



NORTHWEST TERRITORIES  
**LEGISLATIVE  
ASSEMBLY**

**2<sup>nd</sup> Session**

**Day 137**

**19<sup>th</sup> Assembly**

**HANSARD**

**Monday, February 13, 2023**

Pages 5215 - 5258

**The Honourable Frederick Blake Jr, Speaker**

# Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

## Members of the Legislative Assembly

### Speaker

**Hon. Frederick Blake Jr.**  
(Mackenzie Delta)

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**Hon. Diane Archie**

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

**Mr. Ronald Bonnetrouge**

(Deh Cho)

**Ms. Caitlin Cleveland**

(Kam Lake)

**Hon. Paulie Chinna**

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

**Hon. Caroline Cochrane**

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

**Mr. Richard Edjericon**

(Tu Nedhe-Willideh)

**Hon. Julie Green**

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

**Mr. Jackie Jacobson**

(Nunakput)

**Mr. Rylund Johnson**

(Yellowknife North)

**Ms. Frieda Martselos**

(Thebacha)

**Ms. Katrina Nokleby**

(Great Slave)

**Mr. Kevin O'Reilly**

(Frame Lake)

**Ms. Lesa Semmler**

(Inuvik Twin Lakes)

**Mr. Rocky Simpson**

(Hay River South)

**Hon. R.J. Simpson**

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

**Hon. Shane Thompson**

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

**Hon. Caroline Wawzonek**

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

**Ms. Jane Weyallon Armstrong**

(Monfwi)

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**YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES****Monday, February 13, 2023****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. Jacobson, 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 Housing NWT.

**Ministers' Statements**

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 302-19(2):  
ENERGY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY AND  
BLUEPRINT

**HON. PAULIE CHINNA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to inform this House that the draft NWT energy management strategy is out for public feedback until February 21, 2023. This strategic approach will support both Housing NWT's energy goals and objectives, as well the strategic objectives of the GNWT's 2030 Energy Strategy and a long-term view towards guiding energy management decisions and investments. The strategy will also support skill training, economic development opportunities, and more reliable and sustainable energy systems for Housing NWT.

Mr. Speaker, recognizing the importance of public engagement in the development of this strategy, in January 2023 Housing NWT released a draft strategy for public review and comment. As noted earlier, this public comment period will be open until February 21st, 2023 and provides an opportunity for all stakeholders to offer valuable feedback.

Mr. Speaker, over the past several months there has been key engagement work completed, including hosting technical workshops with experts in the energy sector, meetings with our local housing organizations, letters to Indigenous organizations seeking input, and presentations to the Council of Leaders. From the valuable input received and the analysis of the energy use of our housing units, Housing NWT drafted an energy

management strategy. Housing NWT recognizes the importance of energy efficiency, especially in times when we are aware of how climate change is affecting our lives. We know we must improve the energy efficiency of our housing and investing in long-term alternative energy products and solutions. Improving energy efficiency and increasing the use of renewable energy provides benefits such as lowering operating costs, improving living conditions, and contributing to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions which is vital in our fight against climate change. Working to plan, build, and manage our assets in an energy-efficient manner is part of Housing NWT's new mission, values, and vision.

As I spoke previously, Mr. Speaker, we are striving to meet all our new mandate commitments. The new energy management strategy will inform change to policy and programs necessary as part of our renewal, speaking directly to the well-being of our communities, especially considering the issues caused by climate change. As Northerners, we must take seriously the impact that climate change is having on our environment.

I can confirm that since 2010, Housing NWT has invested over \$5.1 million in 13 alternative renewable energy projects such as solar and biomass projects in Yellowknife, Inuvik, Fort Simpson, Hay River, Behchoko, Dettah, N'dilo, Fort Resolution, Fort Liard, Whati, and Aklavik.

Mr. Speaker, I very much look forward to the release of this new strategy and blueprint in the spring of 2023 as Housing NWT continues to work closely with Indigenous governments, community governments, the private sector, and non-for-profit sectors, and our federal funding partners in realizing the goals and objectives of this energy management strategy. I would also like to thank the staff of Housing NWT for contributing and putting this document together. It's much appreciated.

Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister. Ministers' statements. Minister responsible for Environment and Natural Resources.

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 303-19(2):  
ADVANCING THE CONSERVATION  
NETWORK IN THE NORTHWEST  
TERRITORIES

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** Mr. Speaker, this government is committed to working with Indigenous governments and Indigenous organizations on conservation in the Northwest Territories. The Department of the Environment and Natural Resources has spent the last three years implementing establishment agreements, drafting site-specific regulations, and establishing management boards for existing territorial protected areas, Thaidene Nene and Tuyeta. The network of protected and conservation areas in the NWT comes with many benefits:

- Conservation areas protect ecological and cultural important space;
- They help to maintain biodiversity, which is critically important for the ecosystem's health; and,
- They empower and employ communities.

Today I would like to share some of the successes in implementing that network and the work we will continue through the rest of this government. Mr. Speaker, this past December, the Deline Got'ine government, affirmed along with the Governments of Canada and Northwest Territories their commitment to enhance the conservation and stewardship in the Great Bear Lake watershed. As part of this commitment, the Deline Got'ine government announced their intent to create the Sahtu K'aowe Indigenous protected and conservation area. This will enhance and formally recognize the stewardship the Sahtu Got'ine have had in the Great Bear Lake watershed within the Deline district for millennia. This project means active stewardship of the world's eighth-largest lake and much of its watershed and reflected meaningful steps forward for reconciliation.

Mr. Speaker, ensuring that we have a strong economy is essential to ensuring the people of the Northwest Territories, in all communities, have meaningful jobs and opportunities. To this end, our government is working with Indigenous leadership who are bringing the public and philanthropic sectors together to explore options for the long-term investment in the NWT conservation network that will also benefit our environment. This arrangement is known as project finance for permanence, a dedicated fund to support implementation of

protected and conserved areas, support the economy, and empower Indigenous communities.

Last December, as the world came to Montreal to negotiate a new framework for preserving biodiversity, our government was there alongside Indigenous leaders and the federal government to promote investment in our territory's conservation network. This included support for community economic development and Indigenous-led stewardship programs through a project finance for permanence in the Northwest Territories. We will continue to pursue this initiative and ensure the interests of all NWT residents are presented.

Mr. Speaker, advancing conservation starts with a good plan. To this end, we are near to finalizing a renewed work plan for advancing the conservation network. This plan has been built upon engagement with Indigenous governments, Indigenous organizations, stakeholders, and the public.

Mr. Speaker, there is much more work to be done to advance conservation in the NWT. This work includes advancing decision-making on the establishment of Canada protected areas, supporting territorial protected area management boards, providing conservation network information to the public, and supporting Indigenous-led conservation and stewardship initiatives. Alongside Indigenous leaders, we are seeking long-term funding so that conservation can bring real benefits for the communities that support social, cultural, and economic well-being of people across the NWT. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 304-19(2):  
FEBRUARY IS INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES  
MONTH

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Mr. Speaker, February is Indigenous Languages Month in the Northwest Territories. [Translation unavailable].

This month let us celebrate the territory's nine Indigenous languages and learn about the important role language revitalization plays in advancing reconciliation in a real and meaningful way.

Mr. Speaker, for generations Indigenous people have lived under systems designed to erode their cultures, strip their identities, and erase their languages. Here in the NWT and across Canada, we have seen a profound loss of language among Indigenous residents and

communities. I am one of the countless Indigenous people who never acquired the language that was spoken by my ancestors. This is a reality that many people face and one that must be addressed. We have a shared responsibility, Mr. Speaker, as a government and as NWT residents, to advocate for the territory's Indigenous languages and revitalize them. This month I encourage NWT residents to connect with these languages through radio, podcasts, books, and television, and learn simple phrases and original place names.

The Department of Education, Culture and Employment has put together several resources and activities for residents, including a video on Indigenous Languages Month and a virtual scavenger hunt for tips on how each of us can support Indigenous language revitalization. Across the territory, residents will find coffee sleeves promoting Indigenous Language Month at their local coffee shops, and I hope everyone can take the time to enjoy a coffee or tea while practicing new vocabulary and common phrases in one or more of the NWT's official Indigenous languages.

Mr. Speaker, the Government of the Northwest Territories is working diligently to achieve its vision of an NWT where Indigenous languages are supported, respected and thriving. Every year, we feel the momentum growing as more and more people are accessing our Indigenous languages programs. We saw proof of this in December when we received a record 37 applications for the Indigenous Languages Revitalization Scholarship. These individuals are studying to become Indigenous language teachers, interpreters, translators, and linguists.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to congratulate the participants of the third year of the mentor-apprentice program who recently completed 200 hours of Indigenous language immersion. Their dedication is an inspiration. Increasing the number of fluent speakers will help expand services available in Indigenous languages across the government, in schools, early learning and child care programs, and other public services. The fourth year of the mentor-apprentice program will begin accepting applications on February 13, and I encourage everyone to consider participating.

2022 marked the beginning of the United Nations' Global Action Plan of the International Decade of Indigenous Languages. Mr. Speaker, the aim of the decade is to draw attention to the critical loss of Indigenous languages and the need to preserve, revitalize and promote them. The GNWT's Indigenous Languages Action Plan, which was recently

extended to 2024-2025, focuses on meeting these same goals for Indigenous language revitalization and providing access to public services in all nine of the NWT's official Indigenous languages.

Mr. Speaker, learning and reclaiming Indigenous languages requires commitment from governments, communities and people. So let us all take the time this month to educate ourselves on the Indigenous languages spoken in our regions, support those who speak them, and encourage those who are learning them. By working together to revitalize the NWT's Indigenous languages, we will help strengthen NWT communities, regions, and the territory as a whole. Kinana skomitin, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Mahsi cho, Minister. Ministers' statements. Deputy Premier.

**HON. DIANE ARCHIE:** Mr. Speaker, Premier is here today. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Deputy Premier. Ministers' statements. Order. Ministers' statements. Members' statements. Member for Thebacha.

### Members' Statements

#### MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1338-19(2): LABOUR MARKET SUPPLEMENT FOR HEALTHCARE WORKERS

**MS. MARTSELOS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, on October the 5th, 2022, the Government of the Northwest Territories and Union of Northern Workers signed an MOU providing a one-time labour market supplement in the form of a recruitment and retention bonus depending on eligibility requirements. According to the MOU, the labour market supplement will be applied as retention bonuses for some registered nurses, nurse practitioners, midwives, licensed practical nurses, and medical laboratory technologists. Eligible employees will receive between \$5,000 and \$7,000 depending on the NWT community they live in. An additional temporary labour market supplement in the same amounts would also be given as recruitment bonuses for new hires into eligible positions such as registered nurses, nurse practitioners, and midwives.

Mr. Speaker, while in theory this is a good idea being used by the Government of the Northwest Territories; however, in practice the way they are delivering these bonuses has been done poorly. The main issues with this are that the finance department is only giving these recruitment and retention bonuses to a select number of health employees. This means that

there are many nurses across the NWT who are omitted from receiving the labour market supplement retention bonus. In fact, I've been contacted by several constituents who work in health, some of whom have worked in that area and have lived in Fort Smith for nearly 20 years, and they never received this retention bonus. This is unacceptable.

Mr. Speaker, if the Government of the Northwest Territories truly wants to retain nurses, midwives, and laboratory technologist staff with the labour market supplement, then our government needs to seriously rethink their approach with this. The parameters around this policy are too strict, and it has needlessly created divisions among the new and old staff in the NTSSA. For the Government of the Northwest Territories to reward new nurses with bonuses and not give the labour market supplement bonus to long-term nursing staff who have lived in the NWT for years is not okay. The divide among this bonus has created tension and an unhealthy work environment for many staff who feel undervalued, left out, and forgotten by their employer the Government of the Northwest Territories. Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

---Unanimous consent granted

Mr. Speaker, I've spoken to the Minister of Finance about this many times over the last few months but she's unwilling to revisit this and make any changes to this temporary recruitment and retention bonus. The Minister tells me that these bonuses are not designed to be a thank you to employees despite their length of service or the type of work they've done throughout their careers.

We all know there is a healthcare crisis across Canada right now so the retention of our long-term staff should be a priority, but that's not happening right now. I will have questions for the Minister of Finance later today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1339-19(2):  
SPORT AND RECREATION  
OPPORTUNITIES FOR BEAUFORT DELTA  
YOUTH

**MR. JACOBSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Youth in Nunakput and the Beaufort Delta communities are asking for more sports and recreation. Mr. Speaker, we all know how important sports and recreation are for the -- helps our youth to grow mentally, become more confident, develop skills, and have

physical outlet. Sports gives a chance to meeting new friends, a positive environment, travel for tournaments, and all that goes along with that.

Mr. Speaker, recreation can improve the quality of a person's life but not all youth can participate. Some of the smaller communities that have to fly in and fly out, they don't have the money to pay for registration fees, sports equipment, or for travel, Mr. Speaker. Some communities don't even have facilities, staffing, or coaching. We're doing our best in Nunakput communities, but we need help.

Mr. Speaker, the Truth and Reconciliation Call to Action number 90(1) says that, We call upon the federal government to ensure that national sports policies, programs, and initiatives are inclusive to Aboriginal peoples, including, but not limited to, or establishing: In collaboration with the provincial and territorial governments, stable funding for, and access to, community sports programs and that reflect the diverse cultures, traditional sporting activities of Aboriginal peoples.

Mr. Speaker, to support youth access to sports and recreation, to give this a better life, we need investment from our GNWT. And I will have questions for the Minister at the appropriate time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1340-19(2):  
REBUILDING FROM 2023 HAY RIVER  
FLOODING

**MR. ROCKY SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we are now in a new year and inching closer to spring and potential spring flooding, and one can only imagine the anxiety of those Hay River residents affected by flooding last year.

Mr. Speaker, recently I have experienced an increase in the number of calls with respect to both remediation and mitigation questions. Considering that we expect the federal government to provide a majority of the financial support which comes with restrictions, it is important to ensure that the information received from the federal government is not distorted as it passes through the chain of command before it reaches the Pathfinders and those affected residents.

Mr. Speaker, not only is the potential for spring flooding an issue but so is the continued matter of rebuilding after last year's flooding. Many residents are still in disbelief as to the



devastation and the stress it has caused. As the summer construction season is fast approaching, many residents are hoping to either complete repairs or replace their homes that are beyond repair. There continues to be questions with process including inconsistencies between the adjuster's confidential reports and mitigation assessment reports received by clients. These inconsistencies need clarification that goes beyond the authority of the Pathfinders.

Mr. Speaker, some residents are not familiar with project management, construction, engineering, or contracts. Although I have assisted some throughout this process, there are others who are looking for assistance and direction on how to begin their own process of rebuilding or replacing their home. We must understand there may be contractors out there who know that the cost of remediation is covered by government and who may be willing to take advantage of the situation. What we need to provide to these homeowners with is access to third party project management to ensure that the work, that is being done by contractors, not only meets code but that the timeline and budget numbers are fair and reasonable. The cost of this project management service must be a part of the rebuild cost.

Mr. Speaker, I am expecting this to be a very busy season for rebuilding in Hay River. Because of that, it is important this government has the staff in the community that can provide timely supports required for residents. I will be asking the Minister to direct his staff to hold a public meeting in Hay River to hear and address concerns from residents prior to this construction season.

Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1341-19(2):  
CANADIAN RED CROSS SOCIETY

**MS. NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I want to recognize the work of the Canadian Red Cross Society. The CRCS is part of the largest disaster relief and humanitarian network in the world. Comprised of the International Committee of the Red Cross and many related organizations, the Red Cross movement works to help people and communities in times of need and to strengthen their resilience. There can be only one Red Cross Society in each country, and we are very lucky to have the Canadian Red Cross Society as part of our national identity.

Over the course of the pandemic, the CRCS provided a wide range of services and aid in the NWT. The CRCS environmental prevention and control team supported 38 NWT sites, ranging from schools to health centres to shelters. Fifty workshops were held over a six-week period at Stanton, and in Behchoko and Inuvik, to provide training on epidemic prevention, viral containment, and mitigation. The CRCS was engaged in COVID-19 testing, contact tracing, public health and community nursing, patient care, and various other tasks based on urgent need. The CRCS provided 22 qualified medical personnel to the NWT, including registered nurses and physicians.

The CRCS has also played a role in smaller NWT communities outside of COVID-19 supports: Two physicians supporting Hay River's health centres to prevent their closure as well as registered nursing support to Stanton Hospital's OR. In Fort Simpson, where the CRCS has a municipal agreement to collaborate, a psychological first aid course was held for community members. As well, an opioid harm reduction and first aid course was delivered to over 30 participants with 60 nasal Narcan kits distributed.

During the 2022 flooding, the CRCS provided mental health and psycho-social supports via CRCS safety and well-being volunteers, as well as a public health advisor, to help in both Hay River and in Yellowknife. And I don't need to tell you, Mr. Speaker, about the amazing work done by the Red Cross internationally, in all corners of the globe.

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

---Unanimous consent granted

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and my colleagues. As we continue to face the challenges presented by our ever-changing climate, a strong relationship with the CRCS will be more important than ever. Climate-driven disasters and emergencies are only expected to increase in frequency and intensity, and it is crucial we respond rapidly and effectively. These emergencies will be more complex, overlap with each other, include a public health and/or mental health component, and be longer in duration requiring communities and governments of all levels to collaborate and coordinate with organizations such as the Canadian Red Cross.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1342-19(2):  
MUNICIPAL FUNDING GAP

**MS. CLEVELAND:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the call for more activities in the NWT communities is one Regular Members have heard multiple times in relation to child and family services, homelessness prevention, and suicide prevention.

