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The Honourable Frederick Blake Jr, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

Members of the Legislative Assembly

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YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**Monday, February 27, 2023****Members Present**

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

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

Prayer

---Prayer

SPEAKER (Hon. Frederick Blake Jr.): Colleagues, before we begin, I would like to recognize former president of the Nihtat Gwich'in Council, Mr. Jozef Carnogursky. Welcome to the Chamber.

Good afternoon, colleagues. February is Indigenous Languages Month in the Northwest Territories. It is a time to acknowledge the importance of language and culture to the well-being and resilience of Indigenous peoples around the North. It's also a day to recognize the many language champions working to address the language crisis facing Indigenous peoples. To our interpreters, thank you for the invaluable services you provide every day. Mahsi.

Colleagues, today I am proud to announce the renaming of the Legislative Assembly's meeting rooms in the territory's nine Indigenous languages. This project was inspired by nature and reflected in language. Each room is named after an animal in one of the Indigenous languages. Illustrations were done by the NWT-born Indigenous artist Trey Madsen. All Members, staff, and public are encouraged to use the translated room names to integrate Indigenous languages into our everyday work. By celebrating Indigenous Languages Month, we acknowledge how fundamental language is to the identity of Indigenous peoples in the Northwest Territories. Mahsi cho, colleagues.

Ministers' statements. Minister responsible for Education, Culture and Employment.

Ministers' Statements

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 313-19(2):
INCOME ASSISTANCE REVIEW UPDATE

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Mr. Speaker, three years ago I was given a mandate to initiate a review of the income assistance program to ensure its

objectives, benefits, and delivery support the social and economic aspirations of the people of the NWT. Since then, the Department of Education, Culture and Employment has put in a considerable amount of time and effort into fulfilling this mandate. Based on the findings of the review, the Department of Education, Culture and Employment is now in the process of finalizing the most significant changes to the income assistance program in a generation. These changes are supported by a proposed additional investment of over \$5 million annually that will flow directly to our most vulnerable residents.

Mr. Speaker, the current income assistance program provides financial assistance to residents for rent and utilities, based on actual amounts, additional allowances for persons and seniors and persons with permanent disabilities, and set amounts, based on family size and community, for food, clothing, and furnishings. The program is intended to ensure a minimum standard of living and support greater self-reliance. To determine how well we are achieving these goals and whether these goals are still appropriate, the department conducted an extensive internal review of the program and engaged with stakeholders and the public through virtual focus groups, online surveys, and telephone interviews.

A total of 363 people participated in the engagement, with representation from Indigenous governments, non-government organizations, utility providers, landlords, the public, and frontline staff who deliver the income assistance program, and current and past income assistance clients.

In addition to the public engagement, the Department of Education, Culture and Employment completed a satisfaction survey, with 262 responses.

Based on this work, we are proposing to introduce two distinct income assistance programs this summer. First, we are proposing to introduce a redesigned income assistance program for clients ages 19 to 59. Over the years, there have been a number of incremental changes to the income assistance

program, including modest increases and exempting certain types of income from the income assistance calculations. However, these increases have not kept up with inflation. The last full adjustment of benefits based on the Consumer Price Index was in 2005. To address this issue, we are proposing to increase benefits based on the new Market Basket Measure North, which is the Government of Canada's official measure of poverty that has been adjusted to reflect the realities of the North. This will ensure that there is a clear link between the amounts provided by the program and the amounts actually needed to establish a modest, basic standard of living. To reduce the program's administrative burden on staff and clients, we are proposing to streamline benefits and remove the requirement to participate in a Productive Choice. To remove barriers to employment, we are proposing to increase the amount of monthly income that can be earned before it is deducted from benefit payments from \$200 plus 15 per cent of additional income to \$500 plus 25 per cent of additional income. We are also proposing to remove employment-related suspensions so clients are not suspended from the program if they try to maintain employment but are unsuccessful. To advance reconciliation, we propose to increase the exemption for funds received from an impact benefit agreements and treaty or land claim agreements from \$500 per year to 100 percent. We also propose to increase the unearned income exemption from \$1200 per year to \$350 per month.

Mr. Speaker, in addition to a renewed income assistance program, we are also proposing to introduce a new income assistance program for seniors and persons with disabilities. The program will be based on annual income so clients will only need to apply and report their income once a year. By moving to an annual process with income determined using the notice of assessment, only taxable income would be considered when determining benefits. As such, under this new income assistance program, money that seniors and persons with disabilities receive from friends and family, lottery and bingo winnings, and income tax returns and GST will no longer be included as part of the assessment.

Mr. Speaker, due to the magnitude of these changes there is still much work to be done - regulations and policies must be amended, a performance measurement plan has to be developed, staff need to receive training on the new programs, but we are well on our way and I look forward to updating this House as we continue to make progress on this important initiative. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Ministers' statements. Minister responsible for Health and Social Services.

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 314-19(2):
ADDICTIONS PREVENTION AND
RECOVERY WORK PLAN

HON. JULIE GREEN: Mr. Speaker, addictions continue to be a serious issue in the NWT. Many residents have experienced the grip of addictions at some point in their lifetime while many others have watched family or friends battle drug or alcohol dependencies. The GNWT is committed to making sure that residents have access to the right combination of culturally safe supports and services where and when they need it. This is why the 19th Legislative Assembly made it a mandate priority to increase the number and variety of community-based mental health and addictions programs, including aftercare. To ensure that actions we are taking best meet the needs of the people we serve, we regularly conduct internal and external audits to make sure that we are measuring up to our own standards and priorities. This is why we welcomed the 2022 findings of the Office of the Auditor General of Canada's audit of addictions prevention and recovery services for the period of August 1st, 2016 to July 31st, 2021. The findings from the audit help us understand where our programs are on track and where we need to improve outcomes for residents experiencing addictions.

Mr. Speaker, we accepted all seven recommendations by the Office of the Auditor General. The audit speaks to the importance of aftercare, cultural safety, access to services, coordination of services, and client outcomes. Later today, I will be tabling the Addictions Prevention and Recovery Services Work Plan that sets out concrete actions that we will be taking in response to the audit. The work plan identifies five areas of improvement to address the seven recommendations from the Office of the Auditor General. These include

- increasing our understanding of residents' self-determined mental wellness and addictions recovery needs to inform program planning and priority setting;
- enhancing partnerships with Indigenous governments and communities to ensure a continuum of services that better meets the addictions needs of residents; improving access to culturally safe addiction prevention and recovery services;
- increasing consistency in coordination of addictions services and aftercare; and

- enhancing the ability to track community-identified and service user-identified outcomes.

Mr. Speaker, many initiatives were already implemented, or work was underway during the time the audit was taking place. Examples include the establishment of the cultural safety and anti-racism unit that will ensure cultural safety is represented in all policies, programs, and documents. Another is the transformation of the addictions and recovery system by ensuring residents and their families have access to the right level of care when and where they need it. This model of care uses a recovery-oriented approach to provide same day access to flexible mental wellness and addictions recovery services. The community counselling program eliminated wait lists for counselling services. Other examples of work aligned with the audit recommendations include the

- establishment of an Indigenous advisory body;
- establishment of the peer support and addictions recovery and aftercare funds;
- development of a territorial approach to managed alcohol;
- establishment of the mental wellness and addictions recovery advisory group; and
- creation of Indigenous patient advocate positions and an Office of Client Experience.

Work is also underway to develop a territorial model for medical detox and the establishment of transitional housing for addiction recovery.

Mr. Speaker, we will be working closely with Indigenous and community partners, as well as health and social services advisory bodies to refine and implement approaches to advance change in the addictions and recovery services system.

Mr. Speaker, I understand the devastating impacts addictions have on families and communities across this territory. The work plan outlines how and what we will be doing to provide safe and effective services as well as meaningful tools to help struggling families and individuals. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 315-19(2):
LAUNCH OF ONLINE FUNDING PORTAL

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to announce today the launch of a new funding portal on the Government of the Northwest Territories website that will make it easier for territorial residents, businesses, non-profits, non-governmental organizations, and others, to find information and access funding opportunities offered by the Government of the Northwest Territories. This initiative also advances our government's commitment to open government by making government information accessible in a way that is responsive to the needs and expectations of NWT residents.

Mr. Speaker, the government's job is to help improve the lives of the people we serve. We must not only accomplish our broader mandate objectives but also make smaller meaningful improvements along the way. These actions are the building blocks to accomplishing our broader priorities and this funding portal represents one of these smaller but significant achievements.

Mr. Speaker, the Government of the Northwest Territories provides over 120 unique funding programs to residents, delivered by nine departments and agencies across the government. It is understandable that sometimes residents have difficulty finding these programs as the information, while provided online, is located on various government websites. This comprehensive new funding portal brings all these programs together in one online location. Residents can filter through based on who they are and what kind of funding they are looking for. The launch of this portal provides citizens with a clear and simple path to accessing the monetary support they need.

Mr. Speaker, whether you are a small business owner looking to grow, a non-profit organization seeking support, or an individual who needs financial assistance, this new feature on our main GNWT website allows you to find the resources and supports you need to succeed.

It also represents equitable access to government funding, Mr. Speaker. Some residents of the Northwest Territories are less familiar with today's online world, and many struggle to navigate websites to find what they need. This small improvement means that more residents, regardless of their comfort level with technology, can more easily understand and access funding and support available to them. The launch of this portal is a direct response to what I have heard from residents, businesses, and non-government organizations across the territory. It demonstrates our commitment to empowering residents and providing the

resources they need to thrive. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Honourable Premier. Ministers' statements. Members' statements. Member for Great Slave.

Members' Statements

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1377-19(2): RENAMING GREAT SLAVE RIDING

MS. NOKLEBY: Drin Gwiinzii, Mr. Speaker. February is Indigenous Languages Month in Canada, and once again the Northwest Territories proves unique in that we are the only political region in Canada which recognizes 11 official languages, nine of which are Indigenous. Indigenous Languages Month is an opportunity to celebrate the NWT's unique culture and heritage, once again emphasizing how important it is that we preserve and revitalize Indigenous languages. We will achieve this through their everyday use, in-depth educational program, and new technology such as apps, ensuring these languages survive for generations to come.

It was with this in mind, Mr. Speaker, that in the last sitting I introduced a Private Member's bill to change the name of my riding Great Slave. It was my intent to identify a name more representative of the Indigenous people of the Yellowknife area and their culture.

When I began speaking with people on this topic, to gauge residents' thoughts and opinions, it soon became apparent to me that many people had strong feelings about a rename. Some were not open to change and felt the name should stay Great Slave. Some wanted the change but objected to the name that I had proposed, which was just a placeholder, Mr. Speaker. And others had wonderful ideas about how the name should be chosen and what significance should be looked at. Geographical names were proposed as were some that represented the wildlife and the flora of the NWT.

Ultimately, Mr. Speaker, I have decided not to move forward with my bill in this Assembly. I want to ensure that the proper time and consideration is given to this important decision - consideration that is beyond what one MLA can do and particularly one that is not Indigenous. It is my hope, Mr. Speaker, that the 20th Assembly will take a good look at the names of all the ridings in Yellowknife, as well as those outside, and determine a new methodology for renaming them that incorporates local traditional knowledge and

has the approval of the Indigenous governments.

Mr. Speaker, before settlers arrived, Indigenous people had names for the different areas in this region that we call Yellowknife. It is respectful and honourable to have them lead the discussions when renaming the ridings of the Legislative Assembly.

I just want to say big thank you and mashi cho to all of our interpreters and translators who have to deal with me speaking a mile a minute. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1378-19(2): CANADIAN RADIO-TELEVISION AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION CABIN RADIO DECISION

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. On February 15th, the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission ("CRTC") announced that it would not review Cabin Radio's application to take its programming on air with a new FM radio station. There are a number of problems with this decision, and it needs to be reversed.

First, while I respect the authority of this quasi-judicial regulator, I am concerned with the lack of NWT representation on this body. The legislation establishing the CRTC states that federal cabinet appoints up to 13 members. The only requirements are that an individual must be a Canadian citizen, ordinarily resident in Canada, and not have any direct role or interest in the telecommunications sector. If you look at the CRTC website, there are now eight members and one apparent vacancy on the board, with geographic representation from five regions where the northern territories are lumped in with adjacent provinces.

For the first time ever, a northern resident, a Yukon First Nation citizen, was appointed in August 2019. This is a good thing but why is the NWT lumped in with Alberta in terms of representation on the CRTC?

That BC and Yukon commissioner was also one of the two dissenting opinions on the Cabin Radio decision. I want to quote a few points from her dissenting opinion: "There was not enough evidence on the record to show me that Yellowknife cannot sustain a second commercial radio station," and "the Commission may wish to consider a departure from its general practice not to accept further applications for a commercial radio station to

serve the Yellowknife market for two years from the date of the decision."

Another dissenting opinion had the following to say, Mr. Speaker. "The existing commercial radio stations in Yellowknife cannot bar competition indefinitely by citing unprofitability. Diversity of voices should be supported as much in a somewhat remote northern community as elsewhere in Canada. Contrary to the decision, I believe publishing the applications received and proceeding to a hearing is the appropriate and timely response. The alternative is further delay."

While I personally disagree with the CRTC decision, the public wants to know if Cabinet is doing anything about this situation. I think we also need a more systemic fix to ensure that the NWT's interests are known and understood by the CRTC through its membership. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1379-19(2):
JOSEPH BURR TYRELL ELEMENTARY
SCHOOL

MS. MARTSELOS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Fort Smith is home to some of the oldest school infrastructure in all of the NWT. Not only that, but Fort Smith is also home to three buildings with a residential school legacy and all of them are still active in use today. The three buildings I am referring to are PWK High School, JBT Elementary School, and Breynat Hall at Aurora College. To be perfectly clear, all of these structures are either former residential schools or former federal Indian day schools, and they're the only remaining of such structures left standing in the NWT.