Mr. Speaker, there is so much to be learned from sport - how to be a team player, how to focus on what we can control and let go of what we can't, and how to release some good old endorphins. Sports connect us, can help us learn to problem solve, and work wonders for our mental health. But activity is more than sport. It's recreation and physical activity that provide a link to culture, tradition, land, and physical and mental health.

According to the NWT Association of Communities, when the cross to municipalities increases, the first thing to go is programming which is often recreational programming. Over the past three years, NWT communities have felt inflationary increases and operating and infrastructure costs. And while this government will achieve its goal of putting an additional \$5 million toward the municipal funding gap, with inflation this investment will not succeed in reducing the municipal funding gap by the intended \$5 million.

Mr. Speaker, the municipal funding gap isn't a new budgeting challenge for NWT communities. But we have heard how it is going to become even further squeezed with the upcoming rise in the carbon tax, which does not include revenue sharing with municipalities or NGOs. NWTAC says carbon tax costs are expected to add \$2 million to community budgets and that non-tax based communities, the NWT's smallest and most remote where increasing own source revenues is not an option, will need to cut programming to accommodate carbon tax shortfalls.

In the NWT's tax based communities, covering the carbon tax cost will again rely on yet another tax increase. Here in Yellowknife, 2022 saw a nine percent property tax increase. And in 2023, city council passed a 4.37 percent tax increase. Continued increases are already forecast for 2024 and 2025.

Mr. Speaker, our communities are calling for an increase in activity infrastructure and programming as we work toward building a stronger healthier North. But I worry the true cost of excluding municipalities and NGOs from carbon tax revenue sharing is the unintended consequence of reducing programs in so many of our communities that need it most and a

continued increase in NWT cost of living that is hollowing out our middle class and threatening our population growth. Not only do we need to close the municipal funding gap, Mr. Speaker, but we need to ensure that our municipalities aren't further financially burdened by the carbon tax. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Kam Lake. Members' statements. Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1343-19(2):  
COVID-19 IMPACTS ON EDUCATION

**MS. SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, when COVID-19 shut down our schools, we know that it was difficult for all students. Many students struggled to attend online, online classes and keep up with the work. Now that we are out of the pandemic, we see the real effects that COVID-19 had on our education of our youth and our children. My concern, Mr. Speaker, is for the youth that were in high school during the pandemic, when the schools closed and opened and closed and then opened and went online and -- those are the concerns that I have.

What do we know about these youth? Do we know the impact that it caused these youth? I am concerned about the rate of attendance and if Indigenous students from small communities, regional centres were at a higher number, if they weren't attending or not able to access schooling online? And did they complete the required work? I know in my community that there are students, through the challenges of COVID-19, struggled and some unable to graduate high school.

Mr. Speaker, we have young adults who are challenged to keep up with school during the pandemic. Now they are young adults without a high school education or, some may say, a watered-down education as they were exempt from having to complete parts of their courses and even exempt from writing some of their exams. How can we support these youth? What programs are available?

Mr. Speaker, this is our future workforce, our labour pool. These are our future polytechnic university students, our affirmative action employees, but what does their future look like without a high school education? We know young adults are struggling to complete their education and so how is the GNWT investing in this success? I'll have questions for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment later today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes. Members' statements. Member for Frame Lake.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1344-19(2):  
CAMERON HILLS GAS FIELD  
ENVIRONMENTAL LIABILITIES

**MR. O'REILLY:** Merci, Monsieur le President. It's time for another statement on the millions of dollars of preventable liabilities our government has taken on from our mismanagement of the Cameron Hills gas field once owned by Strategic Oil and Gas. Production stopped in February 2011, and it finally went into receivership in 2020. We accepted this site under the Devolution Agreement without full financial security and without an approved closure plan. Nothing was done to prevent the site from becoming a public liability. The final revisions to the fourth version of the closure and reclamation plan were supposed to be submitted in April 2021 and that still hasn't happened.

November 2022 was the last report from the court-appointed receiver. It shows that GNWT and the receiver have been trying to sell the property since July 2021. In July 2022, a request for proposal was issued for abandonment of some of the wells on site by the receiver. This is to comply with an order issued by the Office of the Regulator of Oil and Gas in July 2019. The first batch of 24 wells is to be properly abandoned by March 31, 2023 - just a matter of a few weeks away, Mr. Speaker - and the rest of the wells by 2026.

Environmental Liability Management Incorporated of Calgary has been selected to do this work and has negotiated some sort of an abandonment agreement. A land use permit for this work was issued in January of this year. It looks like the work may have started because there is a shiny new sign on the access road south of the border when I drove by in late January. It's also not clear whether a proper closure plan will ever be completed for the property and how the current abandonment work relates to that uncompleted plan. It looks like all the work has gone to a southern company and that none of that spending is taking place in the NWT to benefit our so-called "remediation economy." The last report says GNWT payments to the receiver have been about \$3.9 million and all of the money held as financial security has been used up so all additional costs will be covered by taxpayers.

We also learned in the review of the 2021-2022 public accounts that \$20 million has been added to GNWT's liabilities to cover some of the costs for Cameron Hills. It is not clear how

much more taxpayers will have to pay out to remediate this site. Needless to say, Mr. Speaker, there are a lot of questions about what is going on with the Cameron Hills field, and why nothing has been done to prevent this from happening again and again. I'll ask the Minister of Lands for those answers later today. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. Members' statements. Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1345-19(2):  
HEALTHCARE CRISIS

**MR. EDJERICON:** Mr. Speaker, thank you. We know that the health system is collapsing. Every day there are more signs of distress. While I agree wholeheartedly with these words, they are not mine. Mr. Speaker, rather, they belong to the Canadian Medical Association who wrote, in August last year, there's no part of healthcare system untouched by the current crisis. The problem isn't physicians or nurses or healthcare workers. It's not one province or a territory.

Mr. Speaker, my constituents have been struggling with healthcare support for many years. The medical travel system is held bounded by the health department's inflexible and outdated policies, staff shortage at our state-of-the-art hospital here in Yellowknife, our chronic and services have been reduced and likely to be even more curtailed as the government struggles to come to grips with this crisis. This is not an easy problem to solve but there are solutions.

Mr. Speaker, last year the Canadian Medical Association brought together thousands of professional patients and policymakers to collaborate on workable proposals that will fix many of the problems in healthcare. Amongst these are \* expanding team-based care so many Canadians have timely access to family doctors and other primary care practitioners; creating national human resources strategy to rebuild Canada's healthcare workforce in a proactive sustainable way; improving workforce data collection across healthcare systems to track ongoing gaps in progress; investing in new training and education infrastructure to increase the supply of physicians, nurses, and nurse practitioners; introducing pan-Canadian licensure to make sure physicians are more mobile, potentially easing pressure on rural and remote communities, allowing for more quick and able crisis response amongst other benefits; scaling up virtual cases and leveraging the promises of artificial intelligence to improve access to care.

While the CMA may have solutions in the organized noted, what's missing is leadership and collaboration between all levels of government as well as with health professionals and patients who live in the current crisis every day. A lack of leadership and collaboration is all too familiar the story in this Assembly. Time and time again we have asked the government to work with this side of the House. Instead, we are stonewalled with policies and politics that get in the way of helping our constituents. Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to conclude my Member's statement. Mahsi.

---Unanimous consent granted

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, colleagues. Mr. Speaker, Northerners want to know what the government is doing to solve our current health crisis; I mean real solutions and strategies, not lip service statements in the House and status quo in our health centres. So I'll be asking the Minister for a clearer and decisive action to make long-term overdue improvements in healthcare and I expect that she has the answer that my constituents, and all NWT residents need to hear, to be confident in their medical system is on the road to recovery. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh. Members' statements. Member for Yellowknife North.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1346-19(2):  
APPLICATION OF THE BUSINESS  
INCENTIVE POLICY TO WALMART AND  
OTHER SOUTHERN COMPANIES

**MR. JOHNSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When are we going to remove Walmart from the business incentive policy, Mr. Speaker? I want to clarify it's not just Walmart, it's the entirety of Schedule 3 of the business incentive policy, which is a list of 54 grandfathered southern-owned companies that, about a decade ago, seemed to get grandfathered in. And, Mr. Speaker, these are some of the largest companies in the world, like Loblaws. Why do we have to give preferential bid adjustments to Loblaws, Mr. Speaker?

Another egregious example, Northwestel. Northwestel has a legally-protected monopoly in the North yet we have adjusted well over \$60 million of their bids. They bid and we say oh no, that's not enough money for your legally-protected monopoly; we're going to add a little more under the business incentive policy, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, now there's a number of reasons why companies have got on there. But at this

point, the only fair thing is to remove them all. Another example is Clark Builders, Mr. Speaker, who have won well over \$200 million in contracts from the GNWT under BIP adjustments. At one point they had their start in the North, but they have grown to be one of the top ten construction companies in Canada. They no longer need their bids adjusted.

Mr. Speaker, also on that list is Golder and Associates, which has thousands of employees. And I'm happy they have an office with a few employees in the North, but they have grown so large they don't need their bids adjusted. And the reality is they compete against local firms and local environmental consulting firms who are actually BIP registered.

Mr. Speaker, there are countless examples where, whether it be paying for food, paying for construction, paying for consulting, these companies that have been bought and sold time and time again, until they are part of global consortiums with thousands of employees, are now having their bids adjusted for no justifiable reason and all it is doing is costing the taxpayer more money. I will have questions for the Minister of ITI on when we are going to update our BIP policy and remove this schedule. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1347-19(2):  
DECENTRALIZATION OF HOUSING  
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES NORTH  
SLAVE DISTRICT OFFICE TO TLICHO  
REGION

**MS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Decentralizations of North Slave district housing office. Mr. Speaker, I have spoken in this House many times about the housing crisis in the Tlicho region. There are not enough homes to house the people in Tlicho region. The homes we do have are overcrowded and undermaintained. Many homes have mold. There are no housing staff in district office that speak Tlicho language. Further, there are not enough housing staff in the Tlicho region, and they are overworked. Tlicho residents need someone who can speak the language to help them deal with their housing issues. If people in the Tlicho region have problems or issues or want to submit program application, they have to do so through the North Slave district office in Yellowknife. Mr. Speaker, this is a barrier.

Mr. Speaker, this means that residents from Tlicho region have to drive into the capital city, enter a government building which is intimidating for some people whose first language is not English, or they have to wait for the North Slave district office to visit the communities. The requirement to work with the North Slave district housing office in Yellowknife is not working for Tlicho citizens and other people living in the Tlicho region. Mr. Speaker, there needs to be decision-making authority within the Tlicho region. The North Slave housing district office needs to be decentralized into the Tlicho region so Housing NWT can actually improve the housing crisis in the region.

Mr. Speaker, we know there is a housing crisis in Behchoko, the largest Indigenous community in the NWT, yet the main estimate show that Behchoko housing support worker has been sunset this year. A local Tlicho position has been sunset but, Mr. Speaker, there are six new positions established in Yellowknife for this fiscal year. This is unacceptable. Mr. Speaker, this government should be focused on decentralizing services to improve services to residents in small communities, not creating more barriers. I will have questions for the Minister of housing. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1348-19(2):  
EULOGY FOR EDDIE GARGAN

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today it saddens me to stand in this House and speak about the passing of a well-known man from the community of Jean Marie River.

Eddie Gargan was born on November 10th, 1945, at Kelly Lake to his parents Celine and Charles Gargan. Eddie was the third oldest of his family. He passed away on October 20, 2022, with his loving family around him. The family told me about the day he was born. His grandma told his sister Beatrice and brother Phillip that he had walk to his mom when he was born. They were so excited to see the tracks outside their grandma's home. They danced around with joy that day. Later in life, they were told that those were whiskey jack footprints and not Eddie's. It was a family joke that they still share today.

Eddie grew up in Jean Marie River and Fort Simpson. In his younger days, he enjoyed being on the land with his parents and his siblings. Eddie was a very quiet person. Even

when he was seriously sick, he didn't tell people about his pain or sickness. The family talked about how he enjoyed listening to his dad read the Bible very Sunday. It was one of his highlights of the week. To the day he passed away, you could always find the Bible near his chair.

Like his family, Eddie was a hard-working person who enjoyed all aspects of work he did. He took pride in getting things done right the first time. If he needed help, he would ask. I can tell you he was well-respected by his co-workers and bosses. He worked hard to get things done in a timely manner. As well, he was very respectful to his colleagues and co-workers. He would always find good in people and had nice things to say about them.

Eddie was buried in Jean Marie alongside his family that passed away with him. Eddie will be greatly missed by his daughter, two granddaughters, his brother and sister and great many nieces and nephews.

Mr. Speaker, the Gargan family would like to thank everybody for all their support and kindness during their time of sorrow. They appreciate everyone who was able to attend his funeral. And then as well, they would like to thank all the medical staff in Fort Simpson during the difficult time. Mr. Speaker, he will always be in our thoughts and our prayers. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Nahendeh. Our thoughts and prayers are with the family and community.

Members' statements. Returns to oral questions. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member for Great Slave.

### Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery

**MS. NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a little bit of a list here today. So I'd first like to start with recognizing Jennifer McManus, the vice-president of the Red Cross for Alberta and the Northwest Territories who has provided a lot of help to us over the past few years through climate change events as well as COVID-19.

Next, I'd like to recognize Mr. Raymond Pidzamecky, who is a registered social worker with health Canada's First Nations and Inuit Health branch. Mr. Pidzamecky has been working in the North with families of residential school survivors for several decades now, I believe.

And then behind me, I have from Canadian North, I have Jim Ballingall who is the

vice-president of sales, distribution and marketing.

As well as Yellowknife's own Samantha Stuart who is the manager of sales and community investments for the Northwest Territories.

Welcome them all to the Chamber. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd also like to recognize Samantha Stewart, a constituent of Range Lake. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Range Lake. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Replies to budget address, day 4 of 7. Member for Frame Lake.

### Replies to Budget Address

#### MR. O'REILLY'S REPLY

**MR. O'REILLY:** Merci, Monsieur le President. The 2023-2024 Main Estimates present pretty much a status quo budget for this government. I am going to talk about what's in the budget, what should be in it, and also about some priorities for the next Assembly in terms of fiscal sustainability.

While I can support most of the spending, there are still some serious shortfalls and trouble is still on the horizon. Both short-term and long-term debt continues to increase, and we remain very close to the debt limit. There is the largest operating surplus of the 19th Assembly at \$178 million, but that is largely due to the scaled back over-budgeting on the capital side. This much healthier surplus comes despite slow growth in revenues, higher inflation, and unforeseen flood remediation requirements. The healthier surplus should also provide greater room for the spending associated with the issues and priorities identified by Regular MLAs.

It's unfortunate that input from Regular MLAs is not sought earlier in the process, something I've recommended for the last seven years I've been here. There should be a meeting between the Regular MLAs and the Finance Minister to share priorities and issues before the budget is developed.

There are some good initiatives in this budget, such as funding for the labour market supplement for some healthcare workers, which should be expanded, and more for

recruitment as well. There is more funding for some non-governmental organizations, apparently a 2.2 percent increase with a total value of \$780,000. However, it's not clear why some departmental contributions and grants funding was not increased, and I will single out Environment and Natural Resources, Lands, and the Executive and Indigenous Affairs departments where there were no increases. About two-thirds of the NGOs seem to be targeted for the increase but this should be applied to all of the contributions and grants provided by GNWT, especially during this period of high inflation. Better yet, we need a policy change to our funding arrangements that incorporates increases into multi-year funding arrangements to allow NGOs to continue to do the valuable work that makes the NWT a better place. The GNWT also needs to do a better job in disclosing, on an annual basis, all of the grants and contributions provided along with the organizations that receive them.

With this budget, the Cabinet will complete its very low and less-than-ambitious commitment to increase funding by \$5 million to make a small dent in the municipal funding gap. That \$5 million probably doesn't even begin to cover the increases in that gap that have taken place since 2015. We can't even get a new calculation of the current municipal funding gap from Cabinet. This gap will continue to grow and will do so even more during 2023-2024 due to the carbon tax increases and the decision by Cabinet not to share any of those revenues with community governments.

I understand that the increased carbon taxes will cost community governments an extra \$2 million in 2023-2024 and this will climb with further carbon tax increases. Tax-based municipalities will be forced to raise property taxes and smaller communities will likely cut programs and services to cope with the carbon tax increases. If GNWT is to continue the administration of a carbon tax, or receives carbon taxes from the federal government, we must share some of the revenues to cover these increased costs and treat the communities as if they were diamond mines.

And while I am talking about the diamond mines, Mr. Speaker, I remained unconvinced that GNWT is doing anything serious to support the workers at Diavik which is scheduled to close in 2025. I got vague statements from the Finance Minister last week that GNWT departments are at some meetings on the socio-economic monitoring agreement. That's not good enough in terms of planning for economic transition. I would welcome any specifics on what we are doing as a government to help these workers but I don't

see much in this budget that is likely to be of assistance.

A few other observations on the budget I would like to make:

The first is a \$75 million bond issuance for the NWT Hydro Corporation. There are absolutely no details in the main estimates about this increase in debt and what this spending is actually all about. I am still waiting for details, Mr. Speaker. This Cabinet has failed to restore public governance to the NWT Power Corporation and our energy planning is, quite frankly, a mess. Crumbling and underutilized assets, reliance on big grids and old technology, no way of properly analyzing and disclosing trade-offs, I can't begin to express how out of touch with reality this system has become. A new focus on energy self-sufficiency and smaller scale solutions is urgently required.

There are some interesting references in the budget and papers to a review of the fiscal responsibility policy that has failed to keep us out of growing debt and huge over-budgeting of capital projects. It appears the Minister has finally heard Regular MLA calls for the calculations associated with the determination of compliance or non-compliance with that policy that will now regularly be found in financial documents. We need more detailed financial reporting and accountability throughout the year to ensure that sound financial management continues. There needs to be some consequences for non-compliance with the fiscal responsibility policy and, at a minimum, a requirement for a plan to be made public to bring our finances back in order.

I am particularly concerned with this government's increasing reliance on public-private partnerships as a way to finance larger capital projects. There has been little to no analysis or disclosure of the impact this has had on our operating budgets as P3 servicing costs eat away into our ability to provide programs and services. There should be a firm cap on P3 servicing costs just as there on debt servicing as part of a renewed fiscal responsibility policy.

One would also think that something as important as the fiscal responsibility policy would go through some form of public engagement as we do with such mundane matters like the renaming of the Stanton Legacy Building, or a survey on liquor and cannabis products. I will pursue this further with a Member's statement and questions for the Finance Minister at a later date.

The Government Renewal Initiative appears to have ground to halt, and I've yet to see anything

made public or much that is very useful. While I support the concept of program evaluation and review, this work cannot possibly find enough spending cuts to fund our unsustainable path when there is over-budgeting on capital, growing debt, and no willpower to raise more revenues.

I would like to turn to some future priorities that I will pass on to future Assemblies in terms of fiscal responsibility that I do not believe have been adequately addressed during the budgets presented in this Assembly.

#### 1. Review own source revenues and undertake a fair taxation review

- Increase the number of personal income tax brackets to five as seen in most other Canadian jurisdictions;
- Increase own source revenues as much as possible in the territorial formula funding arrangement and work with federal opposition parties to make that happen;
- Increase our resource revenues that have been characterized by world experts as some of the most charitable in the world. We are giving away our resources when we should be maximizing the benefits.

I will give some credit to the Finance Minister who appears to have listened to my concerns, and those of others, about the lack of transparency around the disclosure of resource revenues. For the first time ever, there is a statement showing the past and anticipated net fiscal benefit in these main estimates; in other words, what we actually get to keep from non-renewable resource development. This is good but can be improved by separating mining and petroleum revenues. We should also be accounting for payments from the federal government for Norman Wells. Of course, we should go even further and disclose royalty payments from each facility as is already done in Quebec and elsewhere. Mr. Speaker,

#### 2. Focus on Economic Diversification

There are lots of statements in the budget address, and the economic and fiscal reviews about the pending closure of the diamond mines with little prospect of anything similar on the horizon. The next potential mines are financially and environmentally risky, in many cases already fully licensed, and what is holding them back is financing and commodity prices which we have no control over. Past efforts at concerted economic planning and diversification in the NWT have largely failed.

We need to focus on economic diversification and self-sufficiency by building greater food security and import substitution. In an uncertain world with a climate crisis, economic diversification and self-sufficiency will provide greater security for all our residents. Mr. Speaker,

### 3. Housing, Housing, and More Housing

Cabinet has promised 100 new public housing units over four years of the 19th Assembly. Nunavut will build that many this summer under its new plan. If this government is serious about economic development, poverty, reconciliation, and virtually everything else, people need safe and affordable housing. This needs to be the priority for the next Assembly. No more mega-projects over housing when Cabinet goes to Ottawa. Treat housing as the mega-project for the next Assembly.

### 4. The Climate Crisis

The current Cabinet continues to pussyfoot around the climate crisis or climate emergency. I would have thought that two successive years of extraordinary and catastrophic flooding would have convinced this government that we are now in the midst of a climate crisis that will change virtually everything we do. I think I have only once ever heard a GNWT senior staff person say "climate crisis" once.

Our government continues to fail on climate change mitigation and adaptation. Our public reporting is so convoluted that no one understands it. The only reason we may reach the old and outdated greenhouse gas reduction targets is because of the closure of the Diavik diamond mine. I will be watching very closely to see if the new Department of Environment and Climate Change actually uses the terminology of a "crisis" or an "emergency" and has the responsibility and tools to coordinate and lead GNWT's efforts. If this is not part of the establishment policy for the new department, this Cabinet will have failed again. This government needs to stop being part of the problem, acknowledge the crisis or emergency, show leadership, and make better decisions on mitigation and adaptation.

In terms of the budget process, I can say that the relationship and negotiations with Cabinet over financial matters has been respectful and fruitful, a much different and welcome change from the previous Assembly. I will be happy to work with my colleagues on this side of the House to push for changes to the current budget. We still have more work ahead of us to ensure that the priorities of Regular MLAs are more clearly reflected in the budget, but I am confident that working together we can reach a

reasonable compromise and a better balance. Merci, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. Replies to budget address. Acknowledgements. Oral questions. Member for Yellowknife North.

## Oral Questions

### QUESTION 1351-19(2): BUSINESS INCENTIVE POLICY SCHEDULE THREE

**MR. JOHNSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In Schedule 3 of the business incentive policy is quite a long list of companies, and I don't want to go through the reasons of why each of these got in here or others that, you know, seemingly have the exact same situation in this territory didn't. But can the Minister just give me some explanation of how we got here; why is there a specified list of southern companies that we give preferential treatment to? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Yellowknife North. Minister responsible for Industry, Tourism and Investment.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the story starts way back in 2010. There was some policy revisions made at that time. And essentially any business that was already here at that time, and that was already operating in the Northwest Territories, was grandfathered in under that policy. And that has not changed, and so those companies continue to be on Schedule 3. Thank you.

**MR. JOHNSON:** Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think at this point the only fair thing is to scrap the entire list and have a policy that anyone can apply to, and maybe some of these companies will reapply. But when you look at many of them, it's clear they have been bought and sold tens of times since they were put on this list and many are owned by, you know, global consortiums around the world. It just doesn't make sense to be spending extra taxpayer dollars on them.

So my question for the Minister of ITI is when is this procurement review going to be finished and will it remove this schedule? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So, Mr. Speaker, there's a number of different things happening with respect to the procurement review. Some already have seen some changes. There's been, for example, vendor performance management is now underway. Contracts are



being updated accordingly. There's significant work happening led by EIA on Indigenous procurement, being codeveloped or codetermined with Indigenous parties that would benefit from that. There's also work happening in ITI, Mr. Speaker, around the business incentive policy and around the manufacturing policy to look at ways to improve that. And that is all expected happen still within the course and the lifetime of this government. That includes determining exactly what the definition of a northern business should be, which is certainly a little more complicated than just one department making that determination. Should it be an entity that has a place of business here, that does a majority of its business here, that has a certain number of residents that are employed here; that's certainly proved to be rather more contentious than simply a blanket decision to be made. But, again, I can certainly say that there will be work ongoing and it will be happening in the life of this Assembly. Thank you.

**MR. JOHNSON:** Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to try again once more. Okay, perhaps we have to wait for the new policy that answers, you know, some of these companies -- and I get it's difficult to say if your base of operations are here but you've sold -- since been sold, should you fall under the new policy. But to me the answer to that is the new policy. So I don't want to see a situation where we create a new policy and then we keep Schedule 3. So we go well, we're just going to leave those people there forever.

So will the Minister commit that once we have a new policy in place, we will be removing Schedule 3? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, Mr. Speaker, that is certainly -- was exactly the recommendation in the procurement review, was indeed to remove Schedule 3. And the work that's going on about what that will look like to be replaced and how businesses might find themselves, that work is underway right now. And I'm afraid the Member's going to have to wait and see how that unfolds and then any business that's in Schedule 3 can determine whether or how they find themselves reflected in the new policy. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. JOHNSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, you know, and I think this is a tough policy question. There has to be a way to write it because take Walmart, for example, one of the largest corporations in the world, we presently -- if they bid on food services, we buy

a few hundred thousand dollars-worth of food in this territory, we give them some extra money. And I get they have a building here and they have staff here but my question is, will the Minister remove Walmart from Schedule 3? Thank you.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Walmart's the easy one. Walmart and Loblaw's and, in fact, many of the other businesses on Schedule 3 have not bid on any GNWT contracts in over ten years. And in that sense, they're sitting there but they're not really gaining much benefit from being on Schedule 3. Those aren't the difficult circumstances. The more complicated ones are those who are long-time northern-based businesses who have had the benefit of growing and becoming large -- larger businesses, which is really a good news story for the Northwest Territories and for having those businesses based here and who have been grandfathered in, and to determine what, in fact, or how, in fact, we might want to continue to encourage the growth of businesses in the North, to be based in the North, but competing on a national scale, that is the more difficult question. Walmart, I'm not too concerned about as we move forward with this process but, again, it's those northern-based businesses we want to consider how to be tracked and capture that kind of growth in our economy. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister. Colleagues, before we continue, I believe in the gallery today we have Avery Parle, president of Northern Territories Federation of Labour. Welcome to the Chamber. Oral questions. Member for Great Slave.

QUESTION 1352-19(2):  
GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHWEST  
TERRITORIES RELATIONSHIP WITH  
CANADIAN RED CROSS SOCIETY

**MS. NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Premier. In these complex times, with increasing climate uncertainty and deteriorating healthcare systems, why would the GNWT not want to partner with the humanitarian organization such as the Canadian Red Cross that has experienced its share in skills to bring to the people of the Northwest Territories? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Great Slave. Honourable Premier.

**HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Actually my understanding is that

we do work with the Red Cross. The Red Cross provides valuable services to all of Canada; we recognize that. However, this government, because of what we've been facing, has bumped up our EMO, emergency response, from two full-time positions to hopefully ten after this budget. So we also work -- Red Cross really excels in what they do in areas of registration and donation management but it's not free, Mr. Speaker. There is a cost to it. So we've used them before. But like I said, there's a price for direct aid costs such as supplies, materials, logistics, transporting, storing and distributing aid, expenses for personnel and transportation, plus admin costs. So we do appreciate the services of the Red Cross. But we're a small jurisdiction, Mr. Speaker. We've been working focusing on trying to get our communities so that they can actually have the supports that work with emergencies that come. They're welcome; we've talked to them. They're more than welcome to reach out to the Red Cross as needed but our focus has been empowering the communities at this point. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MS. NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A lot of that answer confuses me. First of all, why would we tax our communities that are already lacking capacity and overburdened to then create 33 individual MOUs with the Red Cross? But, also, I'd like to know where the Premier is getting her facts from. It's my understanding that there is a minimum administration fee to work with the Red Cross approximately around \$5,000.

So can the Premier please tell me where she's getting this idea that it would cost us all this money to engage with the Red Cross? Thank you.

**HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So my information comes from various departments. If I'm wrong, I'm more than willing to relook at that. If the Red Cross charges \$5,000 for all their supports that they would do, including the cost of transportation, including cost of personnel, including the cost of supplies, etcetera, then, please, let me know. Send me a letter. I'd be more than willing to entertain that. My understanding is that each one of those components has an additional cost. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MS. NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yeah, I'm pretty sure that you will be -- or the Premier will be getting some information to correct her misinformation. Perhaps if she had met with the Red Cross, as she promised to last year, she would know these things directly.

My next question is to do with why does the GNWT keep using the term "contract" when

answering me when I'm talking about a memorandum of understanding, not a moratorium of understanding, which the Premier mentioned on Friday in her response, but a memorandum of understanding. This does not have any costs associated with it, and it is not a contract. Could the Premier please explain why she keeps conflating the two? Thank you.

**HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I did state in the association of communities, I believe it was, that I was more than willing to meet with the Red Cross. I'm more than willing to meet with most people that ask for a meeting with the Premier. However, Mr. Speaker, at no time did I, as the Premier, get a letter requesting a visit so I would have expected that to happen. But, Mr. Speaker, departments did meet with the Red Cross, the applicable departments. And health met with them, MACA met with them. And that would be the route that I would go anyway, was to take the informed departments. Personally the Premier's office doesn't use the Red Cross at this moment. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Honourable Premier. Final supplementary, Member for Great Slave.

**MS. NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this just seems to be another instance where the Premier is passing everything off to her colleagues to take care of. A territorial MOU encompassing all departments would actually make things a lot easier for communities, for departments, for others to engage in contract with the Red Cross at a later date.

Can the Premier please tell me why such a prudent and timesaving measure wouldn't be explored by her office? Thank you.

**HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think we've already explained that. We are looking at our emergency management structure in itself, trying to help the communities. They are the first on the ground. We do work with other agencies. We have used the Red Cross when needed. And my understanding is they were looking at a standing agreement. But, again, Mr. Speaker, if I'm wrong with that, then please send me a letter. I'm more than willing to entertain that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**MS. SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment.

Can the Minister explain what is known about high school attendance through COVID-19? Can he describe the attendance in small communities versus regional centres? What do we know about Indigenous students' attendance? I guess my question is do we have this data, and if not, can he commit to gathering this data? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes. Minister responsible for Education, Culture and Employment.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Attendance data is tracked. The most recent data that we have has been published, and that was for I believe the 2020-2021, and that is in our JK to 12 performance and measures report. That information states that territory-wide, the attendance rate was 79.9 percent. In Yellowknife, 87.23 percent. In regional centres, 76.3 percent. And in small communities, 72.8 percent. However, I will note that attendance can be difficult to take when things are done virtually, and teachers don't necessarily see the students. So like most things, the stats from COVID are not perhaps as accurate as we would like. But I can commit to continuing to collect this information and report it publicly when it becomes available. Thank you.

**MS. SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you to the Minister for that. And I know as a past regional board director that the data is all from kindergarten to grade 12, and our kindergarten to grade 6s are excellent at going to school, and then as we get into junior high, it starts to fade off, and we get into senior high, this is where we start to lose our numbers. So I would really like the numbers for that.

But, Minister, can you explain what kind of support is available to the young adult students? The ones that I am walking about are the ones in grade 10, 11, and 12 who are impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic to complete their high school education. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And students who are 19 to 21, they can return to high school. I know that a one or two-year age difference when you're a teenager is a big deal and so it can be difficult for students to return. I mean, a 21-year-old doesn't want to sit with 17-year-olds, and that's understandable. Some communities have alternative high school programs. Some of these are flexible programs. Perhaps you could attend on the evenings or on weekends, understanding that

older students might have jobs that they need to attend to. In Inuvik, there is the Sunchild E-Learning Community program as well. And that delivers educational services to Indigenous students. We also have our career and education advisors who are available to help students determine what they need to graduate and move on to the next phase in their life. So there are a number of supports. However, I recognize that there -- and as I've mentioned before in this House, there is a gap in this area. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MS. SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the Minister. Mr. Speaker, recognizing there are students who haven't completed high school, can the Minister commit to working with his department or with the regional school boards, you know, to identify these students that didn't graduate or identify these students that, you know, maybe just, just passed and may not be eligible to be accepted into some of our universities or our colleges and, you know, support these specific students to complete their high school education, maybe similar to the university and college PREP program but targeted to these students with additional semesters that they may require. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So there are currently a few options for people. Students can take upgrading at Aurora College. They can take the adult literacy and basic education program. And so that is -- it's upscaling programming, and there are no tuition associated with this program. There's also the university and college access program and the occupation and college access program at the college. There are fees associated with this, but they are supported through student financial assistance.

As the Member has stated, and I've also stated, we are aware there is a gap here despite these programs, and the department is looking at ways to bridge that gap. It's not going to happen today, but it is something in the near term we hope to be able to do. In terms of identifying those students, that's something I can bring back to the department and talk about any more near-term opportunities. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister. Final supplementary. Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes.