Mr. Speaker, JBT was built in 1958 and officially opened in January 1959, which makes it 65 years old. Originally, it was a federal Indian day school with students from multiple nearby communities until the building was purchased by the Government of the Northwest Territories in 1969. After that, the building was converted into an elementary school which is, to this day, being used for the purpose for students of Fort Smith.

In addition, the former Grandin College was built in 1962 and was run by the Catholic Church as a residential school until 1971 when the Government of the Northwest Territories bought the buildings and converted them into PWK High School. Since then the government has continued to use the old Grandin College

residential school buildings for the high school in Fort Smith.

Mr. Speaker, the link between federal Indian day schools and residential schools have already been firmly established by the academia and the testimonies of survivors from both systems; therefore, both these facilities carry a heavy history of abuse and colonialism that cannot be ignored. We know that both systems caused a lot of damage to many of the students who attended these schools. Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

---Unanimous consent granted

Lastly, Mr. Speaker, these schools are 65 and 60 years old respectively and are in serious need of replacement. For these reasons, I am once again calling upon our government to begin the process to replace and decommission these two facilities.

Two years ago, I tabled an ECE document entitled NWT's Schools Capital Needs Assessment Summary. It was dated April 22nd, 2003, and listed all schools in the South Slave, the year each was constructed, the year of the last major renovations, and the year that it should be reviewed to determine if a replacement is necessary. According to that document, JBT was scheduled to be replaced in 2018 and PWK was scheduled to be replaced in 2020, but neither has happened despite the age and history of both schools. I do not agree with that. So I am hoping that our government takes notice and will work with Fort Smith to replace and rebuild new schools for our community. I will have questions for the ECE Minister later today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1380-19(2):
K'AMBA CARNIVAL

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to start off by wishing my daughter, and the Minister of education's sister, Chelsea, a Happy Birthday today. Hopefully her co-workers are spoiling her, in Calgary.

Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to announce that the 41st K'amba Carnival is on and runs from Thursday, March 2nd through to Sunday, March 5th. It is an event that brings friends, family, and tourists together and is a great way to usher in the start of soon-to-be spring weather.

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

Mr. Speaker, this year's event will start on Thursday with a fire feeding ceremony at the Chief Lamalice Complex, followed by a children's talent show, crowning of the K'amba Carnival Queen, Prince, and Princess. Friday evening will see youth outdoor events, a \$6,000 bingo, and the opening of registration for the dog races. Saturday will start with a pancake breakfast, followed by dog races, hand games, adult outdoor games, all capped off with an adult talent show in the evening. The canteen will be open all day and let's hope they have bannock burgers which are a "must try". Sunday, being the final day of the event, will again start with a pancake breakfast, more hand games, dog races, adult outdoor games, a poker derby, and hopefully more bannock burgers.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of myself, the MLA for Hay River North, and all Hay River residents, I would like to send a big shout out to Diane Tourangeau, who is working many hours to pull this event together, and to the K'atlodeeche First Nation for hosting it, the K'amba Carnival Committee for making it happen, and the many sponsors and volunteers that are bringing this 41st K'amba Carnival annual event to life.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage all of you here to skip out on Friday's session, as I may very well just do that, and take a trip to the K'atlodeeche First Nation and Hay River this weekend and enjoy some of the festivities taking place, along with the bannock burgers. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1381-19(2):
HOUSING AND INCOME SUPPORT

MS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it is a mandate item of the Government of the Northwest Territories to increase affordable housing, especially for vulnerable people. I have said in this House many times how the communities in the Tlicho regions are in a housing crisis. Behchoko, the

largest Dene community in the NWT, does not have enough homes to shelter its people.

Mr. Speaker, when youth need a safe place to live so they can go to school, the GNWT should remove all barriers in their way. There should be extra supports and services to assist youth. We should not be forcing youth to navigate government programs just to be sheltered in a safe space. Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, this is not happening for constituents in my riding, for a young adult in my riding, and this applies to a lot of others who find themselves in these situations.

Mr. Speaker, a young adult that I am talking about, who was raised in the child welfare system, who is facing homelessness but has found safe housing in their home community, who is trying to complete high school education, who is struggling to navigate government system to access financial support to pay for housing and other expenses. Mr. Speaker, the GNWT says they are not eligible for housing assistance because they are not sleeping in a room.

This is exactly the problem, Mr. Speaker. Our communities are in a housing crisis. There is nowhere to house people. They are forced to sleep on couches and then they have to fight with government programs and services to give them the financial help they need to get out of this situation. This is unacceptable treatment of our vulnerable population. I will have questions for the Minister of education. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1382-19(2):
EDUCATION, CULTURE AND
EMPLOYMENT INFRASTRUCTURE FUND

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the federal government's universal child care goal is to build a Canada-wide community-based system of quality care. This is good news. But unfortunately this good news has had a rocky shotgun start here in the Northwest Territories. While the foundation for \$10-a-day child care takes shape, some struggles we are seeing aren't new to this funding model.

The federal government's own explicit model in this new Canada-wide social program is Quebec who, in 1997, built an affordable child care system. This system has led to large increases in birth-giver employment and prominent economists say that child care reforms will, over time, pay for themselves in

increase government revenues and lower benefit costs.

Mr. Speaker, Quebec's program saw its own growing pains and, luckily, the NWT can learn from their experience. The Institute for Research on Public Policy published four recommendations to address the anticipated growing pains of universal child care. The recommendations called for increased early childhood educator wages, being prepared to inject more funding as no one has addressed whether the federal commitment will actually achieve its goals, and to close the maternity and parental gap benefits. But ultimately, they concluded Quebec tried to do too much too fast and should have focused first on rapidly expanding capacity.

Mr. Speaker, the GNWT's current early childhood infrastructure fund has a \$1 million budget for projects that preserve, expand, or create new centre-based child care infrastructure in NWT communities. Most recently, the Yellowknife Daycare Association built a new facility that serves 104 children. In 2018, this build costs roughly \$4 million. The Yellowknife Daycare Association currently has over 400 children on their waitlist. Pair this with ECE's desire to create 300 new child care spaces NWT-wide, and we know this fund will not go far enough to address the needs of our territory.

Mr. Speaker, you don't need to look far here in Yellowknife to find an entrepreneur, healthcare worker, teacher, or public servant looking for child care to meet a looming return to work deadline without any nibbles of potential open spaces. To see this initiative's success, the GNWT needs to be ready to inject more funding in operations and infrastructure through substantial capital grants or loan guarantees to accelerate a coordinated sector expansion.

Working toward universal child care is a good news story, Mr. Speaker. But without learning from Quebec's growing pains, we are already walking in their footsteps, and I worry we are not properly preparing ourselves for a successful next mile. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1383-19(2):
LAND LEASE-ONLY POLICY

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I ask a lot of questions of the Department of Lands, not as many as the Minister asked in the last Assembly, but that's because I have a long dream list for the Department of Lands.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to make some changes to our leases. Ideally, I'd like people who lived in their lease for decades of their life to be able to own that home, to have the certainty that that land can be passed on to their children and they won't have to, you know, have the remediation requirement that comes at the end of a lease over their head.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to see us sort out pricing on leases, to make sure there is fairness there. I'd like to sort out some sort of rights-based option for our hunters and trappers out on the land so that they're not under the same lease and in the same conversation as some sort of recreational user. Mr. Speaker, I would like to finally get rid of this having two types of land. And I know the Minister would like to do many of these things and, in fact, they are dependent on two pieces of work largely: The Public Land Act coming into force and the Land Lease-only policy being reviewed.

This Minister had big dreams, I would say, at the beginning of the Assembly of getting that Land Lease-only policy in force within two years, and then COVID hit and it kind of became hopefully at the end of this Assembly. And when I asked him last session, it was more I hope to get a timeline back to you when we will complete this work. So my hope is that he's gone back, he's got a hard timeline, and he will get that work done in the life of this Assembly, similarly for the Land Lease-only policy.

Mr. Speaker, there's a lot of little changes I would like to see. I'd like to see a cabin lottery. That's one of those other potential things that may happen just in the life of this Assembly. Many of my constituents have complained they've reached the maximum amount of outbuildings on their property so they can't build a greenhouse. I think that's completely at odds with our goal of food security. Many have expressed a desire to run Airbnbs out of their leases. That's presently not allowed. I think that would be a great business model in all of our communities to allow some sort of commercial interest in our leases, or at the very least they'd legally be allowed to live in their houses. I'll have questions for the Minister of Lands about whether we're actually going to complete any of this Public Land Act work or Land Lease-only policy work. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1384-19(2):
DENE DRUM SONGS IN GAHNIHTAH

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to wish you a belated Happy Birthday yesterday. I heard you turned 29 so Happy Birthday.

Today I'd like rise in the House to speak about the Dene drums in the Gahnihthah film that got selected to be part of the Yellowknife International Film Festival, the Swedish International Film Festival, the Berlin Short Film Festival, Dawson City International Short Film Festival, Brooklyn Film Festival, Los Angeles Skins Film Festival, LA Documentary Film Festival and the Skabmagovat Indigenous Film Festival in Finland.

The film is a short documentary about a group of Liidlii Kue Dene that go into the Nahanni National Park to learn the Dene drum songs from the Deh Cho region of Denendeh, Northwest Territories. The short documentary was shot before the pandemic was edited during the pandemic and is now screening across the world.

Mr. Speaker, the director Jonathan Antoine studied cinematography at Capilano University in Vancouver. At the end of the program, he took another cinematography certification program and has been working ever since. Jonathan's first short documentary called "Trapline" got selected to the

LA Skins Film Festival located in Los Angeles, which is one of the best Indigenous film festivals in the United States.

Jonathan went back home to Liidlii Kue to make documentaries and short films about his people and his family. Jonathan made the Dene Drum Songs for the love of the Dene drum that is very special to the people of the Dene. The drum represents the heartbeat of the human spirit. The Dene are very connected to the land and to Mother Earth. This documentary is about the connection to the drum.

Jonathan Antoine would like to thank his mom, his dad, his brother and sisters, his nieces and nephews, his friends, and the people of Deh Cho for encouraging him to make films.

Mr. Speaker, I am happy to announce that it was screened at the 4th Annual Liidlii Kue Film Festival this past weekend at the rec centre in Fort Simpson. I have been advised that this event was well attended.

Mr. Speaker, I have a list of people that were part of the production of this documentary, and I will ask it to be deemed as read. Mashì cho, Mr. Speaker.

Dene Drum Songs in Gahnihthah

- Director: Jonathan Antoine
- Producer: Olinto Beaulieu Liidlii Kue First Nation
- Cast: Angus Ekenele, Olinto Beaulieu, Bobby Cazon, Skylar Deneyoua, Nolan Mendo, Brandon "Buttons" Norwegian, and Edward Villeneuve
- Info: Canada, 2021, 11:28 min Shooting
- Format: Digital Festival
- Year: 2023
- Category: Short Documentary
- Email: Lowerlifeproduction@gmail.com

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1385-19(2): EULOGY FOR CHIEF JAMES FIRTH

MS. SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With the family's permission, I am honoured to be able to read the eulogy of a constituent of mine, Chief James Bennet Firth, who passed away on February 14th, 2023.

Chief James Bennet Firth was born in Aklavik on August 15th, 1951, to his beloved parents James Bennet (Ben) and Joanne Firth. James was the eldest son born to them and had eight siblings, five of whom he is survived by.

The first few years of his life he spent out on the land at Dthaa Tee with his family. They moved to town when his dad was hired at the local power plant. James was ten years old and remembers this as a time when his mother passed away. Being one of the oldest, he helped and cared for his younger siblings. James recalled how the community helped the family with cooking and even remember getting new shoes. James enjoyed packages from his godmother Elizabeth Kunnizzi as she knew what his favourites were. And he fondly remembers Jiji Alfred would come to check on them and at times camped.

He attended Peter Warren Dease School in Fort McPherson and Sir Alexander MacKenzie school in Inuvik where he graduated from high school. He then went on to ABTC in Fort Smith, NT, training in electronics. James continued training with CN in Edmonton, Alberta, who hired him and then he moved to Inuvik for a 40-year career with what is now called

Northwestel. Growing up with sports and school, curling was one he continued for many years, enjoying many bonspiels.

While living in Inuvik, James met Verna Hansen in 1972, and they were married in 1976. Together they had two children, Bradley and Jacqueline. James and Verna would have eight grandchildren, each of whom were his pride and joy.

James was elected chief of the Inuvik native band and held that position for 13 years. He took good care of his people, both the young and the elderly. He would share his harvests with people, and that practice continues on through his son Bradley and his grandchildren.

James was a huge part of the negotiations of the Gwich'in Comprehensive Land Claim Agreement in 1992. Together with the negotiation team, they settled one of the largest land claim agreements in Canada. He also served as vice-president of the Gwich'in Tribal Council and was appointed to numerous boards, such as the Gwich'in Development Corporation Renewable Resource Board and the Denendeh Investment Incorporated.

James was taught by many elders. William Vittrekwa, Uncles Willie Firth, Johnny D. Charlie, John Edward Snowshoe, and Bea Jerome, and his grandmother Mops, who all took time to teach him skills for harvesting and surviving on the land. While living in Inuvik, he became very close to the late Emma Dick and her son Richard. He learned from them how to go whaling and Emma called him the Gwichovaluit. Last summer he made his last trip whaling with his grandsons Jared and William. He made sure Verna always had muktuk to share at Midway Lake Music Festival.

James used his skill to mentor many young people by taking them out on the land or giving them a camp to use for their harvesting. His two grandsons were taken out on the trapline since they were very young. Both were recognized with Youth Trapper of the Year awards. His son Bradley now carries the same passion and love for trapping and harvesting from the land.