**MS. SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you to the Minister. You know, I hear the Minister that I know there is a gap, we know there is a gap; we need to know what the gap is before we can fix it so I'm glad that he's going to be looking into that. But, again, going back to, you know, maybe we have some students that might need a year and a half of university

PREP, not just the one year that they could be funded for because I think for funding that's the cap. Is that changed with all the changes made? I can't keep up with some of the great changes that he's made. But are there students that are eligible to get into some of these university college PREP, especially these students that could be a year or two years that they might need to take, and they can get funded through our SFA program? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think that question deserves a full answer so what I'm going to do is take it on notice, and I'll return to the House with an answer. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 1354-19(2):  
LABOUR MARKET SUPPLEMENT FOR  
HEALTHCARE WORKERS

**MS. MARTSELOS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, can the Finance Minister explain why finance is providing recruitment bonuses to brand new eligible health staff but is not providing any retention bonuses to long-term healthcare staff in similar positions. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the labour market supplement is something that we worked on, both Department of Finance as well as with the authorities, and just to be clear, it's not being paid out differently if you're brand new or otherwise. The issue is around the eligibility of the position. There are specific positions that were negotiated and discussed with the union. Those positions are all going to be receiving the labour market supplement. There are some challenges in terms of the length of time that someone might be employed. So, for instance, if someone's on a term position for one year, then they'd be getting a payment that is in line with the amount of time that they are employed and there would be some differences, for example, if somebody's on paid leave at the moment, there may be differences in terms of when they get their payment processed. But there's certainly not a line that's been drawn as between short-term or long-term staff, again, other than ensuring that they are paid in accordance with the policy and how that adapts depending on how long someone may be in the role. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MS. MARTSELOS:** Mr. Speaker, can the Minister tell us if she considers the recruitment

and retention bonuses to be fairly distributed among healthcare staff? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I certainly do consider this to be one tool in the toolbox of recruitment and retention efforts that are underway within the health authorities and supported by the Department of Finance. The intention again is to ensure that we are finding those positions that have been hard to recruit here in the Northwest Territories and, again, to then pay according to the positions that were discussed between ourselves and the union and looking at the data available about what those positions are. It doesn't mean that every single person employed within the Department of Health and Social Services, or within one of the authorities, gets a labour market supplement. It was positions that were determined to be difficult -- particularly difficult to recruit for and that is in line with the labour market supplement policy. That policy applies not only to the healthcare field but to the entire public service. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MS. MARTSELOS:** Mr. Speaker, can the Minister tell us what type of feedback Finance has received from healthcare staff about these retention and recruitment bonuses? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would say probably the single thing that I have heard the most, that I have had to correct, has been the concept or the notion that these are thank-yous or that these are COVID bonuses. Every single public servant deserves a thank you and is valued. The bonus in the labour market supplement isn't the thank you, and it's not a COVID bonus. It really is a reflection of the challenging situation we are in right now all across Canada recruiting healthcare staff and wanting to ensure that our recruitment and retention personnel had every tool available to them, and that's where the labour market supplement came in. And so we have certainly been trying to ensure that folks are aware of exactly what it was for and what it was not for and certainly trying to ensure that we don't undermine people's sense of value and worth. These are all -- every public servant is valued, Mr. Speaker. But the labour market supplement is hopefully going to bring more folks in to those difficult positions to make it easier for everyone to do their job there. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MS. MARTSELOS:** Mr. Speaker, can the Minister tell us if the Union of Northern Workers

considers the parameters of these recruitment and retention bonuses to be fair for their NTHSSA members? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, while I do hope to have a positive relationship with the union and hope to continue that, I'm certainly not in a position to speak on their behalf. I can say that there were -- this was an opportunity where, while not always a smooth path along the way, I do believe this was a reflection of a good collaborative effort between the GNWT and the UNW in terms of trying to identify ways to bring more healthcare staff in. With more staff there, it helps lessen the burden on each individual staff and it helps retain the staff that we have. And, again, without losing anybody, that helps maintain the overall staffing contingent that we have. So, you know, discussion around the labour market supplement continues. I expect it will continue given the labour market situation we're in in Canada, and we'll certainly look forward to participating in those discussions with the union. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 1355-19(2):  
CAMERON HILLS GAS FIELD  
ENVIRONMENTAL LIABILITIES

**MR. O'REILLY:** Merci, Monsieur le President. My questions are for the Minister of Lands, who seems to have primary responsibility for the former Cameron Hills solid gas field.

Can the Minister tell us when the abandonment agreement with Environmental Liabilities Management Incorporated, or ELM, was signed and the value of that work or contract? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I thank the Member for the question. The abandonment agreement with the contractor was signed on December 9th following a procedural process authorized by the court. The work is being undertaken by the receiver to carry out the order issued by the regulator of oil and gas regulations. The cost to complete this work is \$15 million but as the workers -- or the contractor gets into the site, there may be additional costs. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Merci, Monsieur le President. I want to thank the Minister for that. So during the review of the public accounts, it was revealed that an extra \$20 million had been added to the

GNWT's environmental liabilities fund as a result of Cameron Hills.

So can the Minister confirm this is the total amount of liability GNWT has calculated for Cameron Hills and whether any further funds will be needed for proper closure and reclamation? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, to date, the GNWT's only calculated the liability required to carry out the order issued by ROGO. This order includes closure of oil and gas wells at Cameron Hills along with removal of pipelines and related infrastructure such as tanks and batteries. The cost of reclamation under the land use permit and water license, such as sumps and contaminated soil, has not been estimated at this time, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Merci, Monsieur le President. I want to thank the Minister for that. So there's going to be another hit coming our way? So as I understand, the closure and reclamation plan for Cameron Hills has never been completed, and there's no publicly-available cost estimate for the site. So it's not clear just what ELM is actually doing and how the public is supposed to have any input.

Can the Minister tell us when the closure plan and cost estimate work will be completed and why this work was not done before ELM was contracted? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The contractor is conducting work to meet the timelines in the order issued by OROGO to close the wells at Cameron Hill and remove pipelines and related infrastructure. This work is being inspected and certified by OROGO according to the legislation and standards. The land and water board issued a permit to allow this work to proceed. The land and water board has required the receiver to submit a revised closure and reclamation plan with other work at the site by June of 2024. This revised plan will be available for public comments through the land and water board process. The receiver is currently working on this plan. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** Merci, Monsieur le President. I'm learning a lot from these questions. The fourth report from the receiver shows that K'atloodeeche First Nation was not happy that the current closure and abandonment work went to a southern company. There's apparently some sort of northern benefits plan that has been required of ELM Incorporated.

Can the Minister provide us with some details about what is in that northern benefits plan, and will he commit to table it in this House? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The initial benefits plan for Cameron Hills was approved in 2002, was transferred from Canada at devolution, a draft of the 2002 documents of the Mackenzie Valley Land and Water Board is at the public registry. So it is already available publicly. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 1356-19(2):  
REBUILDING FROM 2022 HAY RIVER  
FLOODING

**MR. ROCKY SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the flood in Hay River last year not only damaged homes and businesses, it impacted the health of individuals and, more so, our seniors.

Mr. Speaker, I've heard of possible PTSD amongst first responders, volunteers, and flood victims. In some, we've seen an increase in substance abuse, stress, anxiety, family violence, family separations, and senior health issues as well. And that is why it's so important to get residents back in their home and to get it right and provide the support that they need.

So, Mr. Speaker, can the Minister of MACA tell me how many homes affected by the flooding in Hay River have been either repaired or replaced to date? Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Hay River South. Minister responsible for Municipal and Community Affairs.

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have to thank the Member from Hay River South, Hay River North, and the Deh Cho, for asking these questions, important questions, on the residents who were impacted by the flood.

MACA doesn't have the information because homeowners in Hay River are managing their own repairs and replacements. MACA only becomes aware of the work to repair or replacement when the homeowners completed a final claim for the disaster assistance. As of December 31st, MACA has processed approximately 100 claims for disaster assistance in Hay River and on KFN. Thank you.

**MR. ROCKY SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, deadlines were established for structural assessments, mitigation consultation, and final disaster assistance claim.

Mr. Speaker, can the Minister confirm that these deadlines have been reviewed and will they be revised considering residents have unanswered questions and the fact we have a long way to go before we see all affected persons back in their homes? Thank you.

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the deadline to request mitigation assessment and structural assessment was March 31st, 2023. This is only a deadline to make the request. This is not the deadline to complete the structural assessment or apply for mitigation funding. Assessments are conducted to take place, and work will continue until all assessments are done. The deadline to request the mitigation and structural assessment was communicated directly to all registered disaster assistance clients and advised within the town throughout various means such as Facebook and radio ads. The deadline for the submissions of the final disaster assistance claim is December 31st, 2023. Municipal and Community Affairs will be contacting clients numerous times over the next year to check the status of their repairs and replacements, reminding them of the deadline and encouraging them to submit their final claims on time. However, Mr. Speaker, Municipal and Community Affairs will explore options to extend the deadline for final claims if it becomes apparent that the repairs and replacements cannot be completed by this deadline. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. ROCKY SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Some of the people who have been impacted by the flooding, they're seniors. There's some people who, you know, can't even read and write and they're expected to, you know, manage the remediation of their home. And like I said in my statement, some of them have come and asked me for support. I've done that. But I think that's -- you know, that's something that this government should be looking at and trying to provide that support however they can.

So, Mr. Speaker, will the Minister commit to reviewing the need for added funds to help those needing third party project management services or, in the alternative, allow the cost for that service to come out of remediation funding? Thank you.

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the Member has said, and in our conversations numerous times, a few

homeowners in Hay River have indicated they'd like technical assistance with contracting for repairs. MACA is following up with those homeowners to confirm the status of these repairs, particularly as many of these repairs are straightforward in nature, for example, replacement of skirting. MACA is working with homeowners considering replacement to system and obtaining property appraisals so that they can make informed decisions. MACA is also discussing having conversations with Public Safety Canada to determine whether the disaster financial assistance arrangements could cover the cost for technical assistance as part of the cost of repairs as the Member's been asking. 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, in some of these documents, such as the adjuster's confidential reports and the mitigation assessment reports, they contradict each other. You'll have one report that'll tell you this is what it costs. As an example, somebody was provided with \$50,000 for remediation through the adjuster's confidential report. Through the mitigation assessment report, it says the building is non-repairable and it cannot be lifted or raised up. So what we need is somebody in the community to actually, you know, take a look at those reports and those contradictions and figure out if we have to do a reassessment with either report.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think it's important that MACA realizes that it's very important to have somebody on the ground come this spring. Not just the Pathfinders. We need somebody there that can actually make decisions. And, you know, right now, you know the person I think -- people that do it are in Yellowknife, but we need somebody on the ground in Hay River.

So, Mr. Speaker, will the Minister, prior to this summer construction season, commit his staff to holding a public meeting in Hay River to update and discuss remediation efforts and MACA processes with residents? Thank you.

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I got 25 minutes and I can talk for 25 minutes. No. The answer is yes, we will early in March. And I have to again thank the Members from Hay River South, Hay River North, and Deh Cho, for reaching out and doing a good job for their constituents. So we will be getting there in early March. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 1357-19(2):  
SPORT AND RECREATION  
OPPORTUNITIES FOR BEAUFORT DELTA  
YOUTH

**MR. JACOBSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I just want to thank the Aboriginal Sports Circle for this weekend and doing the traditional Dene games here in the City of Yellowknife and seeing all our youth coming from the outlying communities.

Mr. Speaker, that being said, the support of Indigenous sporting events and stuff like that, the funding, the monies where it comes from, would the Minister in spirit of the TRC Call to Action, 90(1), what kind of negotiation is the GNWT involved in with the federal government to secure federal funding for sports for youth in the Beaufort Delta and Nunakput and all that riding? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Nunakput. Minister responsible for MACA.

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in the NWT there are no programs that we fund that are exclusively for ancestry. In other words, we don't recognize Inuit. We recognize all residents. When we provide funding through that, the pots, we work for all residents of the Northwest Territories. However, Municipal and Community Affairs has during engagement with the SPAR framework which will govern how MACA invests lottery dollars in the NWT. MACA will seek feedback on the type of specific action stakeholders want to do so that will be one of the opportunities to look at that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. JACOBSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I think we have to go a little bit -- sorry, do a little bit better than that. I think what the Minister has to do is talk to the federal Minister and hold TRC and that claim accountable for the funding that they're doing for Aboriginal students. Not only Aboriginal students - everybody who lives up in the Delta. I mean, right from the Beaufort Delta in Nunakput, the cost of travel, everything that comes into play with that, Mr. Speaker. Something has to be done. We're not getting -- the youth are not getting out travelling. They need help. We have to help them. Where's the money? Would the Minister back it up in regards to talking to the federal government? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's a good segue to actually I'm going to be meeting with the federal Minister this weekend. I'll bring it up with her there. But right now what our department has been doing, through the lottery dollars and

through the BDSRA, we do provide funding for the youth, an opportunity to participate in that there. Again, it's with the organization. I know there's a group that's doing a hockey tournament, sort of kind of interchanging between communities up in the Beaufort Delta and they're organizing that right now. So that money is -- some of that's happening there. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. JACOBSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, how much money does MACA allocate for the youth of Nunakput and the Beaufort Delta on a yearly basis? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, \$250,756. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. JACOBSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, that's not good enough. Prices, especially if our carbon tax goes up, at least need a million dollars for the Beaufort Delta and Nunakput communities to provide service to the youth in our traditional -- like I always said before, the tournaments that would happen in Aklavik, Inuvik, and Tuk and, you know, bringing the communities from Sachs and Paulatuk. Would the Minister go forward and meet -- when he meets with the federal Minister this weekend and ask her, increase and ask to take action in regards to the TRC. Take action, give us a million dollars for the communities. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, that amount of money that I talked to you about, it was a quarter million, there's also programs out there through contribution agreements that the communities are able to access that there. But as the Member said, I can have those conversations with the federal Minister to see what funding help the federal government is available to give to our jurisdictions. The biggest challenge is when we talk to the federal government, it's about Canada as a whole, how the NGOs work. And when we talk about some of the challenges that we face, that's where we have to work with them. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

QUESTION 1358-19(2):  
HEALTHCARE CRISIS

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

**MR. EDJERICON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Earlier I had said that I'll be asking the Minister for clear and decisive action on the overdue

improvements to the healthcare system here in the Northwest Territories. We are year three and a half into our mandate here already, and my question would be to the Minister. Earlier today I mentioned a series of healthcare recommendations issued by the Canadian Medical Association in August of last year. What action has the Minister of Health and Social Services taken in response to these recommendations? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Tu Nedhe-Willideh. Minister responsible for Health and Social Services.

**HON. JULIE GREEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I haven't seen those recommendations so I can't comment.

**MR. EDJERICON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm sure, you know, you'd just have to look online. I'm sure you'd be able to find that.

Moving forward, though, Mr. Speaker, last week in Ottawa Trudeau announced a pitch to probably about \$196.1 billion over ten years to all the provinces and territories, additional \$46.2 billion for the provinces and territories as well. So outside the CMA recommendation, what action or strategies to date have been taken and employed by the Minister's department to tackle the ongoing healthcare crisis here in the Northwest Territories? And if she could maybe just elaborate a little bit more about the money that's coming from Ottawa and maybe if you could help break that down and how can that help the healthcare system moving forward. Thank you.

**HON. JULIE GREEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the federal government has offered a package of different kinds of money, CHT, CHT top up, escalator, tailored bilaterals, and so on. I'm not at liberty to discuss the details at this point.

I can say, however, that the federal government is focused on supporting territories and provinces in four specific areas. They are data, primary care reform, mental health and substance abuse, and aging with dignity as well as health human resources. As the Member, I am sure is aware, we introduced a health human resources plan in June of last year which was with medium- and long-term aims to increase our resident workforce, and we followed that up in August with some short-term incentives; that is, incentives that would work in the short-term to bring more staff to us. In May, we completed our data strategy. This is what we are reporting on and to whom. And the Member can find the results of our reports on the Canadian Institute of Health Information website. They follow metrics for every province



and territory and compare them to national averages. Mental health and substance use is a priority area for us. These are all priority areas. And we continue to invest in helping people regain their health by both services available in the territory and those that are available in the south.

In terms of primary healthcare, which is an effort to create teams to help patients rather than everybody being attached to a single healthcare provider, which is proving difficult to sustain, we have used federal money to create a primary healthcare pilot program which has not been used in the Member's home community of Fort Resolution but, which nonetheless, exists and which we are working on expanding because it has been very successful.

So those are some of the things that we're working on, and we feel that we are aligned with those federal priorities that were outlined in their plan last week and we look forward to developing action plans which will then release the money to us. Thank you.

**MR. EDJERICON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you, Minister, for your answer. And I appreciate that. It seems that it's clear that many of the issues in the healthcare system are systematic in nature.

Will the Minister commit to a full operation review of the healthcare services in the Northwest Territories so that the findings of such review can inform necessary reforms and prepare the next Assembly to get ahead of this problem? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. JULIE GREEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, both the department of health and the NTHSSA are part of the government renewal initiative. Phase 1 was to do an inventory of programs. Phase 2 is to look at how those programs are funded. So we're participating in that process and look forward to working with the results. Thank you.

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

**MR. EDJERICON:** Yeah, thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you, Minister. Just part of the review that you probably are going to look at, can we also take a look at the medical travel review policy that's outdated and inflexible to improve the access to healthcare for those residing in small communities here in the Northwest Territories? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. JULIE GREEN:** Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I'm sure the Member is aware,

there is a review underway now of different components of the medical travel policy. I'm sure he's also aware that the benchmark for the medical travel policy is the NIHB benefits, which are available to status people. And it is our job to meet those benchmarks for the whole population. However, we are at this point subsidizing this federal program for NIHB, and that's something that we want to bring to an end. And I have a call with the Minister responsible for Indigenous Services Canada this week to talk about that. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 1359-19(2):  
MUNICIPAL FUNDING GAP

**MS. CLEVELAND:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions today are for the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs. Mr. Speaker, while the GNWT has increased community funding in the 19th Assembly, the value of that increase has likely been eaten up by inflation. The funding gap is probably unchanged from where it was at the start of the 19th Assembly at \$40 million. Mr. Speaker, we've heard that MACA is reviewing the community funding formula in collaboration with the NWTAC. So will MACA finalize the new and improved community funding formula in the life of the 19th Assembly and will the community government dollars in the 2023-2024 budget be disbursed on this new formula? Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Kam Lake. Minister responsible for Municipal and Community Affairs.