Because of his upbringing and the love for the land, James made sure no one went without. He shared his harvest. He helped many who needed extra help. And as one elder said of James, he shared and provided us food and gave our boys employment to help others. James travelled up the Peel River in the fall for many years to go moose hunting with elders such as the late Amos Francis and Isaac Kunnizzi and everyone's uncle, Abe Stewart. Their harvest was always shared with the community. James took a lot of young people

under his wing by providing them with employment with the business he built. Others he gave the opportunity to go out on the land and learn those skills, and it didn't matter whether they were Inuvialuit or Gwich'in. Also mentioned something that he said is that I hate that I'm leaving the youth with them being so lost. They don't even know where they come from anymore. I wish I could have been able to help more.

He was known for not giving up on anyone, especially those struggling with addiction. It's fitting that James became chief seven generations later after his late great grandfather Vishriinintsi Tyi who was chief of the at the Teet'it Gwich'in.

Chief James Bennet Firth was a true Dinjii Zhuu, trapper, hunter, fisherman, and whaler who respected the land, animals he harvested, and shared as his people always have done. On Thanksgiving Day, he had a talk with his children and his grandchildren as his illness progressed. He also sat down with his siblings and gave each of them a job he wanted done for him. He spoke to them about the importance of life and most importantly how strong our people are. He encouraged them to remain together, stay strong, and keep moving forward as the young children are following behind us. James final words: I am grateful for my family. He will be remembered for many years to come, and we as family will continue his life legacy. God bless.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes. Our thoughts and prayers are with the family and community and the community of Fort McPherson as well at this time. Mahsi.

Members' statements. Returns to oral questions. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Acknowledgements. Oral questions.

MS. SEMMLER: Sorry.

MR. SPEAKER: No problem. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes.

Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery

MS. SEMMLER: I needed a moment, Mr. Speaker, after that. I'd like to recognize my husband who is here with us today; he's travelled down. So my husband, Jozef Carnogursky. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Acknowledgements. Oral questions. Member for Thebacha.

Oral Questions

QUESTION 1389-19(2):
SCHOOL INFRASTRUCTURE
REPLACEMENT IN FORT SMITH

MS. MARTSELOS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in June 2021, I questioned the Minister of ECE about the state of JBT School in Fort Smith. Today I am going to carry on with that questioning. At the time, the Minister stated that the last time a technical assessment was done to JBT was in 2005, almost 20 years ago.

Can the Minister tell us if a technical assessment of JBT was done in the last two years or if one is planned to be done soon? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The last technical status evaluation was 2005. These evaluations are typically done when work is planned to be done on a building. However, there was a building condition assessment completed on JBT by the Department of Infrastructure in August of 2022. These assessments are not as in depth as the technical status evaluation, but they do provide an overall assessment of the building. Thank you.

MS. MARTSELOS: Mr. Speaker, in June 2021, the Minister said that the Department of Infrastructure has a database that produces a rating for schools, and JBT was rated 0.52. The Minister said that that was an "okay" rating.

Can the Minister tell us if JBT's rating has changed since then and to please explain the process for how ratings for schools are actually produced? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So that would be the facility condition index rating. And that has increased from .52, I believe the Member said, to .61, which is just a function of its age. This is determined by a database which is managed by the Department of Infrastructure and includes factors in outstanding maintenance required for individual buildings. So if the building needs a lot of work, it will have a higher number. Once that work is done, it could lower the number. Thank you.

MS. MARTSELOS: Mr. Speaker, can the Minister tell us, based on current capital needs assessment figures, when does ECE anticipate that JBT School is expected to be replaced? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So earlier in her statement the Member mentioned that back in I believe it was 2002 it was thought that there would need to be a replacement sometime around 2015 or 2020, something like that. And clearly we haven't needed that yet. So it's hard for me to put numbers out there, dates out there, when obviously things can change. Right now, based on the information we have, we're looking at 2035. But that could come a lot sooner; it could take longer. You know, Fort Smith has Aurora College with a trades school, and I think that expertise in trades really has helped those buildings be maintained in excellent condition for many, many years. So I hear it all the time that the Department of Infrastructure does a good job maintaining schools, at least in the regional centres, and I believe that the longevity is a function of that maintenance. Thank you.

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

MS. MARTSELOS: Mr. Speaker, of the 49 schools across the NWT, there have been several new school replacements built in multiple communities where their schools are actually younger in age than JBT in Fort Smith. For example, in Yellowknife, the former JH Sissons School was only 45 years old when it was demolished and replaced with a brand new school just a couple years ago. And I'm happy for them. And that school was 20 years younger than JBT.

Can the Minister explain what is the necessary criteria to replace a school when the community wants one as soon as possible? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So we rely on the Department of Infrastructure and their technical assessments of schools. As well, we have our schools' capital planning -- sorry, capital standards and criteria document to guide capital planning and space requirements. We look at the need for school infrastructure projects, including a new construction, renovations, and upgrading of facilities and equipment. Criteria are used to assess and determine needs while standards describe the amount of space considered adequate to meet those needs. So there's a couple different elements we need to look at the actual building, the physical building, as well as the rates of utilization, how many students are using the facilities. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 1390-19(2):
STUDENT BUSSING POLICIES

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, safety of children while taking student bussing transportation is important to all of us and more so, you know, when it comes to the smaller children who during the cold winter months, you know, maybe missed their bus stop and not quite sure where they are.

So will the Minister of ECE confirm who is responsible for developing student bussing policies? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Hay River South. Minister responsible for Education, Culture and Employment.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Education Act lays out the various responsibilities of the department as well as education, the DECs and DEAs. And so it would be the DEAs who are responsible for developing their own bussing policies however there's always supports available from the regional body or from ECE if it is needed. Thank you.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, sometimes the policies, at least some I've looked at, they're very vague and, you know, they may just be a couple of lines.

So will the Minister confirm if a student bussing policy lays out responsibilities of the DEA, bussing contractors, students, and parents or caregivers, and the GNWT as well? Thank you.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A bussing policy can touch on many of those things. It doesn't necessarily have to have all of those things. There are different ways that education bodies go about providing bussing. So sometimes there is a contractor, sometimes the bus is owned by the education body, so it really depends on the situation. But I'm sure there's best practices that we would like all the DEAs to follow. And, again, the department's always happy to provide any sort of assistance when DEAs want to develop these policies. Thank you.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, will the Minister confirm who is ultimately responsible for the safety of those persons using student bussing? Is it the department, the DEA, or the bussing contractor? Thank you.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Safety is everybody's responsibility. And so the bussing -- depending on how things are

structured, you know, the bussing contractor could be responsible for the safe operation of the bus, the technical status of the bus. Education bodies are responsible for developing the policies. But ultimately the department is responsible for ensuring that education bodies are developing policies in accordance with the legislation. So ultimately the GNWT is responsible. Whether or not the Act lays out a framework that makes that easy for us to be responsible and puts the authorities in the right places is a different conversation. But that is the situation. Thank you.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, will the Minister confirm that he will have his department ensure that all DEAs have in place a comprehensive student bussing policy that sets out the rules and responsibilities for the DEA, bussing contractor, students, parents or caregivers, and any other, you know, people or things that would be included in there? Thank you.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish I could say that I would ensure that DEAs have all the appropriate policies in place but my authority doesn't allow me to dictate to DEAs which policies they should have in place. We're happy to work with DEAs and encourage them to develop policies. If a DEA doesn't have a bussing policy, we can look at other bussing policies and provide those as templates, we can outline which policies DEAs should have, but ultimately it is up to the DEA. I know that in Hay River the DEA is working on improving their bus policy so at least in the Member's constituency that work, from what I understand, is well underway. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 1391-19(2):
HOUSING AND INCOME SUPPORT

MS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we know that children who have grown up in the child welfare system are more at risk of being homeless, homeless than others. The high numbers of Indigenous children and youth in care relates to the high number of Indigenous youth in the NWT seeking homes, housing.

Can the Minister describe when the department is dealing with young adults what types of exceptions are considered to support that person? Does the department recognize the

need for flexibility and compassion when providing supports to youth? Thank you.

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

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I hope that we would always be a compassionate government. Sometimes our own policies and procedures get in the way of that and recognizing that we are working to change the income assistance program so that it can be more compassionate so it is not so rigid. However, as it currently stands, the income assistance program is laid out in regulations and so it is legislated so there is minimal flexibility in many instances. However, when we can be flexible, we are. And I've seen many instances of that happening. Thank you.

MS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: I would not have said compassion if I didn't have a reason.

Mr. Speaker, we need to ensure our residents have timely access to government supports as they struggle with many challenges. Completing unnecessary paperwork creates difficulty for accessibility. Can the Minister advise if there can be advanced payment to shelter and utility support to youth who are looking for support? Thank you.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. So utility payments are paid to utility providers upon receipt of an invoice. So I don't think there would be advanced payments made without that invoice. But if someone needs income assistance, they can go apply for income assistance and then they receive it pretty quickly. There's not generally a big period where people are waiting. So I'm not sure what the Member is referring to in advance of what; receiving support in advance of what? Thank you.

MS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Advance payment to shelters and utilities to people. That's what I'm talking about. To where these young people are staying at, living at, and if it can be part of their income assistance instead of the policy that's in place. That's what I was referring to.

So, Mr. Speaker, couch surfing is also homelessness. What support does the department of ECE provide to help young adults break free of homelessness? Thank you.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So just speaking to the income assistance program, because ECE does much more for young adults than just the income assistance program, ECE will pay for eligible clients'

accommodations. So pay really the full cost of rent, the full cost of utilities to someone who needs that service. So that is the assistance that we provide with people who are seeking shelter. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 1392-19(2):
LAND LEASE-ONLY POLICY

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It was almost four years ago that this House passed the Public Land Act, a landmark piece of our post-devolution work that truly gave a made-in-the-North approach to how we were going to deal with land. And so my question for the Minister of Lands is as we approach that four-year mark, when are we going to bring that piece of legislation into force? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, when we started the process, we had to work with IGC in that process there. So we're hoping to have it done by the end of this Assembly. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was hoping the Minister could give us -- I'm happy, I really want to see the Public Land Act put into force and I know that requires phase one of the regulations. I was hoping the Minister could just update this House a little bit more about what exactly will be brought into force, hopefully by the end of this Assembly, to do that and what has now been put into another Assembly for the rest of the regulations? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we're working on trying to get all the regulations done. There's been a process working with IGC, the secretariat as well, and Indigenous governments. We're working with them. In regards to where we are, we are working on I think the last part of it. Again, it's -- we're trying to do it all and then we're going to take it to the drafting process and that, get it done there. So to give them -- there's nine regulations there we're working on. We got eight done, and we're working on that. So I will have to get back to the Member on the exact details and timelines on when we expect everything done. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I hope all nine of those regs are done by the end of this Assembly. I think that would be a true step in getting the Department of Lands to start some of their other work.

First amongst that is the Land Lease-only policy, Mr. Speaker. I know the department has gone out and done a review on the Land Lease-only policy. I'm wondering if the Minister could update this House on when he expects to see changes to that policy. Thank you.

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Short, Mr. Speaker, we're hoping to have it -- something here in the House by the end of this session. Not this Assembly but the end of this session. Thank you.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think first in that policy, I and I believe the Minister shares, that people living in communities who've been in a lease for many years would be given the option to own their homes in fee simple. Is that something we can expect to see from the changes to the land lease-only policy, Mr. Speaker?

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't want to, you know, wreck the surprise and say that. But this is part of the conversations that we're having. Again, we have to recognize we have 33 different communities, different organizations like designated authorities, hamlets, and tax-based communities. So we have to look at those as we move forward. So we may or may not be able to do that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 1393-19(2):
CANADIAN RADIO-TELEVISION AND
TELECOMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
CABIN RADIO DECISION

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. My questions are for the Minister of Finance who seems to have the reins when it comes to telecommunications for this government.

The Minister has probably had ample time to review the CRTC decision on Cabin Radio. Can the Minister tell us whether Cabinet has taken a position on the CRTC decision? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, to be clear, I do not have any reins when it comes to telecommunications. There's a little thing called a constitution and the jurisdiction over this is exclusively with the federal government. That said, Mr. Speaker, under the Department of Finance, we do have the Office of the Chief Information Officer. The OCIO does represent us with respect to northern interests on internet broadband. And we were able to get a bit of information and some support with respect to telecommunications radio -- or rather with radio broadcasting. So in that regard, while this isn't going to be a Cabinet position, and again very clearly do not have that constitutional authority, I have indicated, and I will be writing a letter outlining the position -- a general position of support to the FM license application that's been put forward. Thank you.

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. I want to thank the Minister for that excellent explanation. I said in my statement that while I respect the authority of the CRTC, I disagree with their decision in this case. Can the Minister tell us whether Cabinet is going to do anything about this CRTC decision, and if so, what? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, I don't really have any authority and don't have the authority constitutionally to do anything per se. That said, Mr. Speaker, having the opportunity to raise the issue publicly, as the Member's doing here, probably is one of the strongest things we can do to get all of the public aware, and they can make their own choices and decisions and participate as members of the public vis-a-vis the federal government in terms of raising the voices from the North. As I've indicated, we certainly can write in general with respect to this decision, keeping in mind that it is a decision by an administrative body and that does put some obligation to be respectful, given that we are, again, also a level of government that is not directly responsible. But having this conversation here, again, Mr. Speaker, there's a lot that members of the public may want to do. Thank you.

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. I want to thank the Minister for that. I spoke on the lack of NWT representation on the CRTC. There's an Alberta-NWT commissioner in name only. The commission's enabling legislation provides for a board of up to 13 members. There are currently nine, one vacancy.