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And the Member is correct. We have a working group with NWTAC members and LGANT members -- sorry, I shouldn't say the acronyms. Local government administrators. So they're working with that. So we were hoping to have it done by the end of this fiscal year. Unfortunately, we've had a couple hiccups so it will be done sometime in June, which means our contribution agreements, which we are signing with our community governments, will be signed using this year's numbers but with the new ones, then we're communicating that with the communities as well, that when we come up with the new numbers it may -- we will have the new contribution agreement in place. Some will see increases and some may see decreases as we move forward. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MS. CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, NWT Association of Community expects communities to take a

financial hit from the increase in carbon tax. Our counterparts in the Yukon take the carbon tax into account for community funding. They've estimated that community governments pay 3.5 percent of the tax which is then returned to them in rebates. If we return 3.5 percent of our carbon tax revenues to community governments, they would receive over \$2 million in 2023-2024. So will the Minister consider including carbon tax offset in the municipal funding formula? Thank you.

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the new policies will consider to account for the cost changes in utility prices, not just the carbon tax. The water and sewer funding policy already uses actual power in heating fuel rates in the communities when we do its calculations. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MS. CLEVELAND:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, while many of our communities are underfunded, the GNWT is projecting an operating surplus for the next year of \$178 million as we heard last week in the Budget Address from the Minister of Finance. So will the GNWT share some of its operating surplus for 2023-2024 to actually reduce the municipal funding gap in the life of this Assembly? Thank you.

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, our budgets are out there right now. However, as I had the conversation with the Member and as the process -- and I have to give credit to the finance minister. She's more than willing to have these conversations on how we can work together and how we negotiate so part of the ask can be from committee to see if we can see that. But right now I can tell you we have our budgets in place right now, and this is how we're moving forward on it. But if the negotiation process comes up with the money, then we're more than willing to help the communities out. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 1360-19(2):  
DELIVERY OF HOUSING NORTHWEST  
TERRITORIES SERVICES WITHIN THE  
TILCHO REGION

**MS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the mission of Housing NWT is to, quote, "increase the well-being of individuals and communities by providing fair access to quality housing support for people most in need," end quote.

Mr. Speaker, it certainly doesn't feel that the Tlicho communities have fair access to quality housing support. Can the Minister commit to improving the delivery of housing programs and services in the Tlicho region? Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Monfwi. Minister responsible for Housing NWT.

**HON. PAULIE CHINNA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you to the Member for her question. Housing support in the smaller communities is a priority and also working with the strategic renewal that we have put together. I addressed that very passionately in trying to make the changes here within the Northwest Territories. To date, the government in the last ten years has invested \$32.4 million into the Tlicho region, and we're looking at a current year delivery summary of \$13.4 million to complete ten new public housing units, repairing our 25 public housing units, \$1.6 million towards homeownership repair and private homeowner repair as well. And we're projecting a 2023-2024 delivery of \$7.2 million into the Tlicho. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In this House, we heard so many times about strategic renewal and with the housing itself as -- you know, with the housing itself. It seems like we've been hearing about it all the time with no actions.

So, Mr. Speaker, can the Minister commit to decentralizing programs and services from Yellowknife to the Tlicho region? Thank you.

**HON. PAULIE CHINNA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you to the Member for the question as well too. I knew that I would get some questions on our strategic renewal. But it's a driving document for change for the way that housing actually works with our communities and also driving the change in relationship with the federal government as well.

I just wanted to -- just to let the Member know that the Tlicho government had established a housing action plan that identifies eight key areas that the GNWT has been working with the region. They're looking at bringing in a total of 60 new units by 2023, lot development design, development of Tlicho design housing solutions, establishing of Tlicho housing and infrastructure department, implementation of Tlicho government-Housing NWT MOU, development of Tlicho housing and maintenance programming, completion of Tlicho home assessments, and also increasing trades and apprenticeship strategy for the Tlicho government.

And, Mr. Speaker, I just want to emphasize that this is in result of working in partnership with the Indigenous governments, also recognizing the Tlicho region as a settled land claim and a self-governing Indigenous government area. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Since Tlicho government is doing a lot better than the Housing NWT for program and services so therefore, I appreciate she acknowledged that.

Can the Minister commit to improving regional decision-making authority for housing in the Tlicho? Thank you.

**HON. PAULIE CHINNA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you to the Member for the question. But I want to clarify that this working relationship is established by an MOU that was signed in May of this year, and it emphasizes on our commitment and our working relationship to develop those partnerships with Indigenous governments. This collaboration was created together with the Tlicho government and the GNWT, and they did identify establishing a housing infrastructure department in result of this working relationship that we're developing. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 1361-19(2):  
STATUS OF YUKON-NORTHWEST  
TERRITORIES COLLABORATION ON  
DEMPSTER HIGHWAY REPAIRS

**MS. SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Minister of transportation -- or Infrastructure I guess I should say. It's not the first time, but I've asked this House right from the start, about what's being done on the Dempster Highway and how -- and the Minister before has said that they're going to try to do a joint application with Yukon. This Minister now has said the same thing. So I just want to ask the Minister where are we with this joint application? What's being done because the highway is -- not just in the summer or in the spring, it's even horrible in the winter now. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**HON. DIANE ARCHIE:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, at the last sitting the Member from Inuvik Twin Lakes asked me if I would commit to meet with the Yukon government, the Minister of transportation. And I did. And we had a very good discussion in

terms of working together in partnership on the Dempster Highway. I understand there's some very rough spots. My discussions with the Minister were very favourable. So, yes, we are working together. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MS. SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And that's great to hear. So if you're working together, what are we working together to do? Are we working together to ask for a joint submission to the federal government to fix the road, our goat trail to the Yukon, or are we going to just repair certain areas? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. DIANE ARCHIE:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, you know, the Dempster Highway's been, you know, around for a number of years and, you know, it does need work. We hear comments about driving on the Northwest Territories side and the road is pretty good. And, you know, you get past the border and it is difficult. You mean, you know it's a conversation that we need to -- not only at a ministerial level but at deputy minister and ADM level as well, to work with the Yukon government. So what I've -- meeting with the minister of transportation in the Yukon, he has agreed to drive the Dempster Highway. He hasn't driven that road in a while. And I will continue to keep asking him to come up with some dates and times so that we could make this drive work and, you know, just having a look at other opportunities to get some of his staff on there. And also, I'm just looking at Premier here, we've got an invitation from the Yukon Premier to drive the Dempster Highway with me. So I'm very excited of that. He understands that there's issues happening on the Dempster Highway that we need to address. There are a number of things. There's the bridge. There's the widening. There's the embankment, there's the drains -- the list can go on. I'll use up my one minute of time if I want but I'm not. Anyways, there is a lot work, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

**MS. SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just to finish off, I -- just more of a comment. Thank you, and I look forward to the -- whatever the Premiers have to say after they get to travel that road. And hopefully they travel it winter and summer. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes. Taken as a comment. Oral questions. Member for Kam Lake.

QUESTION 1362-19(2):  
SPORT, PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND  
RECREATION FRAMEWORK

**MS. CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs in regards to the sport physical activity and recreation framework and thank you to the Member for Nunakput for also raising this today.

Mr. Speaker, my first question is MACA's 2022-2023 business plan reports that the SPAR, or Sport Physical Activity and Recreation Framework, would be finalized in 2022-2023 and implemented in 2023-2024. At this point in time, I'm not aware that MACA has, in fact, released this SPAR framework. So can the Minister clarify by what date we can expect to see the SPAR framework finalized and implemented, and will we see it in the life of the 19th Assembly? Thank you.

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

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Member's correct that MACA is currently doing engagement and has met -- or is planning to meet with sport and recreation organizations, Indigenous governments, NGOs working with underserved populations, community coaches, and territorial sport organizations. After engagement, the department will publish a "what we heard" report by June 2023 follows the release of the SPAR framework. If the engagement work advances positively, my intent is to approve the new SPAR framework this Assembly, but it will depend on what we've heard -- or what we've heard through the engagement and how much is required to address this engagement. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MS. CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, work on the SPAR framework has been significantly delayed. The RFP to develop a framework went out originally in August of 2018. A \$60,000 contract was awarded in September 2018 but then, according to the business plan, in 2020 MACA became aware of concerns that the framework didn't adequately address recommendations 87 to 91 of the TRC's final report. Those calls to action include ensuring sports policies are linked to health and well-being, providing stable funding for and access to community support programs.

So, Mr. Speaker, can the Minister provide more details on why the GNWT procured a SPAR framework that didn't account for the calls to action, and can he confirm that the updated SPAR framework, when it arrives, will actually reflect these calls to action properly? Thank you.

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, so when we brought it in 2023 [sic] prior to the pandemic, the one thing we noticed it did not identify the Truth and Reconciliation Call to Action, specifically recommendations 87 to 91. So MACA has taken this feedback and included this work we are now undertaking now to update the SPAR framework. My expectation is that specific actions will be included in the final SPAR framework. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MS. CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm very appreciative that the GNWT has a contracts website where we can easily see and kind of keep tabs on what's going on with certain contracts within the GNWT because it now appears that a new tender for the SPAR framework opened and closed in June of 2022, then it changed from closed to cancelled in September of 2022. I'm troubled by this because, luckily, I'm hearing from the Minister that this is supposed to be done, but this is really important work that's being done here. For example, when the Standing Committee on Social Development put forward their review of the Child and Family Services Act in the March 2022 sitting, one of our recommendations actually called on the government to create more activities for family and youth across the territory. This is something we've heard time and time again in all of our community engagement from the Standing Committee on Social Development. And when we received a response from the government, it actually hinged on -- sorry, Mr. Speaker. The recommendation actually hinged on the finalization of this SPAR framework. And so it is so important, not only to this House but to the people of the Northwest Territories.

So can the Minister please just confirm why the tender was cancelled and generally tell this House how MACA ensures that this work is going to be done? This work needs to be done. This work is important to the people that we all serve. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Minister responsible for MACA.

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** I would get her to write my Minister's statement because that's exactly how I feel about this.

Mr. Speaker, what happened is we went out. Nobody bid on the contract. Nobody did. So we had to cancel it because there was nobody interested. Fortunately I can say that we have somebody that's interested -- or a company that's interested. We're very happy with the people that are doing it. They already started the work. So we're hoping it's going to be successful and we're hoping that it -- like I said

this year, hopefully, be able to get this SPAR framework done and ready to go. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Colleagues, our time for oral questions has expired. 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. Minister responsible for Finance.

### Tabling of Documents

TABLED DOCUMENTS 829-19(2);  
2021-2022 PUBLIC ACCOUNTS, SECTIONS  
1, 2, 3 AND 4

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following document: 2021-2022 Public Accounts, Sections 1, 2, 3, and 4. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister. 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 and 29, Minister's Statement 264-19(2), Tabled Document 681-19(2), Tabled Document 694-19(2), and Tabled Document 613-19(2), with Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes in the chair.

### Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** Merci, Madam la Presidente. Committee wishes to deal with Tabled Document 813-19(2), 2023-2024 Main Estimates, Housing NWT. Mahsi.

**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 resume with the first item.

---SHORT RECESS

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** I now call Committee of the Whole back to order. Committee, we've agreed to consider Tabled Document 813-19(2), 2023-2024 Main

Estimates. We will now consider the estimates for the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation. Please note we consider the main estimates. I will be referring -- while we will be considering the main estimates, I will be referring to the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation rather than Housing Northwest Territories as the name has not been legally changed.

Also, please remember that the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation is included in the main estimates as an information item and the totals are not voteable. We will review these estimates as we will for all other departments; however, we will not vote on the totals.

If Members have comments or questions, they can be raised at the appropriate time. Does the Minister responsible for the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation have any opening remarks?

**HON. PAULIE CHINNA:** Yes, I do, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Go ahead.

**HON. PAULIE CHINNA:** I am here to present the 2023-2024 Main Estimates for Housing NWT. Overall, the corporation's estimates propose an increase of \$12.97 million over the 2022-2023 Main Estimates. These estimates support the mandate objectives for Housing NWT while continuing to meet the GNWT's fiscal objectives to prioritize responsible and strategic spending.

Highlights of these proposed main estimates include the following:

- \$4 million on-going allocation from the Government of the Northwest Territories to increase funding for Housing NWT's homeownership programs for private households and provide incremental operating funding to support the delivery of 100 new public housing units for the territory;
- \$121,000 of on-going forced growth funding from the Government of the Northwest Territories. This includes a \$82,000 increase in funding for inflationary increases on contributions with local housing organizations and a \$39,000 increase in funding for inflationary increases on contributions with third-party affordable housing providers being funded under the social housing agreement;
- \$3.1 million one-time internally funded allocation for forced growth requirements related to utility rate increases;

- \$3 million one-time initiative funding allocation for priority minor repairs for public housing units and replacement of public housing fuel tanks with federal funding support;
- \$1.25 million of one-time initiative funding for additional investment in the community housing support initiative program with federal funding support;
- \$500,000 of one-time Initiative funding to deliver additional maintenance management and accounting systems training for local housing organizations with federal funding support; and,
- An additional \$900,000 increase to the annual amortization expense budget to recognize additional new housing assets being brought into service.

These estimates continue to support the priority of the 19th Legislative Assembly and a vision of Budget 2023 by:

- Fostering strategic partnership, including those with federal and Indigenous governments, to increase the number of affordable homes and reduce core housing needs, especially for seniors and vulnerable persons;
- Reduce the cost of power by investing in energy efficient solutions for both new construction and repairs; and,
- Delivering increased opportunities for homeownership.

This concludes my opening remarks, Madam Chair. Mahsi.

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

**HON. PAULIE CHINNA:** Yes, I do. Thank you.

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

Minister, could you please introduce your witnesses.

**HON. PAULIE CHINNA:** Thank you, Madam Chair. To the left of me, I have Ms. Eleanor Young, president and CEO of Housing NWT. And vice-president Jim Martin, Housing NWT. Mahsi.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Committee has agreed to forego general

comments. Does committee agree to proceed to the detail contained in the tabled document?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Committee, we will defer the housing corporation summary on page 373 and review the estimates by activity summary, beginning with community housing services starting on page 377, with information items on page 378. Questions? Member for Yellowknife North.

**MR. JOHNSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I see that the housing corporation has 107 positions. Can I just get clarification whether that number includes the staff at LHOs and, if not, how many positions exist within LHOs. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Minister.

**HON. PAULIE CHINNA:** Thank you, Madam Chair. The majority of our staff are with the local housing organizations and boards in the smaller communities. I don't have a percentage in front of me. I'll have Ms. Eleanor Young elaborate on the numbers. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. President Young.

**MS. YOUNG:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Currently our local housing associations have 131.5 positions funded, and just -- currently there are 114 filled. There are a few vacancies in those positions. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MR. JOHNSON:** Yes, I guess I'll start with a comment that it would be helpful -- I know that this is a finance template -- to include those positions. I know every time we go through this you get lots of questions about where jobs are in communities. And if any of these jobs move in the Housing Corp positions in the community, we talk about it but clearly the majority of staff are in LHOs. So I think some transparency there would be helpful for everyone. But I'll leave that as a comment.

My other question is I see under community housing services, there's \$2 million approximately in property taxes and land leases. I guess I've expressed frustration at this before that I understand the housing corporation, being a corporation, pays its taxes and then MACA deals with that perhaps in a grant of lieu and then we pay lease fees to the Department of Lands. It just seems like this is \$2 million that would be better not spent the

government paying itself. Is there any efforts underway to reduce this payments for property taxes and land leases? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. PAULIE CHINNA:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Presently we do hold leases with the Department of Lands as well, and we're working together to transfer those leases. I'll have President Young elaborate on the response. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Minister. President Young.

**MS. YOUNG:** Thank you, Madam Chair. So, yes, we do have a working group with the Department of Lands with the intention of converting all leased land that's possible into fee simple. We're starting with our multi-unit builds and then gradually working towards single family dwelling lots. And we're working through a process with lands to deed those transfers so that we remove those leases from our books. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MR. JOHNSON:** Thank you. Yeah, I think that would be helpful that we just -- it seems an odd thing that the housing corp is paying lease fees to lands.

Can someone just explain to me the property taxes here? Is the housing corporation -- my understanding is that no other GNWT assets pay property tax. Good thing we have a former team of MACA here. They essentially -- we take the value of our assets and we give a grant in lieu through that formula. But can I just clarify whether the housing corporation is not part of that and, in fact, just pays property taxes? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Minister Chinna.

**HON. PAULIE CHINNA:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I will have Eleanor speak about the property taxes and exemptions. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** President Young.

**MS. YOUNG:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes, actually, we are not, under the Property Assessment Taxation Act, able to do grant in lieu. So as a corporation, we do pay property taxes. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MR. JOHNSON:** It seems like there should be some way for the housing corp to get that off their books and have it treated like all the other GNWT assets. You know, it just seems odd that we're paying ourselves tax. But I'll leave that as a comment.

I did have a couple questions about the scope of authority of LHOs. I guess I'll start with, do any of our LHOs own any assets, whether that be housing or the offices they work in or anything at all? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Minister Chinna.

**HON. PAULIE CHINNA:** Thank you, Madam Chair. The local housing authorities act on our behalf through a service agreement. We own all assets. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MR. JOHNSON:** Thank you. And I'm wondering if LHOs have the ability to manage other people's assets? I know here in Yellowknife both the city has kind of made that ask of the Yellowknife Housing Authority as well as perhaps some non-profits, obviously for money, but is that something any of our LHOs do or are able to? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Minister Chinna.

**HON. PAULIE CHINNA:** Thank you, Madam Chair. The local housing organizations are funded to provide services only for Housing NWT. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MR. JOHNSON:** Yeah, thank you. Is that something we are considering revisiting? I know, for example, the City of Yellowknife just bought an apartment building and is looking for someone to manage it. You know, the Yellowknife Housing Authority already manages hundreds of units. It probably would not be that much of an incremental cost to them to manage another unit. Are we willing to let any LHOs explore the possibility of managing other people's assets? I'll note that argument probably goes just as well for Indigenous governments who are looking to build their open housing but probably don't want to get into the maintenance of it. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. PAULIE CHINNA:** Thank you, Madam Chair. We will be looking at the service agreements, but I also want to just inform the Member as well too that we also do have a hundred unit roll out that is happening within the lifetime of this government, and we are also struggling to find the operation and maintenance for those units as well too. It's just the reality when administering low income public housing units and social programming. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MR. JOHNSON:** Thank you. And I guess in the same vein, I know the Yellowknife Housing Authority has tried to apply for funding and been told they cannot directly apply for funding or obtain federal funding or any sources of funding outside of the money they get through the housing corp. Is that something we are willing to revisit? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Minister Chinna.

**HON. PAULIE CHINNA:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Through the service agreement, they do act on our behalf. We apply for the federal funding and we provide those services to the local housing authorities. And just once again, just an example of the hundred unit roll out that has happened through the Northwest Territories, LHOs have been allocated some of those units. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MR. JOHNSON:** Yeah, I guess I'm curious as to why that -- you know, I get that they're agencies but some of them are, in fact, registered nonprofit societies and fit under federal grant applications and most certainly would be able to go get money. And, you know, the money from the feds might be something as simple as some training for staff, energy retrofits, or building housing. It just seems having another group apply for money of their own initiatives has zero downside. I get we might want to keep a bit of an eye on making sure they're not just building assets with, you know, without the maintenance funding, but there's plenty of federal funding pools out there. I'm curious why we would not let local housing organizations go out and get it. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Minister Chinna.

**HON. PAULIE CHINNA:** Thank you, Madam Chair. And just once again that this is a government arm -- I mean, an arm that supports the delivery of public housing units and through our service agreements, there are requirements that they do have to follow. We do meet with the local housing authorities should there be anything they may need additionally.

We've just went out just with our energy plan that has been tabled as well too, so looking at improvements for the local housing authorities, but they do act on our behalf. They are societies and associations, but they are an extended arm to offer programs and services on our behalf. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MR. JOHNSON:** Yeah, you know, I've said this before, I'll say it again. Either they should be arm's length and set policies on who can get into rental housing, apply for money, take on assets, or let's take those staff, bring them into the housing corporation, make them public servants, you know, are transferrable, that we can keep a track of waitlists, maintenance lists. It just seems -- I don't see any benefit to this current approach. I am of the view that giving them more authority is the way to go if we actually want local control, but. Yeah, I will try and frame that as a question.

Going forward, are we revisiting this question of, you know, whether LHOs have the proper list of responsibilities and whether perhaps, you know, allowing them to have different localized policies to their communities is in fact something we would want? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. PAULIE CHINNA:** Thank you, Madam Chair, and I appreciate the question coming forward, and I appreciate the Member asking about the local housing authorities because it could be quite complex but then I just want to mention with the strategic renewal that we are working towards those changes as well and recognizing them and also how can we improve those services a lot more better and offer these stronger programming.

I just want to just elaborate on one of my trips that I did take in to one of the communities, is that we were soon to discover that we need more funding for maintenance too, to address our public housing needs. But through those service agreements, those type of situations are addressed, and we are looking to work



towards improvement. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Are there any further questions on community housing services? Member for Frame Lake.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Madam Chair. On page 377, I think that's the page we're on, I'd like an explanation of why the heating fuel costs have gone up by two and a half, \$3 million for 2023-2024? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. PAULIE CHINNA:** Thank you, Madam Chair. That's the fuel price increase. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks. I'm sure the Minister's going to guess my next question. Does the housing corporation pay the carbon tax, and what proportion of this increase is related to the carbon tax? Thanks, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Minister Chinna.

**HON. PAULIE CHINNA:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'd have to get back to the Member. Thank you.

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** Okay. Is there a timeframe for the Minister to get back to us, and can that information be made public? Look, I'm just looking for some kind of a ballpark figure. Is it 10, 20, 30, 40, 50 percent, something like that? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. PAULIE CHINNA:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I will have that number available for the Member tomorrow. Thank you.

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Madam Chair. Yeah, I'm not sure how else I can get the Minister to agree do this in a bit more timely fashion and make the information public, but if I don't get the information and it's not been made public I'll ask her on the floor of the House.

So the next line here, minor modernization and improvements, is going up by a little over \$2 million. Can I get an explanation as to what the

additional funding is for and what it's going to accomplish. Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. PAULIE CHINNA:** Thank you, Madam Chair. This is for the replacement and the priority repairs for public housing. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** Okay, thanks. Does the Minister have any information that she can make public on wait times, by community, for public housing? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. PAULIE CHINNA:** Thank you, Madam Chair. The numbers do vary, and I just want to just express through one of my community visits that I did have, the wait time was between three and seven years. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** Wow, three to seven years to get into public housing, that's pretty appalling. I don't know what to say.

I think this is part of the housing corporation that also helps people get into homeownership. One of the I think biggest barriers, or growing barriers for homeownership, is insurance. You know, look, I'll confess, I live in Yellowknife, my riding is in Yellowknife, but I, you know, had several constituents contact me over the last year about the difficulty of trying to get home insurance in Yellowknife let alone, you know, regional centres or the smaller communities. So what is NWT Housing Corporation doing about this problem, this barrier to homeownership? Thanks, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Member. I think that goes under programs and district operation. This is LHO, public housing. But if the Minister has the answer, I'll...

**HON. PAULIE CHINNA:** Okay. Thank you, Madam Chair. There has been conversations going back and forth with the Department of Finance to address the insurance issue. I don't have a solution for that, and I do understand that it is quite complex. I do come from a smaller community as well too, and to get home insurance is quite difficult. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** Yeah, thanks, Madam Chair. Well, that seems to be one of the hottest potatoes here is this problem with home insurance. I raised it with the Department of Finance. I even made suggestions about looking at the Government of Saskatchewan insurance program because they actually provide insurance outside of Saskatchewan for homeowners in some of the provinces but nobody seems to want to actually do anything about this. And the reason I guess why I raised it is in the activity description, homeownership programs are mentioned here but I guess I'm not going to get any answers from the Minister on this either. Thanks, Madam Chair. That's it.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Questions? Member for Kam Lake.

**MS. CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I wanted to start off just in regards to a question that the MLA for Yellowknife North asked. It was in regards to operations and maintenance concerns for LHOs being able to purchase their own -- essentially enter into their own mortgages and source their own funding agreements to be able to really contribute to improving and increasing the housing landscape -- or the number of houses in the Northwest Territories and the number of homes. And one of the things that they do in BC through Indigenous Housing BC is they actually have the O and M of all of the units built into the mortgages. And they've had tremendous amount of success with this and so I just wanted to point to that solution there.

But one of the questions that I have in regards to community housing is the housing corporation is, thankfully, in the process of doing a government renewal right now, and that was in response to a motion that was put forward by this side of the House. And I have to say a huge thank you to the housing corporation because it was probably the motion that was most positively responded to in the lifetime of this Assembly and became an actual clear action item for the other side of the House. So kudos to housing corporation for taking that on. But my concern is that the roll out is supposed to happen on April 1st for this new suite of policies, and I'm wondering is there funding within this budget, and would it be within community housing services, to provide the training and communication material that not only LHOs will need but also the people of the Northwest Territories who use public housing services? They're going to need to understand how the rules and policies that

govern their housing are changing and how they fit within that. And so I'm wondering -- I'll leave it at that. So is there funding for training within this budget for LHOs? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Minister Chinna.

**HON. PAULIE CHINNA:** Thank you, Madam Chair. We are funding those changes through our existing budget. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MS. CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. So Madam Chair, I'm wondering why the housing corporation would not ask for more money to take that on when, from what it looks like from this side of the House, is housing corporation is already trying to stretch a budget, a very thin budget, farther than they can. And this House has been asking, since the beginning of the 19th Assembly, to please, please, please ask us for more money. We want to give more money to housing. Please, let us pay you. Let us on this side of the House say yes, we agree with the budget that's being asked for by housing corporation.

And so I have huge concern with the housing corporation stretching their existing dollars to pay for this training. And I guess my next question is will the housing corporation be producing resources for the people of the Northwest Territories to ensure that they are able to be connected to the services of the rest of the government? Because that's where this started from, was a need for the housing corporation to recognize its place in the social envelope departments of GNWT and to provide those connections to its residents that require other services from other government departments to make sure that they have a fair shot at establishing stable housing. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Minister Chinna.

**HON. PAULIE CHINNA:** Thank you, Madam Chair. And thank you to the Member for the question as well too. I really appreciate these comments coming forward as well. And I just wanted to mention that since the renewal, we were able to conduct workshops with the local housing authorities, the district offices, and the maintenance as well too, and identifying areas of improvement and training. I'll have Ms. Eleanor Young just elaborate on the response as well. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. President Young.

**MS. YOUNG:** Thank you, Madam Chair. And I'll just give a couple examples but mention some of the other work that we are doing.

We are in the process of preparing a tenant handbook, you know, which would also be available online, which would be a tool for how to, you know, support successful tenancy; you know, to overcome some of the issues that we have encountered working with tenants. But also, we need to train our staff to be able to have those conversations one-on-one. So it will also involve staff training. And getting to some of the examples that the Member mentions, you know, also training our staff on how to access or where programs and services exist within the other social envelope departments so that if they recognize an issue but it's not something that housing itself has the solution to but we know that there is, whether it's mental health support, other types of support that the client may need, just making sure that our folks know where that access point is and how to do that. And without getting too far into it, this is also a key part of the homelessness conversation because we're having the same conversations there on how to work together to make sure that we're supporting clients to get the programs and services that they need. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Member for Kam Lake. Are there any further questions on community housing services? Member for Deh Cho.

**MR. BONNETROUGE:** Mahsi, Madam Chair. I'm wondering about your O and M costs. You were talking about it a bit there. There could be a lot in there; I'm not sure what's all entailed in there. I'm just wondering if the O and M costs, if the majority are having to pay utilities versus others. If you could answer that. Mahsi.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Minister Chinna.

**HON. PAULIE CHINNA:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'll have President Young respond. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. President Young.

**MS. YOUNG:** Thank you, Madam Chair. So, yes, of course a huge component of the O and M costs for public housing units is utilities. I think right now when we are budgeting, we're estimating about \$21,000 a year for a unit to be operated. And most of that is utilities. And, of course, with increased utility rates we are seeing increases in those costs significantly. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Member for Deh Cho.

**MR. BONNETROUGE:** Mahsi for that. So I guess CMHC, when they put a deadline of the year 2038 to cut O and M funding, I guess they're looking at a business model in the sense that we're not generating any revenue to cover the costs for ourselves. So I see where CMHC is coming from there. But at the same time, we don't see Housing NWT as a business model but a social program. I'm wondering if you could just maybe elaborate on that. Mahsi.

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

**HON. PAULIE CHINNA:** Thank you, Madam Chair. And thank you to the Member for the question. I want to just respond to the operation and maintenance cost, that we do have several service agreements within Housing NWT as well and we do have to become very strategic when we're looking at generating income for the operation and maintenance and for the programming within housing. For an example, I just want to point out the almost completion of the RCMP units where we will be generating a little over a million annually that will go right back into public housing. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Member for Deh Cho.

**MR. BONNETROUGE:** Mahsi for that. Yes, you're not generating enough anyways in business and I always mention that we treat housing, in our communities anyways, as a social program because of the fiduciary responsibility of the federal government to First Nations to provide housing. And that's the premise that we go on. I realize that too as a private homeowner, I pay for my own fuel and now the cost has jumped from, you know, 1.90s previously, now it's over \$2. I don't know, \$2 and something per litre, so that's becoming significant. And it's going to, you know, only increase to your heating fuels. So I'm wondering if there's -- like, I can't believe myself too, when I see the federal government programs with your copayment ones and the rapid housing initiatives, Number 1, where they're just pumping them out really quickly, but at the same time they're not thinking about the greenhouse gas emissions through the use of fuels. That's really surprising that they'll throw out their programs yet not follow their own directives, you know, related to climate change as we should be ourselves. So, you know, I don't know why they don't incorporate, whether it's solar power or a wood pellet boiler system or different source of alternate energy into their designs and into their systems that they pump

out. Even the housing corporation right now is pumping out units into the communities. I think I have -- I know I got a four-plex or singles units coming up. There's nothing in that regard there. We're looking at two more duplexes coming into our community. I don't see anything there. It doesn't seem like the corporation wants to help the whole government probably save on utility costs. And I'm wondering if there's any outlook in the near future to, you know, incorporating these designs and these initiatives into your new designs. Mahsi.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Minister Chinna.

**HON. PAULIE CHINNA:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Prior to these units being delivered, there was significant changes being made and the design that was put forward are energy efficient designs as well. And we are looking at how can we further look at the cost savings right through building our units. And one of the other things that we have done as well too is with our unit delivery, we have taken part in a consultation throughout the Northwest Territories as well too, when building these units, when communities are going to be receiving a new unit be constructed, there is those conversations that do happen. They are a part of our design conversation as well too. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Member for Deh Cho.

**MR. BONNETROUGE:** Mahsi, Madam Chair. Yeah, I know that the Minister talks a lot like that, saying that yeah, they're incorporated, they're in this design, they're in that design. When they come to our communities, the units, we don't see that. And I say the price of diesel has gone over \$2. I don't think it's ever -- may never come down the way things are going. Even my landlord, they just raised the rent for my place and I'm asking why are you -- you know, increasing the rent? And they state well, cost of living. That's the landlord. What about that little person that has to pay that rent? They have to deal with the cost of living too. And I've been trying to get housing corporation to really start an aggressive campaign and start looking at alternate energy sources because either way, you know, you take out 240-volt electric hot water heater and put 110-volt oil fire electric heater, you don't win either way because now you've gone to diesel. You're burning more diesel than anything. And housing corporation should start from all their offices in all the communities and start incorporating wood pellet boilers and start from there. And like I've always said, put a cluster into one. What is

preventing housing corporation from doing such an initiative? Mahsi.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Minister Chinna.

**HON. PAULIE CHINNA:** Thank you, Madam Chair. And I just wanted -- you know, right now the energy strategy is out for consultation. We do have it all over Facebook. We did put this in the newspaper as well too. So we do have the public to engage. And I think the consultation is for two weeks I want to say? I think we're supposed to be receiving that, I want to say back on the -- I think it closes on the 28th of February. And in looking at the energy strategy as well too, we are looking at the fuel tank replacements for all public housing units as well too and making sure that they're upgraded in their fuel efficiency and whatever. And also the biomass projects. I think we have -- I don't have the communities in front of me right now but there was about eight communities that were listed that received those energy savings initiatives. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Member for Deh Cho.

**MR. BONNETROUGE:** Mahsi, Madam Chair. Mahsi to the Minister for that. I don't think it's really getting to the crux of what I'm getting at, is to incorporate the systems into communities. Let's save our housing corporation from destroying the old public housing picture in the Northwest Territories by 2038. Let's try to help to extend that. Let's incorporate solar panels or electric hot water -- for hot water heating, whatever source we can get, and also incorporate wood pellet boiler systems which, so far, makes sense. They do. I'm telling you. I've done a unit and I've said it so many times. We've done one. When I worked as a project officer, we incorporated into our school in Fort Providence. It went from a 3000 a litre burning unit -- fuel burning unit to less than 500 litres per month after the installation of a wood pellet boiler system. And it's running full bore all the time. When you get 40 below, 35, 40 below --

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** -- Member, your time has expired.

Are there questions? Member for Monfwi.

**MS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Thank you. Thank you, Madam Chair. Since we're on training and support workshops, I'm just looking at here, the 254, is that going to be enough money to make up for the years that -- from 2021-2022 we only had three? Like, is it -- because it lapsed and it's, like -- are we going to make up for it? Are we on the right page? 379?

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Is that training and support workshops? Yes. Yes, okay. Minister Chinna.

**HON. PAULIE CHINNA:** Sorry, can the Member repeat her question. Sorry.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Member for Monfwi.

**MS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Sorry about that. 254 allocated for this fiscal year, I'm just asking if it's going to be enough to make up for the year 2021-2022, there was only three and it's lapsed. Like, aren't we, like -- I'm just trying to ask if it's enough to make up for the years that we lost due to COVID?

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Minister Chinna.

**HON. PAULIE CHINNA:** Thank you, Madam Chair. And during that time, we did hold a lot of -- oh, what is it that -- not the face-to-face, what is it -- virtual. Virtual meetings as well too in connecting with the local housing authorities and with staff. But looking at the 254, I'll have President Young elaborate on that number as well because it does seem quite low. We are trying to put forward our strategic renewal as well. And I know there's a number of training upgrades that we need to provide to our staff. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. President Young.