Can the Minister tell us what action, if any, has this Cabinet taken about nominating individuals or changing the composition or appointment

requirements for the CRTC? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, Mr. Speaker, I am also aware of the appointments to the CRTC insofar as they are known on the internet. The federal government does not have an obligation to come to me with respect to their decisions over who they appoint. They are appointments done by the Canadian heritage minister, federal Canadian heritage minister so, again, they're five-year appointments. It may well be that it's an opportunity to put forward some names if people in the Northwest Territories are interested in this area. I would certainly be interested in hearing from them or hearing about them. But, again, it's an appointment made by a federal minister. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. Glad that the Minister offered a free advertisement there for people interested in the CRTC and that Cabinet's willing to maybe even nominate some people. That's great.

So when this subject was last raised in this House a couple weeks ago, the Minister committed to write a letter to, quote, "comment upon or to express some concern around this decision," end of quote. So I think the Minister said that she hasn't written the letter but can the Minister actually confirm that she does intend to write this letter, and will she commit to table it in the House before we break on March 9th? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the department and I do have a draft letter that we are working on. It will be ready I think by the end of today or tomorrow. I am mindful again that this is a federal adjudicative body that has made an adjudicative decision whether or not we may now agree with it. And so in my role, I do want to be conscious of what I comment upon and how I do so. When I made that determination, I'd certainly be, if it's appropriate, happy to table it or at the very least to share it with Members confidentially. But, again, this is a good opportunity to let members of the public more broadly know that they certainly can also lend their voices if they may choose to do so, depending upon how they feel about the matter. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 1394-19(2):
EDUCATION, CULTURE AND
EMPLOYMENT INFRASTRUCTURE FUND

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions today are for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment in regards to the early childhood infrastructure fund. Currently the fund is set at \$1 million every year, and I'm wondering if there is a plan to increase this fund given ECE's current child care goals? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Kam Lake. Minister responsible for Education, Culture and Employment.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. No one would like to see this fund increased more than myself. I could take a win right now but I don't have a million dollars in my back pocket. The budget is, you know, it's before committee right now. And so the Member is aware what the budget for this upcoming year is, and it will be \$1 million. In the future, I'm sure the budget will increase but it is not in the immediate future. Thank you.

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, during a March 2022 public hearing with the Standing Committee on Social Development, the Minister and staff stated that increases to the fund would be made in, quote, "considerations for project going forward based on need." So I'm wondering if the fund isn't intended to increase, how potentially would the Minister be able to accomplish this based on need, and what would be used as determinants of need? Thank you.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And this is one avenue that organizations can pursue to get new child care infrastructure or assist with that. Indigenous governments also have their own child care agreements with the federal government and so there could be funds through there. The early childhood infrastructure fund is proposal-based and so "proposals" very widely in terms of what they're proposing, the cost of what they're proposing. But what the fund is intended to do is support more spaces. So adding spaces to existing programs or creating new spaces.

We looked at communities where there is established demands, such as Yellowknife. We also look at communities with no child care to ensure that there is equitable access. The proposals need to demonstrate a need for the early learning and child care in their community. There must also be a plan for the delivery of a licensed program once it becomes operational. It's not just we want a building; we also -- the

department also needs to see a plan for once that building is in use. Thank you.

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, based on the high demand of child care in some communities, I'm wondering if this fund, if it is able to provide full funding to some programs based on what is left in the pot or if the department of education has a maximum of what they're prepared to provide to child care centres? Thank you.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Sorry, Mr. Speaker. I might have missed the question, but we have \$1 million in the fund, and based on the programs that apply that's how we make a determination. So sometimes there may only be a few programs that actually qualify based on the proposal. And so those programs, as we've seen in the past, can get some significant amounts of funding. And I apologize if I missed the Member's statement. I will say that we have also overspent. I believe we spent \$1.28 million last year on this because there was a number of good proposals, and there was a demonstrated need that we wanted to support. Thank you.

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

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my previous question was in regards to whether or not the fund can fund an entire project or if it can only fund a portion of a project. But my next question -- and if the Minister is able to answer that, great. And the reason that I ask this is that in my statement I also talked about the Yellowknife Daycare Association who paid just over \$4 million before the pandemic, before inflation, before the high cost -- higher cost of building in the Northwest Territories for 104 spaces. If the goal of ECE is to create 300 new spaces, the \$1 million absolutely won't cut it. And I appreciate the Minister acknowledging that he too would like to see an increase in this fund. And so my concern is that if for some communities who don't have the ability to go out and do some own source revenues, if daycare centres are kind of being dictated what their increases can be, there's some concern about how they're going to turn around and pay for a potentially really high cost of building infrastructure spaces. And so I'm wondering if the GNWT is expecting to plan for some -- or some infrastructure increases within the child care agreement through the federal government going forward to address this huge infrastructure deficit and this need in the territory? Thank you.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. So every time we speak to the federal government, we talk about the cost of infrastructure in the

Northwest Territories. I think that we're all aware of the cost but when we speak to federal officials and politicians, it's clear that they're often taken aback by the cost. So we do our best at the officials level, at the political level, to hammer home, you know, the reality of the cost in the North and the changes we've seen over the past few years. We've seen costs double, triple, and even more than that. So we are working with the feds on this. We are doing our best to look at what we have internally and how we can best use that and at the same time looking for additional resources from the federal government. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Oral questions. Written questions. Returns to written questions. Mr. Clerk.

Returns to Written Questions

RETURN TO WRITTEN QUESTION 55-19(2):
PUBLIC ACCESS TO FORESTRY
DECISIONS AND DECISION-MAKING

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Tim Mercer): Mr. Speaker, I have a Return to Written Question 55-19(2) asked by the Member for Frame Lake on February 7, 2023, to the Minister of Environment and Natural Resources regarding public access to forestry decisions and decision-making.

The Member enquired about the number of instances where decisions and authorizations have been made under the Forest Management Act and the Forest Protection Act and if they are publicly available. In addition, the Member also requested "an explanation of how the department intends to implement the provisions of the Open Government policy as part of the new Forest Act." Later today, at the appropriate time, I will table this information. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills

BILL 65:
BUILDERS' LIEN ACT

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, your committee would like to report on its consideration of Bill 65, Builders' Lien Act.

Bill 65 received second reading in the Legislative Assembly on November 3rd, 2022 and was referred to the Standing Committee on Social Development for review.

On January 18th, 2023, the committee held a public hearing with the Minister of Justice and expressed concerns with the bill, including the level of consultation completed prior to introduction of the bill. Following the public hearing, the Government House Leader requested that committee seek an extension on the review period for Bill 65.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, in accordance with Rule 8.3(2) of the rules of the Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Great Slave, that the review period for Bill 65, Builders' Lien Act, be extended by 120 days -- sorry, Mr. Speaker, thank you very much.

I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes, that the review period for Bill 65, Builders' Lien Act, be extended by 120 days. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? Any abstentions? Motion is carried.

---Carried

Reports of committees on the review of bills.
Member for Yellowknife North.

BILL 66:

AN ACT TO AMEND THE PROPERTY ASSESSMENT AND TAXATION ACT

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Committee would like to report on its consideration on Bill 66, An Act to Amend the Property Assessment and Taxation Act, as ready for consideration in Committee of the Whole. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Yellowknife North. Reports of committees on the review of bills. Reports of standing and special committees. Member for Kam Lake.

Reports of Standing and Special Committees

COMMITTEE REPORT 41-19(2): INTERIM REPORT ON BILL 65, BUILDERS LIEN ACT

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, your Standing Committee on Social Development is pleased to provide its interim report on Bill 65, Builders' Lien Act, and commends it to the House.

Introduction

Bill 65, Builders' Lien Act, was referred to the Standing Committee on Social Development for review on November 3rd, 2022. A plain language summary for Bill 65 was tabled on the same day. The sponsoring department for Bill 65 is the Department of Justice. During committee's review and public hearing on Bill 65, inquiries focused on applying the Builders' Lien Act to the Government of the Northwest Territories, Indigenous governments, and municipalities, including questions on how provisions related to lands owned by those entities would work. Committee had already raised concerns and considered amendments to the proposed legislation, particularly concerning types of lands subject to the bill and GNWT's engagement with Indigenous and municipal governments in developing the bill.

During the public hearing on January 18th, 2023, committee expressed concerns regarding the level of consultation done by the department prior to the introduction of Bill 65. During the same hearing, the Minister of Justice committed to working with committee, doing further engagement, and improving the bill.

Following the public hearing, the Government House Leader requested that committee seek an extension of the review period under Rule 8.3(2) to allow the Department time to engage in discussions with Indigenous governments, municipalities, and industry about committee's concerns.

The purpose of Bill 65 is to modernize the Northwest Territories lien legislation as it concerns construction. The existing Mechanics Lien Act has not changed substantially in over 100 years. Since then, practices and contractual arrangements in construction and real property development have changed considerably and continue to evolve. At the core of this legislation lies the intent to ensure that contractors and subcontractors are paid for the work and materials they have provided.

The builders' lien legislation would also regulate the way payments are made in the construction industry and protect the participants in a construction project against the failure of others to pay for the work or materials provided. Several Canadian jurisdictions have also updated their builders' lien legislation, including Ontario in 2019, British Columbia in 2020, and Alberta in 2022.

Bill 65 applies to activities involving the creation, repair, or alteration of an "improvement" to land or alteration of the land itself. This includes buildings and structures above and below ground and could consist of culverts, driveways, utility lines, pipelines, excavations and nearly all active modification of the surface and subsurface of the land, including demolition or removal of structures.

Bill 65 updates the law governing construction in the NWT by clarifying who is entitled to claim a lien (including workers), extending timelines to preserve and perfect a claim, allowing annual and phased holdback amounts, requiring a certificate of substantial performance, providing rights to certain information, and including regulation-making provisions.

COMMITTEE CONSIDERATIONS

Committee reviewed Bill 65 and found there is room for changes or clarification in the following areas:

- Ensuring the GNWT is bound.
- Ensuring that Bill 65 treats all governments equally.
- Ensuring that land, resources and self-government agreements prevail where there is conflict or inconsistency.
- Exempting three categories of land from sale and seizure: public lands and lands owned by agencies on behalf of the Government of the Northwest Territories, settlement lands, and municipal lands.
- Considering that lands withdrawn from disposition for the purpose of pending treaties also be exempt from seizure and sale.

In the initial review, committee perceived that GNWT did not give enough consideration to the thought that settlement lands may not be sold. Members found that any sale of lands requires recognition of the land for a heightened sensitivity in the analysis and preparation of legislation.

Committee included Indigenous governments and organizations in the initial review during the engagement period, however, committee did not receive submissions. Members see it as necessary to have communication on Bill 65 going directly to Indigenous governments.

Committee members determined that Indigenous governments and communities as well as industry must have an opportunity to provide input.

Conclusion

Committee decided to wait for the outcome of the department's consultations before taking a final view on any amendments to Bill 65. Committee is willing to work collaboratively with the department and looks forward to considering the results and recommendations from the department's engagement. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Kam Lake. Reports of standing and special committees. Member for Kam Lake.

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker -- I'm talking too fast even for myself.

MOTION TO RECEIVE COMMITTEE REPORT 41-19(2) AND MOVE INTO COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE, CARRIED

I move, seconded by Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes, that Committee Report 41-19(2), Standing Committee on Social Development Interim Report on the Review of Bill 65, Builders' Lien Act, be received and adopted by the Assembly. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? Any abstentions? The motion is carried. Bill 65 has been adopted by the Assembly.

---Carried

Reports of standing and special committees. Member for Yellowknife North.

BILL 66: AN ACT TO AMEND THE PROPERTY ASSESSMENT AND TAXATION ACT, RECEIVED AND MOVED INTO COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Your Standing Committee on Government Operations is pleased to provide its Report on Bill 66, An Act to Amend the Property Assessment and Taxation Act and commends it to the House. I have four pages to read today, Mr. Speaker.

Bill 66: An Act to Amend the Property Assessment and Taxation Act received second reading on November 3rd, 2022 and was referred to the Standing Committee on Government Operations for review.

Bill 66 makes changes to the Property Assessment and Taxation Act. These changes address known issues specific to the assessment side of the Act, based on suggestions from stakeholders to the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs.

Specifically, Bill 66:

- Streamlines certain administrative and operational process to make things more efficient without changing the overall intent of the act;
- Clarifies and modernizes terminology; and
- Ensures that the legislative framework supports a fairer, more effective system.

Bill 66 is the first of two planned pieces of legislation to amend the act. Phase two will deal with more complex taxation and authorities' issues. Public comments from MACA appear to imply that a second bill will not come forward until the 20th Assembly. Committee is disappointed with this apparent delay as MACA had previously committed to bringing forward a second bill in the life of the 19th Assembly. The act, which has not been comprehensively reviewed since it was first passed in 1988, urgently requires modernization. Committee hopes MACA will prioritize the second bill and bring it forward as soon as possible.

Committee considered public input

Committee sought public feedback on Bill 66 with a public notice and targeted engagement letters. Committee received written submissions from:

- The Northwest Territories Association for Communities; and
- The Northwest Territories Metis Nation.

All written submissions are included in an appendix to this report.

Committee also held a public review of Bill 66 on January 23rd, 2023. At that meeting, committee heard remarks from Minister of MACA, asked questions to departmental officials, and received oral comments from the NWTAC and the NWTMN. Committee thanks the NWTAC and the NWTMN for their engagement. Their participation helped committee identify amendments to improve the bill and highlighted other key issues for future consideration. Committee also wishes to highlight a concern raised by the NWT Metis Nation. The NWTMN indicated that they have asked for discussions with the Government of

the Northwest Territories to amend the act to exempt Indigenous Metis rights-based cabins from taxation. However, the NWTMN reports that discussions have not taken place. Committee strongly encourages the department to engage with all Indigenous governments on the phase two changes to the act.