**MS. YOUNG:** Thank you, Madam Chair. And like everyone else, we're trying to balance our numbers. And so one of our intentions here is we do access other funding sources as well for training and workshops. So we will use this money and leverage other funding sources as well to be able to stretch it as far as we can. But we also recognize that our LHO staff in particular, the ones that are key to doing training, also have day jobs. So we need to be able to work with them to schedule training and allow them the time to do the other work that they've got to do. So, you know, we do try to work with them as best as possible to line this up, deliver it so that it can be done as cost effectively as possible and be able to deliver the training they need. So I think at this point, we think that it's enough money and we will apply for additional funds if necessary. But I think we will also, as part of the renewal, be tracking things like this to see if we need to change those investments, you know. If as we start this model of working more closely with Indigenous governments and LHOs, if we need to shift some of that thinking, then we can do so.

As you've heard, our associate that talks about renewal, the renewal is just the start of an ongoing improvement plan and we'll be monitoring these things on an annual basis. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Yes, thank you. I'm glad that they mention that. But, you know, especially in my region, Tlicho region, we are in housing crisis. We have lots of housing that are sitting vacant, like, for many years. And it's not just that. There are some other houses in the community that are occupied by tenants and they keep complaining that there's all kind of issues with the unit. And they keep calling the LHO office, but they don't have the capacity, so. And some of them they don't have the training to do the job.

And I know that we need to -- we need to help our locals to get the training that they need, you know, so that they can do the job. And there's a lot of them. And they're getting younger, some of these staff. So I think what we should do is that yes, if 254 isn't enough then we need do more to help build up our local youth that are working for the departments. But not only that, the administrations need a lot of work because like I was saying before in my Member's statement, some of the arrears that occurred, it is from -- they are basing the rent on last year's income. And nobody comes and work with the tenants. Only once a year or once their notice of assessment comes in, then many of these tenants are given a huge bill. And some of them are not working. Last year maybe they worked; this year they're not working. And so that's how a lot of rent accumulated. And even Tlicho region alone, we have like \$1.4 million arrears. And that's probably based on the administration because nobody is contacting these tenants.

And it's not from not paying rent alone but it's just that once -- you know, like, once they gather all the information and in July/August, some of the people they start calling and saying I just got \$14,000 bill, you know, housing bill. And they're still paying max. So these are subsidized housing; these are social housing. And it's -- I don't think, you know, it's -- I don't see it as a social housing if you're getting the tenants to pay max. If it is subsidized, then what they should do is that they should be working with the local based on the current income. Last year income, yes, there was -- yes, it was a good year for employment but this year it's not so all those things have to be taken into consideration when they're doing this.

So I know that that's where a lot of arrears have occurred. So in administration, at the

administration level, there needs to be more training provided for the LHO office and also for the trades, for the young people that are working there. We need to build them up. We need more than just -- like here, you know one position is sunset. Like, and I know in my region in Behchoko we don't have that many staff working there to accommodate to work on over 200 public units. And we only have few staff, you know.

So I know they need to do a better job. Not only that too, and so I heard the president said about handbook, tenant's handbook. That's good. It's good they have that, you know. But 2018 status report for the GNWT for my region, we have the low literacy rate. We have the low graduation rate. If that is low, how do you expect these people to read? Is it going to be written in Tlicho language too as well or the administration team, are they going to be going around to the Tlicho community or to the people and tell them and explain to them what the handbook is about? How are they going to accommodate? How are they going to implement this? Like, what are they going to do? Like, just give it out and then just -- it's going to be forgotten. So how are they going to -- I just want to know how they're going to carry out, you know, like delivering the handbook.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Minister Chinna.

**HON. PAULIE CHINNA:** Thank you, Madam Chair. And thank you to the Member for her question. I was just consulting with President Young because we do have the renewal that is coming out as well too -- I mean that has been established. And I do have Jamie Fulford that is here as well so I'm just wondering to switch out the witnesses so he could speak on behalf of the strategic renewal as well with the training and the aspects with it. Is that all right?

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Okay. Sergeant-at-arms, please switch the witnesses.

Thank you. Go ahead, Minister Chinna.

**HON. PAULIE CHINNA:** Thank you, Madam Chair. And I just wanted to speak about the community liaison officer as well too that we've been working with the Tlicho government. So that is going to be funded still for the Tlicho government through our community initiatives project. So that position is still there. It didn't eliminate it. It didn't go -- cancel or anything.

The thing -- I also wanted to speak about the trades concerns that you do have. I have seen it throughout the Northwest Territories. I have been to one of my communities where 75 units and one apprenticeship -- I mean, one maintenance person. And, you know, then it results in a lot of declining administration for these units as well and it does end up costing us quite a bit in the future. But recruiting maintenance people has honestly been a challenge throughout the Northwest Territories.

And also the training for administration, I hear you on that. And through the renewal, these have been identified and there's been a lot of consultation that has been happening, and I did, you know, keep my feet to the ground I guess in making sure that people knew about this renewal that was coming up; we did get the comments that were required out there as well. Language has been identified as well. And in respect I hear where the Member's coming from and understanding that, you know, the Tlicho language is very strong in her riding. I'm looking at further translation documents as well too and also providing further training to our local housing authority and our staff as well too to look at more client-based training. And I look forward to these changes as this renewal is more -- with more emphasis on it. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. And the time has expired for the Member for Monfwi. But if Mr. Fulford has anything to add to the question that was asked, then if you want to just answer that now and then we'll move on to Member for Thebacha. Thank you.

**MR. FULFORD:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I can elaborate a little bit more on the tenant orientation handbook that the president referred to. And I think it's important to note that this came out of the review we had with the Council of Leaders housing working group, and it was noted that, you know, not all of our tenants are going to have English as a first language. So we specifically noted that there would likely be a need for Indigenous language support there. So that's one of the pieces. And to develop it in plain language so that those who do understand English, at least it'll be in a plain language format. It was recognized that some of our materials in the past haven't always been at a standard that communicates well what we're trying to communicate with our tenants in that easily understandable manner. So that's been a thread throughout the whole renewal process.

And if I may just add one more of the proposed changes that's come out of the renewal process, and that's a tenant support program

that we're hoping to begin piloting, and it's based on a program called Rent Smart that started off in BC. Nunavut has done a pilot. And it's about trying to provide tenants with the tools to maintain their tenancies. And that's actually delivered in person. So it's not here's a book and read it. It's to try and get people to develop those skills to maintain their tenancy because that's one of the things that we want to do, we want to see success in our tenants. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. I'll move on to Member for Thebacha.

**MS. MARTSELOS:** Thank you, Madam Chair. First of all, we have 2900 rental housing units in 33 communities. Could you tell me how many units are located in Yellowknife and then I could sort of figure out the 33 communities, please. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Minister Chinna.

**HON. PAULIE CHINNA:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm pretty sure I may have the number in my binder but it's in my desk. Just a second.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Did you have a next question, and then we'll get back to that one, Member for Thebacha.

**MS. MARTSELOS:** I just want to make sure that I don't lose time waiting for them to find the answer.

I also would like to know about the homeownership program. How many homeownership programs have gone to individuals in the entire NWT is my second question, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Minister Chinna.

**HON. PAULIE CHINNA:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I don't have the percentage in front of me but the last number that I was given was 56. 56 percent in the territory were entered into the homeownership programming. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MS. MARTSELOS:** Madam Chair, is 56 percent of the 2900 units?

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

**HON. PAULIE CHINNA:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Correction. 56 applications. Sorry, thank you.

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

**MS. MARTSELOS:** Of the 2900 units, there's only 56 applicants, and most of them will be subject to a means test and all these other things and so that's not a very good rate of success. But, you know, I looked at that whole renewal initiative. It sounds great. But there's one important part that is missing from that renewal program, and that's the Seniors Aging with Dignity program. You know, we talk about this in the House. We talk about our seniors all the time. And that hasn't been addressed in the renewal initiative. And I'm going to be doing a statement on that tomorrow. But I just want to make sure that, you know, we have to do what we preach, and I don't see that happening here.

I also want to -- there was a comment made by the Minister just a couple minutes ago that the RCMP revenue for the new homes that we're getting is one million a year, around one million; is that correct?

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

**HON. PAULIE CHINNA:** Thank you, Madam Chair. That is correct approximately a little over one million, and the agreement is for 50 years. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MS. MARTSELOS:** Ok that's a really bad deal. We are -- we're -- you know, that is not a business -- Madam Chair, that's not a business transaction because it sounds like if it's 50 years and one million, that's \$50 million, and most of those houses are costing from 1.3 in the South Slave to whatever in the -- further up. So, really, it's not a really good solid business revenue decision. Who made that decision? Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Minister Chinna.

**HON. PAULIE CHINNA:** Thank you, Madam Chair. The funding was provided by Department of Justice and by the federal government for us to build, and we are to operate and maintain and we will be accumulating the \$50 million over the 50 years approximately. We did not build those units on our own. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MS. MARTSELOS:** Well, that's not my understanding, Madam Chair. I think that the housing corp has a kind of a lease back

pay -- payment to the Government of the Northwest Territories for building these homes. And the cost of building each unit, whether it be a duplex or whatever, is much more than that. For \$1 million revenue a year for the amount that has gone out, that is not a good business deal, Madam Chair. True or false?

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

**HON. PAULIE CHINNA:** Thank you, Madam Chair. At that time, the opportunity was for us to build on behalf of the federal government. And at that time, I never made the decision but, you know, I can see how housing has to be very strategic in trying to generate revenue with our limited budget that we do see and as we go forward. I cannot predict what this is going to look like but for the time being right now, we are going to be in a lease arrangement, and we will be generating that amount of funding from the RCMP units. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MS. MARTSELOS:** Madam Chair, when you do a business deal like this, you always look for profit. And we are no different, okay. The Government of the Northwest Territories settles for something that is less business oriented and goes with what the federal government -- and those specs for those houses were over the top. It's almost like building a -- you know, something that's going to happen within a war zone or something. That's how bad the specs were. There was no collaboration with the Government of the Northwest Territories on the specs, and the prices went up. I'm not blaming anybody that had to build them, but the revenues are not there. To me, it's a bad business deal. True or false? Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Member. I'll pass it on to the Minister but just so Members are all aware, we are on community housing. This is for LHOs within the department. So Minister.

**HON. PAULIE CHINNA:** Thank you, Madam Chair. And I appreciate the Member and the background in business that she does have as well too. But with this agreement that we do have, we are going to be -- we do have the open relationship with the federal government to reviewing this lease every five years as well too. And looking at the way that the units were built and designed, that was provided by the federal government. And I'll just leave it at that. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MS. MARTSELOS:** While we're on this subject, you know, I would -- Madam Chair, I would really appreciate if the housing corp would adopt a policy where they're more client-based rather than administrative-based. You know, we're serving people that -- most of the people are either underprivileged, or have many problems with addictions, many things that happened with residential school, and we seem to be more administrative-based. And, you know, this should be a client-based department. I just want to ask if that's true or false. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Minister Chinna.

**HON. PAULIE CHINNA:** Thank you, Madam Chair. And I just want to go back just a few questions ago. 345 units is what we have here in Yellowknife, public housing units.

And looking at becoming more client-based, that is a part of our renewal and for us to be more client-focused and working more strategically, I want to say, throughout the Northwest Territories. I'll have Mr. Jamie Fulford elaborate on the response as well. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Mr. Fulford. Thank you, Madam Chair. I'd just take a few steps further and say that moving in the direction of being more client-focused because as a process is a lynch pin of the renewal process. You'll see in the new mandate that committee saw earlier, and that was subsequently adopted early in 2022, that a value around client centeredness was identified. So one of six values that was identified that we thought had to be the focus of Housing NWT.

I've heard maybe questions earlier about what that means in terms of training LHOs because it takes some training; it takes some resources in some cases to get around to that point, and we're alive to that. We're reviewing the service agreement with LHOs with a view to getting more of their input this time around. In the past, it's been more of a template agreement. So we know that there are some of the changes that we're doing. They may require some additional resources and, as the president said, we would have to then seek the Minister's authority to come forward for additional funding for those. But we're content that we're moving in this direction. We've had not only this House tell us that. We've had the Ombud tell us that. We've had reports tell us that. And that all went into the renewal strategy and that's why we're



moving in this direction. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Committee, we'll move on to Member for Great Slave.

**MS. NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I just wanted to come back to the sort of training manual and move towards that empowering, I guess, clients to do repairs. And even as a homeowner myself, I could definitely use some help in, you know, how to keep maintaining my home better.

So my question, is there any move with this renewal or this client focus to bring back the idea of superintendents or people that are living within the public housing units that are then responsible more for, like, maintaining? So what would be a super back in the day they would call it, so somebody that lives in the building that then is responsible for maintenance and upkeep and sort of being that contact point between the department. And not necessarily being an employee but maybe getting a bit of a discount and that kind of a program. And I think it fits in well with this idea of sort of offering training to clients to do home repairs themselves. If you had sort of one person on site who has that kind of skill set and then is getting a little bit of a break, it creates almost a community and a network around repairs.

And then that comes back to the comment I made to the vice-president when he toured with me at Norseman was the sense of ownership. And I think that's what's missing in a lot of the buildings is that people don't take pride in where they're living because it's not their place. So I think that kind of a system may give that ownership back to the residents that then would, you know, perhaps cause a better uptake or upkeep of the building. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. PAULIE CHINNA:** Thank you, Madam Chair. And it's just -- it's quite interesting because I've had this conversation throughout the territory as well too, and we're looking at unique positions. And I just wanted to just identify the one in Behchoko where we're identifying a community liaison position. But the aspects of that position is to basically include what the Member has spoken about as well. We need to improve that communication. We need to improve that pride between the tenants and their units as well too and also providing them the training. So through the renewal, I'm looking at changes going forward on how we could

better communicate that and become more creative with positions that would try to work to eliminating those barriers. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MS. NOKLEBY:** Thank you. And, yeah, I'm curious to see what the -- there's a lot of -- like, it's in the government renewal and then, you know, we have to sort of wait. And I mean I get that we're not going to see that in likely the term of this Assembly. So I'm hopeful that it's actually going to be tangible on-the-ground things instead of a great idea that just really doesn't go anywhere. So then I guess that kind of leads in again to sort of my next area of question is around the apprenticeships.

Again, I know that there's sort of a more formalized apprenticeship type program that comes along with the people doing the repairs in the department; however, maybe is there something in between where it's not like a formalized apprenticeship program but it is an area where maybe young people can come and use housing projects to get, you know, a feel for whether or not they're interested in carpentry or boiler mechanics, which I really struggle that any child is going to want to get into boiler mechanics. But, you know, I think there's an opportunity here when people or youth are identified in the community to have almost like a tag along type of program. And not just one day of the year but actually can go and work alongside or observe people doing repairs and getting themselves more interested in that field, and then maybe that will solve some of our future problems around having these types of workers available. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Minister Chinna.

**HON. PAULIE CHINNA:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm quite excited for these set of questions because, you know, it just really changes the way that I want to see housing provide their programming and moving us more into a social program as well too. And I just want to go back to the community initiative funding program that was created in the last government by the Premier, that this has become very creative and a number of communities have actually wanted a position similar to what the Member has been describing. So I just wanted to comment on that.

And the other is the trades as well too. We've worked in some of the communities where we've had summer students and casual employees come up and see them through the

apprenticeship programming. And we do fund, at the headquarters level, 12 positions, but then also the LHOs do receive funding within their budget as well. But it's really challenging to find the commitment. The commitment and to keep the positions.

The other thing I just want to quickly comment on -- I'm just going to be cautious of the time as well -- is that we build these into our contracts as well too, to making sure that we do get the community members experienced on site and as these builds are being rolled out that they do gain employment. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MS. NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I think that one of the things that I'm realizing, and I'm hearing from my colleagues, is there is a bit of a disconnect between LHOs and what they're telling people out there and sort of, I think, the direction and the want of the department. Like, it's my understanding these opportunities just really aren't available in all of the communities. And one of my colleagues just mentioned that to me. Also I have had instances where I have communications with the department about a client or a constituent's file, and then what they're being told from the LHO side is much different. And I think it comes back to what a lot of what my colleagues were talking about, and that's having the, you know, culturally appropriate and trained Indigenous workers actually working in the department versus a very -- what comes across was a very patriarchal colonial type method for dealing with people. And I think there's an element of compassion missing because when people are at a point where they're reaching out and trying to get help, and particularly to the LHO when it's your housing, your secure place to put your head at night and get a good night's sleep, there is a lot of what feels like abuse or disrespect or even racism in the responses that are coming back to people from the LHOs. So I don't know that I have a huge amount of a question in there other than I just really wanted to make sure that, you know, the Minister and the department are aware that while you may be telling us all this, I'm not sure it's translating to the LHOs and the LHAs. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge):** Thank you, Member. Minister Chinna.

**HON. PAULIE CHINNA:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm going to try to be very quick. But I appreciate the question coming forward as well because I've heard this a number of times throughout the Northwest Territories on our client service, and it's one of the areas I'm looking for significant improvement. And I've

brought this back to the department that we need to improve our own communication between headquarters, a district office and the LHOs, and really understanding the priorities of that service agreement. So with the strategic renewal, I know the Members may get tired of hearing of it but it's the guiding document for us to continue those changes going forward and to show that we are committed to improving housing and the way that we deliver housing throughout the Northwest Territories.