Committee amended three clauses

Requiring tribunal decisions within three months

Clause 18 of Bill 66 proposed an operational change so appeals would be resolved in a timelier manner. Specifically, the clause would have required the Assessment Appeals Tribunal to sit within three months of the Territorial Board of Revision's decision.

Committee wanted to see this clause go further. While the clause set a time limit for the Tribunal to sit, it did not set a timeframe for the Tribunal to render a decision. The clause also falls short of the NWTAC's advocacy on the issue. NWTAC Resolution 21-98-12 urges: "That the tribunal be granted a period of no more than six months from the time of the deadline of appeals during which it must rule on said appeals."

Committee sought an amendment that would reflect the NWTAC's resolution. MACA accepted this request, drafting a motion to drop clause 18 of Bill 66 and to add subclause 19.1 to the bill. The new subclause requires the tribunal to make a decision within three months of receiving a notice of appeal.

Committee was satisfied with the changes and agreed to pass the amending motion at the clause-by-clause review.

Publishing ministerial orders that vary timelines

Section 112 of the existing Act allows the Minister to vary any deadline with an order. Two of the new deadlines introduced in the amended Bill 66 are:

1. The Territorial Board of Revision must give a decision by March 31 on complaints in the previous 12 months; and
2. The Assessment Appeals Tribunal must give a decision within three months of receiving a notice of appeal.

Committee was concerned that ministerial orders to vary these deadlines may not be sufficiently transparent to the public. The existing act does not expressly require variation

orders to be public – though they are registered and published in the next monthly issue of the Northwest Territories Gazette, which is publicly available.

Committee sought an amendment to require variation orders to be made public without delay. MACA accepted this request and drafted a corresponding motion. The motion split section 112 into two subsections: Subsection 112(1) retained the language of the existing section 112. Subsection 112(2) required any variation order to be published on the department's website within five days. Committee was satisfied with the amendment and approved the motion at the clause-by-clause review.

Requiring public approval for purchases by municipal council members, officers, and employees

Clause 22 of Bill 66 reverses the current ban on council members, officers, and employees in the six municipal taxing authorities to purchase taxable property offered for sale at a municipal public auction.

While supporting the intent of clause 22, the NWTAC explained that more detail in the clause would be beneficial. The NWTAC was concerned that municipalities may have difficulty interpreting the clause as it was drafted.

Committee sought an amendment to clause 22 to specify what it means for the council to provide "prior approval" for a purchase. Committee wanted to ensure that council's decision to approve would be made public and that council had more legislative guidance when granting approval.

MACA accepted committee's request and drafted a motion to amend. The amendment added subclause 97.81(1.1), which requires council's approval to be made by resolution and to be recorded in the minutes of the meeting at which the approval was given.

Committee was satisfied that this addition provided sufficient legislative guidance to municipalities and agreed to pass the motion with the amendment. Committee believes these requirements for public processes will support municipalities in managing the risk of potential conflicts of interest.

Further building on the NWTAC's feedback, committee asked that MACA commit to developing a guidance document covering council approval for purchases by municipal employees. Such a guidance document should include the options and best practices available

to municipalities to address the potential for conflict of interest. MACA should consult the NWTAC in this work.

Committee scrutinized board of revision timeline

Clause 15 of Bill 66 would require the Territorial Board of Revision to give a decision by March 31 on complaints in the previous 12 months. Committee was concerned about unworkable timelines – for example, if a complaint was made in mid- or late-March, the Board of Revision would only have a couple of weeks or days to give a decision. Committee considered putting forward an amendment that would define the deadline based on equal wait time.

MACA provided committee with further explanation on the choice for the March 31 deadline. The assessment roll is generally finalized in October; afterwards, there is a certain amount of time for ratepayers to make complaints, then the roll needs to be revised. MACA projected that, in the vast majority of cases, the notice of assessment is provided by February 15th – and in most cases earlier than that. That provides enough time for the Board of Revision to give a decision by March 31. The Board of Revision also only meets once per year. MACA wanted to avoid convening multiple meetings. The March 31 date also ensures complaints are decided on within the same fiscal year, averting an impact on the property taxes a municipality can collect in the next fiscal year. Finally, MACA pointed out that if the March 31st deadline is not workable, section 112 of the existing act allows the Minister to vary the date.

Committee accepted the department's explanation but brought forward and approved an amendment to ensure that, in the rare occasions that the Minister varies the deadline, the order would be made public without delay.

Conclusion

On February 13, 2023, committee held a clause-by-clause review. Committee passed a motion to report Bill 66, as amended, to the Legislative Assembly as ready for consideration in Committee of the Whole.

This concludes the Standing Committee on Government Operations' review of Bill 66. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Yellowknife North. Reports of standing and special committees. Member for Yellowknife North.

MR. JOHNSON: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Thebacha, that Committee Report 42-19(2), Report on Bill 66, An Act to Amend the Property Assessment and Taxation Act, be received by the Assembly and referred to Committee of the Whole. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? Any abstentions? The motion is carried. Committee Report 66 has been received and will be moved into Committee of the Whole for further consideration.

---Carried

Reports of standing and special committees. Tabling of documents. Minister responsible for Health and Social Services.

Tabling of Documents

TABLED DOCUMENT 843-19(2):
GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHWEST
TERRITORIES RESPONSE TO COMMITTEE
REPORT 37-19(2): REPORT ON THE
REVIEW OF THE 2022 AUDIT OF
ADDICTIONS PREVENTION AND
RECOVERY SERVICES

TABLED DOCUMENT 844-19(2):
ADDICTIONS PREVENTION AND
RECOVERY SERVICES WORK PLAN
(2022-2024)

TABLED DOCUMENT 845-19(2):
FOLLOW-UP LETTER FOR ORAL
QUESTION 1319-19(2): REGISTERED
NURSES LICENSING PROGRAM

TABLED DOCUMENT 846-19(2):
FOLLOW-UP LETTER FOR ORAL
QUESTION 1385-19(2): MIDWIFERY
PROGRAM

HON. JULIE GREEN: Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following four documents: Government of the Northwest Territories Response to Committee Report 37-19(2); Report on the Office of the Auditor General's Audit on Prevention and Recovery Services; Addictions Prevention and Recovery Services Work Plan (2022-2024); Follow-up Letter for Oral Question 1319-19(2): Registered Nurses Licensing Process; and, Follow-up Letter for

Oral Question 1385-19(2): Midwifery Program. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Tabling of documents. Minister responsible for Justice.

TABLED DOCUMENT 847-19(2):
FOLLOW-UP LETTER FOR ORAL
QUESTION 1341-19(2): CIVIL FORFEITURE

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following document: Follow-up Letter for Oral Question 1341-19(2): Civil Forfeiture. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Tabling of documents. Minister responsible for Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission.

TABLED DOCUMENT 848-19(2):
ANNUAL REPORT 2018 WORKERS'
ADVISOR OFFICE NORTHWEST
TERRITORIES AND NUNAVUT – TOWARDS
RECOVERY

TABLED DOCUMENT 849-19(2):
WORKERS' ADVISOR OFFICE
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES AND
NUNAVUT 2022 ANNUAL REPORT

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table the following two documents: Annual Report 2018 Workers' Advisor Office - Towards Recovery; and, Workers' Advisor Office Northwest Territories and Nunavut 2022 Annual Report. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Tabling of documents. Minister responsible for Environment and Natural Resources

TABLED DOCUMENT 850-19(2):
WASTE REDUCTION AND RECOVERY
PROGRAM 2021-2022 ANNUAL REPORT

TABLED DOCUMENT 851-19(2):
INFORMATION FOR RETURN TO WRITTEN
QUESTION 55-19(2): PUBLIC ACCESS TO
FORESTRY DECISIONS AND DECISION-
MAKING

TABLED DOCUMENT 852-19(2):
FOLLOW-UP LETTER FOR ORAL
QUESTION 1338-19(2): OUTFITTER
LICENSES

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following three documents: Waste Reduction and Recovery Program 2021-2022 Annual Report; Information for Return to Written Question 55-19(2): Public Access to Forestry

Decisions and Decision-Making; and, Follow-up Letter for Oral Question 1338-19(2): Outfitter Licenses. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Tabling of documents. Minister responsible for Infrastructure.

TABLED DOCUMENT 853-19(2):
GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHWEST
TERRITORIES RESPONSE TO COMMITTEE
REPORT 33-19(2): REPORT ON THE
REVIEW OF BILL 52: ELEVATORS AND
LIFTS ACT

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following document: Government of the Northwest Territories Response to Committee Report 33-19(2): Report on the Review of Bill 52, which was the Elevators and Lifts Act. Quyananni, Mr. Speaker.

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

TABLED DOCUMENT 854-19(2):
INSTITUTE FOR RESEARCH ON PUBLIC
POLICY PUBLICATION – EARLY LEARNING
AND CHILD CARE IN CANADA: WHERE
HAVE WE COME FROM, WHERE ARE WE
GOING?

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I wish to table a document entitled "Early Learning and Child Care in Canada: Where Have We Come and Where are We Going?" published by the Institute for Research on Public Policy. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Kam Lake. Tabling of documents. Member for Frame Lake.

TABLED DOCUMENT 855-19(2):
MINERAL RESOURCES ACT
REGULATIONS TARGETED ENGAGEMENT
WITH MINING INDUSTRY PRESENTATIONS
– DATE RANGE 2021 07 08 TO 2022 01 26

TABLED DOCUMENT 856-19(2):
MINERAL RESOURCES ACT
REGULATIONS TARGETED ENGAGEMENT
WITH MINING INDUSTRY PRESENTATIONS
– DATE RANGE 2022 01 26 TO 2022 02 23

TABLED DOCUMENT 857-19(2):
MINERAL RESOURCES ACT
REGULATIONS TARGETED ENGAGEMENT
WITH MINING INDUSTRY PRESENTATIONS
– DATE RANGE 2022 02 18 TO 2022 05 17

TABLED DOCUMENT 858-19(2):
MINERAL RESOURCES ACT
REGULATIONS TARGETED ENGAGEMENT
WITH MINING INDUSTRY PRESENTATIONS
– DATE RANGE 2022 09 09
TO 2022 11 28-29

TABLED DOCUMENT 859-19(2):
YUKON NEW MINERALS LEGISLATION
DISCUSSION PAPER, FEBRUARY 2023

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. I wish to tabling the following five documents: Mineral Resources Act Regulations Targeted Engagement with Mining Industry Presentations, Date Range 2021 July 8 to 2022 January 13; number 2, Mineral Resources Act Regulations Targeted Engagement with Mining Industry Presentations, Date range January 26, 2022 to February 23rd, 2022; number 3, Mineral Resources Act Regulations Targeted Engagement with Mining Industry Presentations, Date Range February 18, 2022 to May 17, 2022; number 4, Mineral Resources Act Regulations Targeted Engagement with Mining Industry Presentations, Date Range September 9, 2022 to November 28-29, 2022; number 5, Mr. Speaker, Yukon New Minerals Legislation Discussion Paper dated February 2023. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. Tabling of documents. Notices of motion. Motions. Notices of motion for the first reading of bills. First reading of bills. Second reading of bills. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters, Bill 23, 29, and 61, Committee Report 40-19(2), Minister's Statement 264-19(2), Tabled Document 681-19(2), Tabled Document 694-19(2), and Tabled Document 813-19(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: Thanks, Madam Chair. Committee wishes to consider Tabled Document 813-19(2), 2023-2024 Main Estimates, Industry, Tourism and Investment and Executive and Indigenous Affairs. Mahsi, Madam Chair.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, committee. We'll take a short recess.

---SHORT RECESS

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): I'll now call Committee of the Whole back to order. Committee, we are going to continue with the main estimates, the Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment. And we're going to continue on at tourism and parks, beginning on page 238 with information items on page 239 to 241. Oh sorry, I better ask the Minister if she has witnesses. Sergeant-at-arms, please escort the witnesses in.

Minister, will you please introduce your witnesses.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, on my left is Pamela Strand, deputy minister. And on my right is Nina Salvador, the director of finance.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. And as I said before, we are on pages 239 to 241, tourism and parks. Are there any questions from Members? There are no questions? Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. So I know that there was some fanfare made about how some NGO funding was increased in the budget. And I'm just wondering -- I'm looking at page 239, grants, contributions. Can the Minister tell us whether any of the grants and contributions were increased as a result of forced growth? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, there's one increase in this area. It is with respect to NWT Tourism.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. So the NWT Tourism doesn't actually show funding for NWT Tourism here, unless I'm misreading this, but is that the tourism industry contribution? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Let me turn that to the deputy minister just to point to which line item it'll be under, please.

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

MS. STRAND: Thank you, Madam Chair. So the NWT Tourism contribution sits on our grants and contributions under industry -- or sorry, tourism industry contribution. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. The visitor information centre line here, can the Minister tell us which visitor information centres are supported? And it doesn't look like there's any change there; I just want to confirm that. Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I certainly could provide a list. There's the Dempster-Delta Visitor Centre, Western Arctic Regional Visitors Centre, village of Fort Simpson, Yellowknife, Norman Wells, and in the South Slave is 60th Parallel and I can certainly provide more detail perhaps by breakdown in writing. That might be easier. Thank you.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. I think there was some one-time CanNor funding or something that was flowed through to the City of Yellowknife in previous years, or am I getting confused? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. I mean, there certainly are funds from CanNor that do come through at various points for various initiatives. Let me see if the deputy minister can speak to whether she knows what they may have funded for the City of Yellowknife.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Deputy minister.

MS. STRAND: Yes, thank you, Madam Chair. So we have been funding as well as the -- as CanNor on a -- I believe a three-year basis for the Yellowknife Visitors Information Centre. I will let you know that this is the last year that we have that extra top-up funding in our budget. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. So, yes, I think we can probably expect tourism to continue to pick up over the next year with the pandemic basically finally winding down. You know, where are we going with this stuff if there's -- it looks like the only increase in funding here is to NWT Tourism; how are we going to support folks moving forward? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I mean, yes, I certainly also hope that tourism continues to move forward. Right now there is -- I mean, NWT Tourism does do the lion's share, really, of all of our marketing. That was divested to them some years ago as being a specialty area that they can focus on. There is Northwest Territories, the Tourism 2025 still in play right now, which is still being implemented and there's funding for its implementation, and there's quite a number of funding programs still here for in-comers to the industry. So, you know, and the funding has continued to increase with respect to the implementation of T-2025. So, really, I think probably we would hear almost anyone, any department, any program, might say they want more money but at this point, they are -- it's preceding what was planned for in terms of being implementing the T-2025 program which ensures that the funding is flowing in an organized fashion. And for this coming fiscal it's \$364,000. So hopeful that that will indeed be more than adequate for this year to keep them moving forward and seeing, hopefully, a return on the private sector revenue side as well. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. I don't have anything further on this activity. Thank you.

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

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. My question is around hotel rooms, etcetera, in kind of a little bit not budgety but I think something that really should be aware of is it's come to my attention recently that a lot of the hotel rooms are quite full and that people are struggling to find accommodations, particularly if the accommodation, you know, needs to be booked in a short timeframe. And so I guess that really comes back to I know that some of that space is being taken up by contract workers, etcetera. So I'm just wondering has the Minister or the department had any further

conversations with the City of Yellowknife around allowing camps, etcetera, in camp, to then free up some of our hotel rooms for tourism. I guess the reason I ask this is that we have, in the past, had to turn down cold weather testing as a result of not having enough spaces in the hotels. So if the Minister could speak to how do we deal with our hotel capacity issue, that would be great. Thank you.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, it's certainly an excellent question. It's one I'm familiar with, really, as happening to be also a Yellowknife MLA. What I'd suggest at this point given that there's some city bylaw challenges potentially and obviously just the overall housing spectrum that is at issue in terms of understanding different needs. ITI can go back and have a conversation with NWT Tourism and the city, and I can certainly commit we'll make a point of doing that with a focus on increasing the availability of appropriate accommodation. Thank you.

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

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. I think another -- just to further make a little bit more points or comments around that is that also one of the issues that I hear around having construction camps and mining and other industry around is sort of the byproduct of the partying, etcetera, that may come from some of the workers that do come into town. So another point there for pushing for camps is that in a camp situation, the camp can regulate workers returning to the camp in the evening therefore limiting the amounts of alcohol that they can consume and then be, you know, creating trouble in our downtown core. So just more of a comment around that and why I think it's really important that we start to explore allowing those camps within city limits.

My next question, though, is more related to what the Minister can actually answer which is around the pandemic relief programs. And I know now we've lost a couple of them over the last two years, and there was one that is sunseting now which is the restart investment program.

Can the Minister or the department speak a bit to where is the federal government going with this? I know that there was a huge conversation as COVID hit around how do we restart tourism in Canada in general and some things around tourism travel grants for travellers, that kind of thing. So I'm just wondering if the Minister could

speaking a bit to any future federal contributions that are being spoken about and what is the federal government doing to restart our tourism economy. Thank you.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, there was a federal-provincial-territorial meeting just not that long ago in Vancouver, and it certainly I think was reflective that the experience across much of Canada is similar to ours, which is we're seeing a return to some degree, but also acknowledging that a lot of the operators are not uniformly back to where they were and necessarily uniformly back to being in a position to welcome back the tourists who do seem to be coming back in terms of the demand. So there is still some disconnect in that respect. We're not alone in experiencing that.

As far as new money from the federal government, I can say that the impression that we had quite clearly was that there was not a whole lot of new federal money coming in the budget for tourism or for sort of post-COVID relief which, you know, is not to say that there can't be ways of finding funding for -- whether it's training, labour market supports, you know, other ways by which the industry might benefit. There certainly is an interest in Indigenous tourism. There is an interest in looking at more rural opportunities for tourism products in terms of, again, the kind of experiences that tourists seem to be looking for. So hopefully we can see ourselves reflected in that and reflected in that in a northern way and not only in a way that is dictated from elsewhere. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. And that plays really nicely into my next area of conversation around different forms of tourism. I recently had the opportunity to attend the Grow NWT conference, which was the agricultural conference that was hosted by the territorial agri association last week. It was fantastic. And through that there was a lot more conversation around ecotourism, agri-tourism. You know, I think there's a real opportunity for -- that southerners would find it quite interesting to see how does the North feed itself and when we do get to a stage where we have innovative greenhouses and such, which we do. I mean, the Inuvik greenhouse is pretty fantastic.

So can the Minister speak a bit to whether there is opportunities for tourism in that area and

anything that might be coming down the line there. And the reason I bring it up is that it seems like there might be more money for agricultural investment at this point from the federal government versus tourism. So is there a way that we can be creative to lobby or leverage that agricultural money into a tourism sector as well? Thank you.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, look, I can convey just briefly a conversation I had actually with the executive director at that same conference which is -- which some of the products that they are putting out and looking at the entire food value chain from growing to production. You know, I actually asked, why are we not having more foodie tours? I had much the same reaction to be quite honest, given the wealth and the variety of things available in the North, a lot of them very unique and gourmet forging. So I completely agree. NWT Tourism was represented at the agri-grow conference that took place last week. And I would just note there are some initiatives that are starting up in terms of the partnering between the agriculture association, NWT Tourism. There's a company out in Vancouver, sun -- you know what, let me get the deputy minister to speak to that briefly because she will have it right.

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

MS. STRAND: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes, it's with Sungiven Foods, which is a fairly large grocery chain in Vancouver, partnering with NWT Tourism to raise awareness about the North and the opportunities here. So although it's not a foodie tour, it still has ties to more on the food side of the tourism sector. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. And I'm really excited to hear that. You know, I think it would be an amazing opportunity to offer, like, you know, go berry picking with an elder when we have people coming into the North. And as well too just all the mental health advantages of, you know, growing our own food and working with the earth and etcetera so I'm really happy to hear that.

I guess I just want to come back to something we talked about before the pandemic took over our lives, and that was the lack of anything around in the downtown core. In the winter months, when we do have the Aurora tours, you

often would see them sort of wandering around downtown kind of looking for things to do. I do recognize that the Yellowknife visitors centre is now up and running and have yet myself to get in there and plan to soon. However, can the Minister or the department speak a bit more about, you know, is there a plan to start hiring or having sort of almost showcasing artists or cultural exhibitions and such on a more frequent basis, just on a very small scale around the downtown, in order to provide something for our tourists to do on the offset hours? And even around there could then be some arts markets and such. Thank you.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, that probably is -- the answer there is probably going to have to look as much to the arts funding that is being proposed in the main estimates here as much as it is to tourism programming. But, again, as I had indicated earlier when I made a commitment that I will go back to NWT Tourism around accommodation issues and what work they may be doing, perhaps I'll add to that list, and I no doubt am due for a touch base with them, that we can speak specifically about what we can do to increase access to the arts sector as well. And again, you know, they are funded to support tourism broadly across the Northwest Territories. There's art funding to support artists across the territories. Maybe there are ways to take advantage and combine those things together so I'll add that to a list, and I'll add the agri-tourism to that same list. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you. And I appreciate having the 40 seconds left so I can ask one more question. So then I guess my last question is around the community tourism infrastructure. I look at that, and we have seen a few changes, and I know that we had an influx during the pandemic, when I was sitting in that seat, just to keep some money going into communities while building things like kitchen shelters, that sort of thing. I'm glad we're up a hundred thousand from last year but a hundred thousand dollars does not go very far when it comes to trying to build anything in the communities. Can the Minister speak to are there other access or funding pots that communities can access for this infrastructure or put together, and do we anticipate seeing a larger demand than we have the money for, and is more money coming? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Minister, if you can answer that shortly. If it's longer, maybe you could provide it in writing to the committee or to the Member. Thank you.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I would certainly be happy to provide a list to committee of all the tourism funding available. There are quite a number of pots. I do have a detailed note here that lists them all with the amounts, and that probably is the most effective way of putting that forward. And I would just otherwise give one quick note which is to say CanNor does often come in, and we are able to work with them when there's particular funding shortages for communities or to connect communities directly to CanNor so they can go to them. So wouldn't want to not give them that thank you where it's available. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. So we'll get that to -- okay, thank you. All right. Member for Yellowknife North.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I saw that there's an engagement and a land use permit going in to expand the parking when you get to the end of Tibbitt Lake at the end of the Ingraham Trail. Happy to see that. Happy to see that the signage has been added. I'm just hoping the Minister can clarify whether that's ITI or infrastructure money or operations or capital money, where exactly that money is coming from? Thank you.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, the signage is a shared initiative with ENR, ITI, and Infrastructure. I believe that we are responsible for the parking?

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Deputy minister Strand.

MS. STRAND: Madam Chair, that is Infrastructure. Thank you.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Well, I'll save questions on that for Infrastructure. I guess I'm going to try one more attempt, my last in this Assembly, about winter camping. I know there's many different ways this could look. I want to perhaps point out one of the lowest cheapest ways is I saw the town of Fort Smith recently partnered with the Salt River First Nation and is running a number of on the land camping expeditions which are available to everyone who wants to go on them. And there's a number of elders

participating, and it's kind of a training exercise. And I think this kind of, you know, bridges the gap in -- you know, it's kind of something ENR would typically run, perhaps even ECE. But I'm just wondering, you know, ITI has a lot of parks staff who obviously some of their work winds down during the winter, whether that's something ITI would explore, offering that type of kind of camping programming in the winter and perhaps using some of our territorial parks or perhaps just doing it on general public land. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, if there is an operator in the North Slave area that is interested in running winter camping, we would love to hear from them. There is going to be a whole list of funding opportunities that I'll be sharing with MLAs after today to give opportunity for potential operators to access funds to open their winter camping opportunity. The costs to the department, when we ran just two extra weeks back in 2020, was well over \$200,000 and largely because of the costs of the contractors. Now that is across all of the regions that were participating in that pilot back a couple of years ago but there was very low uptake, very high costs, and it literally was to pay for the contractors. So if there is a private sector party that wants to get involved in this area, please, as I said there's going to be a lot of opportunity for funding that they can apply for and hopefully participate in. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Yeah, thank you, Madam Chair, I guess just a bit of a comment. There is a couple private sector operators who are now at multiple years waiting for a response on their commercial lease applications to open some cabins and potentially rent them out. There is also multiple people who have expressed to me that if they were allowed to rent out for any commercial purposes their cabins that they would gladly do that. So perhaps just the Minister could have a conversation with her colleague at the Department of Lands and see what barriers, you know, exist in regulation and/or in accessing leases to offer some sort of winter camping, because I know there -- it's hard. You can't just -- there's no building presently that exists where you legally can do that. You have to go get a commercial lease application, which seems to not be happening. So I guess in the form of a question, is the department willing to kind of talk with Lands and

get an update on where they are at in some of their outstanding issues in this area? Thank you.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. I think it's been said before there have been regular meetings with the LNR departments, Lands, ENR, or now ECC and ITI, and I can certainly suggest that we put this on our shared agenda.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Are there any further questions under tourism and parks? Member for Thebacha.

MS. MARTSELOS: Thank you, Madam Chair. My first question is the extension of hours within the parks. At Queen Elizabeth Park, they close on September 1st, and not this past year but the year before we didn't have snow until November 3rd and we had warm weather until almost the end of October. So I'm not asking that it open until the end of October but at least until the end of September. It's really important that we encourage more tourism; we encourage people to use our parks as much as possible. And I'm just wondering how the Minister feels on this. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, so I mean, as I've said, I think, through the last round of questions, I certainly in general would be happy to see more uses of the parks and more tourism opportunities. The challenge is ensuring that the contractors who run the parks are available, firstly, and it may not -- that they are prepared to undertake whatever the asks are. And there then has to be sufficient occupancy and incoming revenue to make some business case for it. And it probably will not fully offset the costs to the department to keep the parks open. But if it could at least come close then we could get to a place of being able to propose or request the budget. So I understand that as for this coming season, say the Queen Elizabeth Park will be open until September 15th, and perhaps what we will do is look at what the rate of occupancy is with a view to determining if there's an opportunity to keep it open further based on the occupancy and the costs of doing so. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MS. MARTSELOS: During your recent discussion about the information -- visitor

information centre, so Fort Smith doesn't get funded for a visitor information centre? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I think that is correct. I was going to try and just pull my list up again. But my understanding, again, is that it's the town and Parks Canada that are filling that and the 60th Parallel Visitor Information Centre is currently the one that is receiving funding in the South Slave region. Thank you.

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

MS. MARTSELOS: So Fort Smith doesn't get funding for a visitor information centre? It's probably the warmest community and the garden capital of the Northwest Territories and has all these different events and a lot of tourists that go there, and we don't fund a visitor information centre for Fort Smith? I mean, going under the auspices of Parks Canada is not sufficient. I'd like to know what the criteria would be for Fort Smith to get some funding for a visitor information centre, whether it be run by either, one, the Salt River First Nation or the Fort Smith Metis Nation. So we have an Indigenous content to the visitor information centre. We always had one, and I'm going to speak about that in the next question. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. And, Madam Chair, not every community or every area necessarily has a visitor information centre or -- and not every visitor information centre is necessarily funded or operated by ITI. But I'll certainly commit to getting, as I said what that criteria it might look like, what -- you know, by what determination there are, just different gradient of funding that goes to visitor information centres. I can say that there certainly are asks that have come in from the town of Fort Smith and have received various funds on a project basis to support often. So, for instance, Mission Campground -- or Mission Park, rather, and that continues to be an option. But I'll get a bit more information for the Member with respect specifically to visitor operation centres -- or visitor information centres. Thank you.