And very quickly if I could get President Young just to elaborate on the trades positions. There is something exciting happening here in Yellowknife I just wanted her to elaborate very quickly on. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Minister. President Young.

**MS. YOUNG:** Thank you, Madam Chair. And just to expand a little bit, we are -- here in Yellowknife, we have a trades program through the high school with the Yellowknife Housing Authority. But something the Minister mentioned, and I think it is one of the tools that we have that we are trying to use to change the direction that we're talking about, the community housing support initiative, we are finding ways to work with Indigenous governments, LHOs, to try to find a different way to get things done. You know, whether it's fixing furnaces in communities, whether it's doing repairs for homeowners, whether it's doing pre-trades for lack of a better word, work with students, you know, to build shacks for people. Like, we're trying to be creative and do what the local government, what the Indigenous government would like us to try to do, and trying to be flexible with that program so that we can do innovative things with the communities. So we're trying to move a step in that direction. It does take time. But as the Minister said, you know, baby steps, but the other thing is then sharing that information with other LHOs so that they get the ideas and can share them around and maybe what has been done in Fort Good Hope is a great model for, you know, another community to use. So that's really important too, and that's part of our reasons for managers meetings, board meetings, to be able to share some of those innovative ideas that we do. Thanks, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Member for Nunakput.

**MR. JACOBSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. You know, just in regards to LHOs and the training, I guess sometimes I think our staff forget who they're working for. We work for the people of the Northwest Territories and all,

everybody. There should be no favoritism, should just come and serve them and good enough. And I think that should go a long way in regards to that, in regards to staff training again. It has to be looked into. My office is getting too many complaints in regards to that.

And another one is in regards to the -- I guess the increase in heating fuel across. And would that come into effect in regards to raising our rental scale being increased for the people across the Northwest Territories? Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Minister Chinna.

**HON. PAULIE CHINNA:** Thank you, Madam Chair. And thank you to the Member for that. And like I had said, staff training is a priority as well too, and we need to do a better job of getting out there and really connecting with the local housing authorities, district offices, and to be supporting them in a better capacity.

I just wanted to talk about the heating fuel, that we do have an increase in our budget here to address heating fuel. There hasn't been any conversation about increasing rent due to inflation. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MR. JACOBSON:** Madam Chair, in regards to the, I guess, inflation in regards to the rental scale, if this carbon tax goes through, there will be an increase. I'll guarantee it. And we're going to be wearing it if that comes up in regards to accepting that Bill C-60. And I think that before it goes to -- I guess brought up into the floor of the House in regards to that, I mean, we have to look at all aspects of what the increase is going to be to our constituents and the cost inflation on everything right across the board. I think the Minister -- I think you should really talk to our staff in regards to that because I'll guarantee you next year this time they're going to be coming back with increases over the year. So that being said, the programs that -- that's a comment.

But the programs that we are giving with the housing, the homeownership programs, I had a constituent for two and a half -- almost two and a half years trying to get stuff sorted out. I've been going back and forth with the Minister's office and I'm -- hopefully it's finally done. I never heard from my client so I'm assuming it's done. And I just wish it would be a lot better service in regards to providing service and getting things done, you know. We only had 56 applicants out of 2900 homes. You know, it shouldn't take two years, two and a half years almost, of our time.

You know, getting calls. I wear it just like the Minister. I had to wear it. I stuck up for the department. I'm working, I'm working with it, but it takes that long and I'm hoping it's dealt with now. I haven't had no call back.

And that being said, another one is you know when our community leaders come into the community -- or come into Yellowknife for meetings with our Minister, if any of our Ministers, and they're saying they're going to follow up with them, follow up with them because I wear it too. Again, trying to -- I take the shots just like with the government in regards to when they don't follow through with their meetings or what they promise in regards to any kind of the programs that they're doing, we have to -- we push and push and push until, you know, you can't -- you don't even want to talk about it. But you're still getting heck on the other side of the phone saying what's going on here; why aren't they doing this? So any of my Ministers across there, you're saying something to one of -- you know, any of our mayors or community corp chairs or whatever, please, please do your job. Get your staff -- you have enough staff to help you to get your job done. But that's, like -- you know, I can go on and on. I'm not satisfied with this department. I mean, I'm telling you, Madam Chair. We're hurting. Communities need houses. All I've been hearing out of this whole two years, two and a half years since COVID, how -- one was COVID. Two, now we try to build houses. The announcement keeps coming over and over and over. Where's the houses? Announcement's there through the federal government. Nothing. Show me the houses. Like, you drive down -- if you're down south, you see all these houses on the side of the road. Get them, buy them all, bring them up. It's a -- you know, you want houses. That's the way you're going to do it. CMHC too. CMHC's all lip service. We had them up in Tuk a few years ago, those guys. They come in. They listen. They say same thing. They'll promise you the world until they jump on that plane and leave the community. Nothing. No follow through. And that's got to stop here. Tired of lip service. We need houses. Communities need houses. We need service. Serve us, please. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Member. I didn't hear any question in there. Did you have any questions left for the Minister?

**MR. JACOBSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm really -- I'm passionate about my people. They're suffering in regards to small communities. We got people that are homeless. That's another question. How many houses do we have under the homeless shelter -- shelters in the community for homeless people right now

in my riding? Do we have houses allocated furnished and ready to go? Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge):** Thank you. Minister of Housing.

**HON. PAULIE CHINNA:** Thank you, Madam Chair. And thank you to the Member for his comments as well too. And I hear where he's coming from, and I just -- you know, I want to comment on CMHC is that, you know, with those federal programs going out, we've seen a lot of success throughout the Northwest Territories because we're working with Indigenous governments. And right now we haven't -- the department has met with IRC but there hasn't been any federal submission submitted, and there's been no partnership in that aspect as to putting those co-investment or those re-AP applications going forward.

We do have a housing delivery in Nunakput. I just don't have those housing deliveries in front of me right now. And then also looking at the -- that our response in working with the tenant and the client in his riding, that is pretty much finalized, and my apologies that it had taken almost three years to close up that file. There was a lot of back and forth that had happened. But then that's pretty much going to be finalized in the next few weeks here.

And also looking at their rent increase, that hasn't been a discussion that we've been having here for inflation. Our units and our houses are low income and social programming. We haven't even thought about that to be honest, to be raising the rent and looking at rent calculations differently.

And then also for the homelessness initiatives as well too in Nunakput, we've had conversations with local governments, but we haven't had any follow through that, you know, are there NGOs, who are we going to be working with, who do we fund. It just hasn't been -- the engagement there hasn't been as strong as it has been throughout the rest of the territory. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Member for Nunakput.

**MR. JACOBSON:** Madam Chair, no. Just in regards to that, the Minister brought up our regional governments and working together. The biggest problem that we do have is who do we -- how do we hold them accountable? They get the money. Nothing being built. IRC is sitting on funds to build units. How do we hold them accountable? I could hold my Minister accountable but how do we hold and work with the IRC, I guess, to hold them accountable to

build the units that they're required to build with the money they got sitting in a bank account. And I don't want to bring it up here but, you know, we're frustrated. The community leaders, I'm frustrated. We're trying to get units into the community. All I see is lip service from the federal government announcing things over and over again but nothing. You know, it's got to stop. Just give us some houses, please and thank you. Not hard. Spend the money. You're sitting on it. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Member. Did you have any questions left over for this Minister?

**MR. JACOBSON:** No, I don't. Thanks.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Member for Nunakput. Did you have anything final to say under this section to the Members, to Member's comments?

**HON. PAULIE CHINNA:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I can follow up with the Member as well too on what we've been doing in Nunakput as well. I'll follow up with him separately. And then also with the distinction based funding that the Indigenous groups have had, we are in the same boat as well too in trying to understand what are they delivering and looking at our community housing plans, how can we better work with the Indigenous groups and trying to support them in their housing delivery. But it's just the department knocking on their door and whether they invite us to the table or not is really up to them. And we've had some progress throughout the territory, but it's just that building relationship. But I will follow up with the Member with the numbers for his riding. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Minister. We will now begin executive on page 380, with information items on page 381 of the budget. Questions. Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

**MR. EDJERICON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I do have questions, but I think we're going to come back to 274. I just want to ask one quick question in regards to the program details on page 380 on the executive.

Given that, you know, we -- in working with the housing corporation and the people in the communities, the Indigenous governments, you know, we have to start building a new relationship and trust again with the housing corporation. I just want to say that by starting to do that, maybe then we may be -- I would like to recommend that they should seriously take a look at having that Indigenous advisor next to the president of the housing corporation. That

way here that the chiefs in the communities or the Metis leaders or people in the communities want to go to talk to somebody, they could have somebody at the housing corporation that they could relate to. Maybe our former leader, maybe something like that. But right now, like I said before, you know, we don't have very much Aboriginal people in that office. I know that we've gone to committee and there may be one or two people there, but we need somebody there to advocate to work with the president but at the same time trying to convey what the people are saying in the communities so that the people have a voice to go to somebody because they're busy as it is, so I just wanted to -- that's the only question I had, Madam Chair. And then I have further questions on 374 later. Thank you.

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

**HON. PAULIE CHINNA:** Thank you, Madam Chair. And to the Member's question as well too, we do have the Council of Leaders housing working group that has all leaders throughout the Northwest Territories that have contributed to the changes throughout the territory. We also have a working relationship established with YKDFN. They're actually going to be hosting our housing forum this year. And they're putting forward and working with us quite significantly with their housing aspirations, I want to say, because they do have a plan that is put in place. And also the district offices, the majority of our district directors are Indigenous. Our LHOs, the majority of our people at the ground level that have the service contract are Indigenous as well too. And majority are community representation. I also wanted to include that 80 percent of our employees are in the smaller communities. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MR. EDJERICON:** I'll have a followup question to that then. I guess what I'm trying to say is I think the Minister misunderstood what I'm trying to say is that I'd like to get a commitment from this Minister here to really trying to get somebody in the headquarters of the housing corporation and sitting next to the Minister -- or sorry, to the deputy minister. That's what I'm saying is on top of what you just said, yes, we understand what you're saying, you're working with the Circle of Aboriginal leaders, etcetera, but you need to have a body in an office over there that people could talk to, who could relate to, and vice versa. If the president needs something to happen in the communities, then you have that person to go to. Right now I could walk into that office. I'll be lucky to see maybe

one, two Aboriginal people in the three storeys, in the three floors over there. And I don't think we got the numbers there in terms of Aboriginal people. So people from N'dilo and Dettah, or wherever they come from, they want to go over there. Yes, the president might be there, but they need to talk to somebody to convey in their language anything pertaining to housing. So I just want to say if you could help commit to maybe look at this and trying to get somebody into that office. Thank you.

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

**HON. PAULIE CHINNA:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Just for the Member as well too, that our vice-president for district operations is Indigenous. We have hired an advisor to the Office of the President as well too who is Indigenous and originally comes from Behchoko. We do have our North Slave district that was previously vice-president as well too and came from smaller communities, and that was Indigenous as well too. I feel that there is a balance in our office as well, and I think that when we get into the communities that working with Indigenous governments is a priority. I am Indigenous myself. I come from a smaller community. Indigenous representation is a priority of this portfolio. And I think we've made quite significant progress. When we're getting into the smaller communities as well too, I'm making sure that my team is there, that they do relate, and they do have those open conversations with local people, not just the leadership but actually going into houses, taking the notes, and actually understanding what are the needs in the smaller communities and within the city as well too. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge):** Thank you, Minister. Members, do we have any other questions for Members on NWT Housing Corporation Department of Executive? Member for Thebacha.

**MS. MARTSELOS:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I just want to question the Minister on the allocation of staff. You know, we have 107 positions and we have North Slave and Yellowknife that are in Yellowknife. So we have 65 staff. It's really misleading how the numbers come out because if you go to the table of active positions summary, so 65 staff are for the headquarters in North Slave and you know, when we're doing these, the mains, we should make sure that we make that very clear and we don't put them in with the regional offices. So you have 41 staff for the rest of the territories and there's 33 communities. That's really misleading. And I'm just wondering, you know,

many times when you are not client-based and you have a staff who are not driven to make sure that the client is looked after at the door, there's no oversight on how a client is treated, and there has to be. And I just wonder how the micromanaging from the top continues, okay. The person that comes to the door has a problem and everybody agrees with the staff instead of the client. How do we deal with that? Sure they can go to the board but the board isn't privy to everything that happens in that office and how the client is treated. So I'm just wondering how client-based with a pamphlet or a booklet is going to help that client. That is my question for the Minister, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Member. And we are on the department of the executive. And so within this department, there are only 15 staff. They are in the executive. So that's where we're focusing the questions on this topic. We've already passed the community -- so Member, so if -- can you wait for the mike? We have to have -- make sure -- just direct your questions. So Member for Thebacha, did you have any questions?

**MS. MARTSELOS:** No, I don't.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Are there further questions on the NWT Housing Corporation executive? Member for Great Slave.

**MS. NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm just looking at the -- and I apologize if I know this answer and just need some reminding. The policy and planning, there's been quite a difference in fluctuation around what the actuals were versus what was budgeted and such. So maybe the Minister or the department can speak a little bit to why -- so that's on page 380, why that line item keeps sort of moving around and do we think then that the \$2 million is going to be enough? Thank you.

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

**HON. PAULIE CHINNA:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'll have President Young respond. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. President Young.

**MS. YOUNG:** Thank you, Madam Chair. And what you're seeing there, we have had a number of positions that have been funded through internal resources and not through the core part of the main estimates, and so what you're seeing now is some of that now stable being put into the main estimates to be reflected there moving forward. So an example of

that -- the Behchoko position's probably not a good one because it's being funded through grant funding now but, for example, our community housing planner had been funded through internal resources. It's now just being picked up through the core part of the main estimates. And so we do anticipate this number will be stable moving forward. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, President Young. Member for Great Slave.

**MS. NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, we haven't picked on travel too much yet this sitting, and it's been a big topic of conversation in the past. I note that we had a little bit less for this one in the 2021-2022.

Can the Minister or the department explain why that was less? And is the \$219,000 here for the travel, is that so that the executive can get out to the different communities and chat with local staff, or maybe they can explain a little bit about what they're travelling for. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Minister Chinna.

**HON. PAULIE CHINNA:** Thank you, Madam Chair. And I just wanted to comment that engagement it needs to be done within the lifetime of this government because we are rolling out the strategic renewal. We need to communicate and improve that with the local communities as well too. But not only that, our programs and services as well, we're just recovering over COVID and there's a lot of work to get done out there as well. I'll just have President Young respond. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. President Young.

**MS. YOUNG:** Thank you, Madam Chair. And, yes, the lower number for 2021-2022 really does reflect the slowness of picking back up and getting back into normal business. But primarily the purpose for travel here would be participation through FPT meetings with our colleagues, territorial meetings, but more importantly, as the Minister talks about, engagement with our Indigenous government partners, with our LHOs, with our shelters, you know, all of the stuff that housing does and getting out to meet with folks on the ground. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, President Young. Member for Great Slave.

**MS. NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I can think of one travel item that isn't going to cost you any money and that would be if the Minister and staff would come and do a tour of

my riding, please. I've requested this now for a while and at one point, staff did come with me; however, I've not had the Minister tour any of the buildings in my riding and I would like to add in Lanky Court as I asked for in session at one point. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Minister Chinna.

**HON. PAULIE CHINNA:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'll follow up with the Member.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Did you have anything further, Member for Great Slave? Okay.

Are there any further questions? Member for Frame Lake.

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

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

---Carried

I will now rise and report progress.

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

### Report of Committee of the Whole

**MS. SEMMLER:** Mr. Speaker, your committee has been considering Tabled Document 813-19(2), and would like to report progress. And, Mr. Speaker, I move that the report of the Committee of the Whole be concurred with. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes. Do we have a seconder? Member for Deh Cho. All those in favour? All those opposed? Any abstentions? The motion is carried.

---Carried

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

### Orders of the Day

**CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Tim Mercer):** Orders of the day for Tuesday, February 14th, 2023, at 1:30 p.m.

1. Prayer

2. Ministers' Statements
3. Members' Statements
4. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery
5. Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills
6. Reports of Standing and Special Committees
7. Returns to Oral Questions
8. Replies to the Budget Address (Day 5 of 7)
9. Acknowledgements
10. Oral Questions
11. Written Questions
12. Returns to Written Questions
13. Replies to the Commissioner's Address
14. Petitions
15. Tabling of Documents
16. Notices of Motion
17. Motions
18. Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills
19. First Reading of Bills
20. Second Reading of Bills
21. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters
  - Bill 23, An Act to Amend the Public Utilities Act
  - Bill 29, Resource Royalty Information Disclosure Statute Amendment Act
  - Minister's Statement 264-19(2), Response to the NWT Chief Coroner's Report on Suicide
  - Tabled Document 681-19(2), Government of the Northwest Territories Response to Committee Report 26-19(2): Report on the Child and Family Services Act – Lifting Children, Youth and Families: An All of Territory Approach to Keeping Families Together
  - Tabled Document 694-19(2), Northwest Territories Coroner Service 2021-2022 Early Release of Data
  - Tabled Document 813-19(2), Main Estimates

22. Report of Committee of the Whole

23. Third Reading of Bills

24. Orders of the Day

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Clerk. This House stands adjourned until Tuesday, February 14th, 2023 at 1:30 p.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 5:37 p.m.