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

MS. MARTSELOS: So, Madam Chair, Conibear Park used to have a visitor information centre and it was burnt down. It caught fire and was burned. It was during the winter. And since that happened, there's not been any centralized visitor information centre in that park. That park was donated by a family to the town of Fort Smith, and it had a kind of a log structure. And I just want to mention to the Minister, Madam Chair, that I'd like to see an erection of a visitor information centre within that park, along with a stage that they used to have many years ago. Since that left, we haven't had that in the community. We're supposed to be promoting these parks and these central areas for visitors and for the people of the community and surrounding communities, and I'd like them to examine that if possible. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, the deputy minister was actually quite recently in Fort Smith and perhaps I'll just, rather than me speak for her, have her speak to just whatever conversations briefly she might have had. I don't know that there is a specific ask from the town to us just yet. But I'll turn it to her for just some different detail. Thank you.

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

MS. STRAND: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes, I was able to meet with the Town of Fort Smith on a number of items. Conibear Park is also, we know, a high priority for the town. And we are there to help as a lead on developing that project. So we also hope that they can move forward on it. Another interest of the town was Mission Park as well and what that can offer to the community. So that's one that we will also be reengaging on with all of the interested parties. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MS. MARTSELOS: The last question I have is the utilization of the new conference centre in Fort Smith. Both the new Salt River First Nation conference centre and the Fort Smith Metis Nation building conference centre; one is a bit older, one is a newer one, but I'd like to ensure that the department starts having some conferences, the smaller conferences, held in some of these buildings that are owned by Indigenous people, groups in Fort Smith. We're always saying that we're going to encourage Indigenous involvement in conferences and ownership, and I don't see very many

conferences being held there that are held by the government. In fact, when they phone up they say oh, that's too much and they want to go somewhere else to have their conference. I think that is not okay. I'm sure they pay a good buck when they go to the Chateau Nova or the Explorer. So I'm just saying that we have to start encouraging our own Indigenous groups. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I completely agree. There is the Tourism NWT conference bureau that sits within NWT Tourism. What I'd suggest is perhaps ensuring that there's a more direct connection between the conference bureau, which admittedly was not seeing a significant amount of incoming conferences here during COVID but is back to work now and looking forward. So perhaps making sure that they can confirm with me, again on my list of things I want to talk to them about, that they have a direct liaison to the Town of Fort Smith and to the facilities that are there. Thank you.

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

MS. MARTSELOS: One last comment. My last comment is I want to thank the deputy minister visiting Fort Smith. All the leaders that she approached and went to visit were very, very pleased with her visit. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Do we have any more questions or comments for tourism and parks? Member for Monfwi.

MS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you. I know they started this before me because I wasn't here the last week, Thursday. I just wanted to ask here tourism industry contribution. I just want to ask the Minister how much of this is being spent in Tlicho region?

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I have 2021-2022 actuals here, and I can provide that as a one-page summary to the Member. Perhaps that might be the easiest. Right now the breakdown that I have is by the administrative regions of the Government of the Northwest Territories and not necessarily relating to individual Members' ridings. So as I say, I can provide a two-page summary here to Members and then we'll try and see if we can provide that

in more greater detail at the same time. Thank you.

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

MS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you. Thank you, Madam Chair. Yeah, that's why it's really important to have Tlicho region so that way we know how much money is being spent and what are we doing with program and services, so. And I know that there are a lot of people in my region they inquire -- they've been asking about getting into tourism business but the liability and for insurance, it's too costly for a lot of them. So I just wanted to know what is the department doing working with the local people to promote tourism for businesses?

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. So, again, Madam Chair, would look to pointing again to the list of funding programs that are going to be provided to all Members. But perhaps I'll turn to the deputy minister and see if she can add something more specific at this point. Thank you.

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

MS. STRAND: Thank you, Madam Chair. So, yes, I think there's an extensive list of things that our North Slave regional office have been working on with respect to the Tlicho. So first is the North Arm campground but we've also been working with Whati and the Tlicho communities offering different training courses. You know, on our tourism program on our website, and we can include these to the Member as well, are the different, you know, how to be a tourism operator and in those conversations, you know, there is that discussion on insurance and how we work on that. So we're fairly active with getting into the communities with our North Slave regional office. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you. Thank you for the information. I know that we're next to Yellowknife. So, you know, like we're losing out on a lot of opportunities, especially within tourism. And here we don't even have a tourism visitors centre. You know, because I know a lot of people are saying they each out to the people but we have nothing for them because it's not just Yellowknife, and then some people that -- people that come from the south, they go to Yellowknife and they get tired of Yellowknife but we don't have nothing to offer

them in Tlicho region. So that's why I'm saying that, because a lot of people are looking for authentic experience. And even last year when we had 100-year celebration, we had a lot of tourism that were in Yellowknife that went to Behchoko when they heard about when we were having the celebration and they said yeah, like, we're tired; you know, like it's the same ole and they trying to reach out, go to other places, and as soon as they found the opportunity they went, they came and spent, you know -- like, they really enjoyed themselves. This is what I heard from some of them, and some of them were from Ontario, from the East Coast. So that's why I'm saying that, you know, like it would be nice. I would like to see this department, the Minister, to promote and to have a visitors centre in -- either in Behchoko or in Whati or the junction somewhere, you know. So that way the tourism when they're coming, we can tell them what we do have. But right now we don't have much to offer them, especially in our regions, because everything is in Yellowknife and Yellowknife is not the only place. We do need stuff too in the small communities. So that's why I'm just asking that, how come we don't have a visitors centre in Tlicho region? Thank you.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, if the communities -- one of the communities in the Tlicho region are interested to work on some form of visitors centre or facility and, again, happy to receive that kind of a request. There's been a lot of work gone in to Whati to try to work with the community and decide what they may want in terms of tourism product or tourism opportunities. And my understanding is the Tlicho government has been taking the lead on these issues, quite rightfully, and happy to work with them on that. There's been a lot of money that has gone to the North Arm Park camping grounds area, including access to, you know, interpretive signage and boardwalks, etcetera. And, indeed, money has gone away from other projects in the North Slave region generally into the North Arm Park in order to get that done and to get it done early and on time. Community tourism coordinators would be another place I'd point, Madam Chair. There needs to be someone in the community and the community wants to have to have a community tourism coordinator, and that might help to advance more -- to put forward in a more advanced way what is available in an offer in the Tlicho community, because I mean, I think we'd all agree we'd like to see more but it will have to be Tlicho government led with us in support. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you. Thank you, Madam Chair. Is there a timeline for the North Arm Park; when is it going to be completed?

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. I believe it is open -- at least largely open, to be this summer, Madam Chair.

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

MS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just want to talk about, I guess, the arts and one thing I still see that there's a need for is to secure naturally tanned hides for crafts and garments and those type of things. I'm just wondering what the government is -- or the department's doing to ensure that happens so that we don't have -- you know, don't have the artists having to go south to look for tanned hides that aren't from the Northwest Territories or are commercially tanned? Thank you.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. So, Madam Chair, this is another area that I think what I may have to do is put this one on my list for our shared multi-department sit down between the LNR departments. ENR does play, I believe, a lead role or a significant role in terms of accessing hides. There have been some pilot programs, I believe, over the last year or so, in terms of finding different ways to provide access to hides, and I have heard the different views from members of the community as to whether or not those were appropriate and culturally relevant. So as I say, I will put that on my list for a meeting and once we've had that meeting, we'll confirm with the Member what opportunities there may be going forward between the two departments. Thank you.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. Next question here. You know, I guess last week we had the agri conference here in Yellowknife. So I'm just wondering, you know, we talk about agri-tourism and that. How much

interest is there by the Indigenous governments or persons or businesses, I guess, in providing that type of service? Because, you know, when I look at it, when I look at tourism, and it doesn't seem that's something that Indigenous people may want to do. So I'm just -- and I may be wrong, so I just want to be corrected if I am, to see if -- you know, how much interest there is. Thank you.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I can't say on the perspective of what Indigenous governments' view on it might be. What I can speak to a bit more is with respect to the foraging and harvesting opportunities, you know, for example Ecology North, I believe, has been running tours out to do harvesting walks or foraging walks here just in Yellowknife. So to the extent that these are the people who understand and know the land the best, I would think those opportunities are there. Whether they want to commodify that and turn that into a tourism product, again, there is funding opportunity for mentorship, for mentor training, and then to market their products through NWT Tourism. And it's just a matter of connecting those opportunities should people be interested in doing so. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. And I see an opportunity there, I guess, for Indigenous people, especially when you're looking at, you know, whether it's, you know, berries or whatever it is that's grown naturally or in the Northwest Territories, and like I say walking tours and that. So, you know, there's a real opportunity I think there. But just, I was just trying to get a sense on the, you know, run of the mill of agriculture that is, you know, that we see from the south that's moved into the North, that's all. So more of a -- just a comment. But I'll just go on here.

The other thing that we don't seem to talk about much is the new initiatives as well for tourism. Like, we have some, you know, beautiful places around here. Like, Hay River, you know, we've got Louise Falls; we've got Alexander Falls; you know, we've got the lake and all that. You know, and I look at it, and I -- you know, when I go down there I'm thinking, you know, what could we do different here? And then I talk to some of the people that work in the department and that and, you know, one thing we should be looking at is expanding what we have and, like, for, you know, around Enterprise there, the falls is, you know, a walking bridge or something like that.

Is that something that the department is looking at, new initiatives to expand what we have for tourism into, you know -- you go to the falls and you're kind of -- you're concentrated in one spot but you may be able to get over top of it, you know, and things like that. I know there might be a little bit of a liability issue there but, you know, we got to throw those type of ideas out there. Thank you.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, happy -- I mean, the ideas, I couldn't agree more with. Happy to have the ideas. Exactly who the champion might be and then connecting the champions to the funding is, I suppose, the more challenging side. That said, I would note that there is now funding for interpretive programming within parks, which is new. That is an asset I have heard here. And there's now \$50,000 per year proposed to support interpretive programming which hopefully would -- I mean, I'd love to see that be fully expended this year. It certainly would give that value-add about the distinctness of each culture and region. So, you know, I'm happy to give that a little plug and a little nudge and I'd be happy to also see that it gets fully utilized. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. One other area here is -- you know, where I can see expansion is the border there to Highway No. 1. You know, again, we got beautiful, you know, booth there -- or building there for tourists and we've got places for people to stay. But I think that could be expanded. But the issue there is that it comes down to power. And right now we're generating power either with diesel generators or sometimes with other sources. And we have Alberta -- we have power there going -- I'm not sure how far it goes into. If it goes to Indian Cabins or a little bit this side. And I would like, I guess, the department to take a look at the cost of possibly bringing that line into the territories to provide power to it, because we are spending a lot of money anyway, and see if it would make sense because we wouldn't be maintaining -- we wouldn't be having to maintain generators and, you know, worry about that. So it would just allow us maybe to expand the season a little bit around there and expand the services that we could provide to tourism. Thank you.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. And, Madam Chair, I've certainly not heard it proposed from within the department or with colleagues over at Infrastructure that Alberta Power can come up here in any sort of easy or cost-efficient basis. Certainly would love to be frankly wrong about that, Madam Chair. But there are efforts underway to move to renewables where possible, that some of the parks are seeing a move to having some small scale various renewable initiatives, particularly around solar. So again, I can perhaps get back to the Member with respect to what's happening. It's often an Infrastructure/ITI joint initiative and often under the small cap side of the capital budget. So, you know, not to say that it gets lost in the small cap budget, Madam Chair, but there's a long list of items there and they may not all get the attention that they deserve for the fact that they are actually providing power alternatives at the parks which does have a significant impact -- trickling effect on other things like tourism. So let me get -- I can highlight a few of those initiatives. I just don't have the capital budget, small cap, projects in front of me. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: That's all. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Are there any further questions? All right, so please turn to page 238, Industry, Tourism and Investment, tourism and parks, operations expenditure summary, 2023-2024 Main Estimates, \$16,795,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. There are additional information items on page 242 to 246. Are there any questions on those? Member for Tu Nedhe-Willideh.

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you, Madam Chairman. Anyways, I'm just thinking about the business incentive policies. In the early days when I was the local housing authority manager in the community in N'dilo, we managed all our housing in our community. We had a block funding agreement with the housing corporation where we agreed to build X amount of units in our community. But we had to follow the business incentive policy which means that we had to buy all cabinets from the North, all the windows from the North, all the screw jacks from the North, all the trusses from the North, etcetera. But what's happening now is that, you know, the chief in Fort Resolution made it very clear that they don't want no trailers in the community and yet we know here we are, we're

bringing trailers into the community, taking away employment from our people in the communities. And so I'm not really sure in this going forward, your policy, the business incentive policy and working with the housing corporation, I'm not sure how they're going to really fix this problem. We know that high cost of living. We know the high cost of building. We know the high cost of materials in the south and the labour in the North etcetera is high. And so I remember in the early days where we had the business incentive policy, they kind of frown -- they didn't really like the idea that we were to use -- buy trailers from the south. And they promote it in the business incentive policy. But yet now we got these trailers that are being purchased from down south with no real benefit to northern BIP suppliers. So I'm not sure how your department is managing that. Can you maybe talk about that a little bit so it's a little bit more clear as to how you're going to deal with this BIP policy on the Industry, Tourism and Investment? Thank you.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. So there is a procurement review underway, still right now, that was begun some time ago and a fairly detailed set of recommendations received some time ago. It is now at a stage where there are a number of changes that have been made and some more changes coming forward to the public side of the procurement work that the government is doing. Things, for example, around just clarifying, you know, how bids are being received, trying to ensure that it's more -- that, you know, vendors are being monitored for ensuring that they actually follow through with whatever their commitments are. And there's a lot of work happening, particularly through EIA with respect to Indigenous procurement and what Indigenous procurement policy might look like. With respect to the business incentive policy, there's a need to better understand the definition of a "business," of a northern business and of a northern Indigenous business, and that work is actively underway right now to be done in the life of this government. So there's quite a number of things happening.

Specific issues with respect to whether or not to choose a trailer or not a trailer, I'm not familiar with, but I'd be happy to receive the details of that and then could then provide a more detailed and specific response to the Member. Thank you.

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

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you, Madam Chair. So going forward, I guess, I'm just thinking that as claims get done in the North and Indigenous governments want greater control on managing the housing situation in their communities, I guess would your department -- or are they going to start looking at how they're going to start working with Indigenous governments to fulfilling some of these roles through either agreements that they have either through a block funding agreement or contribution agreements? So sooner or later, this government here has to start recognizing that we are going to have settled claims. And right now in committee that I've been involved, none of the departments are -- have the foresight to say that in four years or eight years we're going to have these agreements. We're -- what's happening in committees that they're just going ahead status quo without recognizing that the claims are going to be there. So going forward, do you guys have a vision in how you're going to work with Indigenous governments to look at how we're going to start transferring some of these responsibilities through decentralization? Thank you.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. So, you know, obviously, Madam Chair, my comments have to be limited to within the scope of what the Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment can speak to. EIA is coming next so, you know, heads up to my colleagues who are going to be sitting here shortly. But with respect to what the Department of ITI can do, you know, I can speak, Madam Chair, to the work we've already done with the Intergovernmental Council and more on the development of the Mineral Resources Act regulations. But ITI has been the lead department to enact and to put forward and to work with the Intergovernmental Council at the secretariat level, in particular to really co-develop and what is happening with the Mineral Resource Act regulations. And that process is one that has been very intensive. We've been figuring out and understanding how it will look as its evolved. And, you know, I think that's -- if I was to point to one thing that speaks to how the Northwest Territories is going to have to evolve the way we govern and do our governance, both as a public government and then vis-a-vie Indigenous governments and modern treaty holders, that is a process that, again having now seen and unfold, provides some very, I think, exciting lessons for how things can be done differently. The other one I'd point back to is the procurement review where, again, we've been trying to do that not only as a government led/government run but

as one that is inclusive. It takes a little longer to have a more inclusive conversation but the product at the end is hopefully better. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Any further questions? Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

MR. EDJERICON: Madam Chair, I note that she touched on the Minerals Act. Right now it's also under review to my understanding. But it's also a concern that was also brought to my attention by a member from my community that, you know, there should still be more Aboriginal and Indigenous engagement on this Act, but right now it's -- what's happening is that they're working behind the scenes it seems like with industry, etcetera. Is it your hope to start working with Indigenous governments and then Denedeh Diamond Corporation, I guess they changed their name now, but in terms of getting some feedback on what the views are of the Aboriginal people on the amendments of the Mineral Act? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, the Intergovernmental Council has been a co-development partner of the Mineral Resources Act regulations. They have sat at the table hand-in-hand with ITI in terms of getting to where we are at this point. And notwithstanding, I know perhaps not the view of every Member in this House, the industry partners out there are often quite critical of the fact that they feel that they haven't had the opportunity to have as much input as they want. So it seems like you can't always make everybody happy. But in this case, we have taken the legislative protocol that was brand new and put that into motion and put that into action, and there's a now codeveloped process through which the modern Mineral Resources Act regulations are ones that have had the Indigenous governments and modern treaty holders, as well as Council of Leaders, but IGC in particular, have been hand-in-hand in developing what that's going to look like and helping us to drive what the policy terms would be before getting to a point of actually drafting those regs. So it's been a very different process. It's been very unique anywhere in Canada. I do think it's going to produce something that we as Canadians can be proud of and as Northerners can be proud of. And I certainly -- you know, again, the process isn't over by any means. The process is still underway. But it is one that has really enacted that legislative protocol as being something

unique and different. So if there are Indigenous governments who, for some reason are not happy with the IGCS process, I mean that's probably a question for EIA. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Did you have any further questions under the section? Thank you, Member for Tu Nedhe-Willideh.

MR. EDJERICON: And just going forward on page 242 and 243. Again, regional allocation of funding and positions etcetera. I mentioned a few weeks ago as well that we got to -- I guess I do have a concern in regards to how North Slave is -- how we're rolled up into the North Slave region, whether it be N'dilo, Dettah. And then the question is where does Lutselk'e fit in, are they a part of the North Slave or South Slave? And in terms of the South Slave region, again, right now from what I was told last time I was going through this is that South Slave is predominantly in Fort Smith and Hay River but -- so Fort Resolution, yes, it falls in the South Slave but then in terms of positions and allocation, it's really skewed here because when you take a look at it, 15 full-time positions for whether it be the North -- sorry, headquarters, and then other positions we have, it's nothing on here, part-time seasonal. But anyway, I guess what I'm trying to say is that, you know, we may -- the government's going to have to really take a look at how we're going to go forward with this document because N'dilo and Dettah is rolled into the North Slave, and Fort Resolution and Lutselk'e is also -- I presume it's part of the South Slave, so. But yet in my Tu Nedhe-Willideh riding we've got four communities. So I don't know when the government's going to start changing their booklet here to reflect that. So I just want to know what are your plans to fix this problem? Thank you.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. So, Madam Chair, this is just the Business Development Investment Corporation, and it's just -- so the 15 staff mentioned here are really just for the BDIC. And they do -- a lot of their work, while based in headquarters, they support staff, ITI staff who will deliver their frontline work out in communities through the EDO offices that are based in communities around the Northwest Territories. And at this point, there's no intention necessarily to change the fundamental functioning of the BDIC. There is a lot of work underway right now to change -- well, to change their act for one,

which I believe is before the House. There's a new corporate plan out for them. And there's a real drive to try to look at better positioning the range and the scope of business supports for micro lending through to the larger lending, which is what BDIC would be responsible for on a Northwest Territories scale.

As for the reorganization fundamentally of the administrative regions of the Government of the Northwest Territories, that is not something that I'm aware that there's any, you know, effort or initiative underway to fundamentally do that. That would be a fairly significant restructuring that would be fairly costly and would have to involve all the departments. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Are there any further questions from Members on these information items? Seeing none, please return now to the departmental summary found on page 221, revenue summary, information items on page 222. Questions?

Committee, I will call the departmental summary. Industry, Tourism and Investment, operations expenditure, total department, 2023-2024 Main Estimates, \$61,476,000. Member for Frame Lake.

COMMITTEE MOTION 365-19(2):
MAIN ESTIMATES 2023-2024, INDUSTRY,
TOURISM AND INVESTMENT, DEFERRAL
OF DEPARTMENT (PAGE 221),
CARRIED

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. I move that we defer further consideration of the estimates for the Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment at this time. Merci, Madam la Presidente.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. The motion is in order. To the motion?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? All those abstaining? The motion is carried. Consideration of the Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment, 2023-2024 Main Estimates, operating expenditures, total department, is deferred.

---Carried

Thank you, Minister. Thank you to the witnesses for appearing before us. Sergeant-at-arms, please escort the witnesses from the Chamber. We will take a short recess.

---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 Department of Executive and Indigenous Affairs. Does the Premier have any opening remarks?

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Yes, I do, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Go ahead.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: I am here to present the 2023-2024 Main Estimates for the Department of Executive and Indigenous Affairs. Overall, the 2023-2024 Main Estimates continue to support the priorities of the 19th Legislative Assembly and vision of Budget 2023, by:

- Funding the GNWT's negotiation and implementation efforts with respect to the conclusion of self-government, resource and land claims agreements with Indigenous governments; and,
- Providing support for the departmental activities related to the implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

The Department's main estimates propose a one percent decrease from the 2022-2023 Main Estimates. This is based on a \$120,000 reduction to the overall contract services budget to better reflect actual expenditures that the department has incurred year over year as there have historically been surplus amounts in this budget category. These main estimates support the mandate objectives for the Department of Executive and Indigenous Affairs while continuing to meet the government's fiscal objectives to prioritize responsible and strategic spending. That concludes my opening statements. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, I do. Thank you.

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. On my right is Martin Goldney, the deputy minister of Executive and Indigenous Affairs. And on my left is Ms. Lauren

Alexandra, the director of shared corporate services. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Welcome. 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): Okay. Committee, we will defer the departmental summary and review the estimates by activity summary beginning with cabinet support, starting on page 124 with information items on page 125. Questions? Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. Can I get an update as to where we're at with an offshore accord? Thanks, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Madam Premier.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you. Thank you, Madam Chair. The last I heard was the federal government was going to be -- the federal government extended their moratorium on the offshore. There's no doubt about that. They had scientific review that was done. The next steps were to be working with the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation membership to review that scientific review and then process would carry forward with the accord. The accord is three parties. The federal government -- well, four. The federal government, the Northwest Territories, Yukon, and the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation. So we're still waiting for the scientific review to be reviewed. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. I don't really understand why an offshore accord needs to wait for these other things. Can the Premier shed some light on that for me? Thanks, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member. Madam Premier.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. They don't need to wait. We were working on them all simultaneously. There is a little bit of a trust issue that we're trying to address right now, Madam Chair, with the federal government. And so hopefully when the federal government shares the scientific review, that will regain some of that trust. So it's always a delicate area that we work on when we're trying to work with different parties,

different government levels. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Okay, thanks. I'd like to ask about the scientific review. Is there any public document that's now finished, or is it finished and when is it going to be made public? Thanks, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Madam Premier.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. We have asked for that to be made public as well. My understanding from the federal government is they're going to work with the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation, their membership first, and then we'll still pressure them to make that report public because I do believe it should be a public document. So thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks. So I'm just trying to understand this. So scientific review was probably contracted by the federal government and, you know, it's finished. So why does that have to go through some sort of process with IRC before it's actually made public? Like, the work's finished I presume, but can you shed any light on that for me? Thanks, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Madam Premier.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. The work on the scientific review was to be done in cooperation with the Inuvialuit, the GNWT, the Yukon government. So that is why that work should be shared with the membership first. There's been no discussion with the four parties on that science-based review at this point. So we're asking for a review of that so that we can all sit at the table and discuss it first. And, really, I mean, even if they reached out to the Inuvialuit, it is their land. It's their area. So I think that they -- to do due diligence, I think that the federal government should share their findings and have that conversation with the people that are affected by it. After that work is done, then our next push is to make that public. But, again, recognizing that that's a federal government document. We took part in it and so all we're asking for is to let's have the conversations first. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Yeah, just seems rather mysterious to me, but okay. I want to move on to the external advisory table that I think this is another place where I can raise that, or is there a different activity I'm supposed to raise it in?

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Sorry, which?

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. So there's an external advisory table for NGOs that EIA had committed to establish, it seems like a long time ago. There was a public call for people to submit names. Where are we at with this, and is this the right activity to ask questions about that? Thanks, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): If it's not, I'm sure you'll have the answer. Madam Premier.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. It took me a while to figure out which committee as well. So yes, the NGO advisory committee, we did ask -- put an ad out, ask for people that were interested to sit on that committee. We got quite a few interested actually and so we've just picked the committee members. We tried to be as diverse as possible within that and representing all the regions as well, not just in from Yellowknife. And so we're just -- I believe this week/last week they've appointed. They're letting people know now. And they have one month to be able to do that work and then bring back recommendations to us on what we should be doing differently with the NGO sector. As soon as we find out more, so we will actually be willing to meet with committee as well and update committee. Thank you.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. So can the Minister share the membership of this external -- or the NGO advisory group with Members even on a confidential basis if necessary, or announce it, even better? Thanks, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Madam Premier.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. So I will have to check. I mean, that work has just been going on. So we'll check to see if they've all been notified first, which I know that they've been working on the last week so hopefully they've all been notified although sometimes people are hard to get. So I'm not too sure if it will be made public. I don't see a reason why. But the least I will commit to is that if there's any reason that I can't, then I will share the names of all members with MLAs

in confidence, if there's any reason that I can't. But I don't see at this point why I can't. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Yeah, thanks, Madam Chair. I'm all for doing it publicly. Like, I would think that this is something you'd want to give yourselves some credit for, so. In any event, I think I heard the Premier say, though, that this group is only going to be around for a month? It seems like a pretty short timeframe to look at some of these issues and I would have thought that you might want to have some kind of group like this maybe on an ongoing basis, maybe they meet, you know, once or twice a year to bounce ideas off them. They might have some advice, suggestions, for how we improve our relationship and funding of NGOs. But did I hear that right, just one month to do some work? Thanks, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Madam Premier.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes, this group that we're bringing together now is a working group, Madam Chair. All of them should have experience within the fields, hopefully years of experience within the different fields. So we're really looking from them from an experience viewpoint of what do they need, what do we need to work on now. I agree with the Member that perhaps this should be something that's long term. I don't think that at this point I'm ready to commit to that. This is going to be a group that will receive an honorarium for their work done. I think that in general, Madam Chair, that the NGO sector has not been consulted appropriately within governments, this government, past governments. This government had COVID in fairness but past governments as well. So I think that the Member is right. We should be looking at some kind of a forum that we can actually have more engagement with the NGO sector. They're valuable, they provide incredible amount of work, and we do need to recognize them. But this work is to meet our commitments, our priority, and it's really structured work-focused and paid work. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. Yeah, I guess I'd like to get a commitment from the Premier then that the report recommendations, whatever, from this group are going to be made public and that there's going to be a response from the Cabinet to those recommendations

that can also be made public. Thanks, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member. Madam Premier.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. At this point, absolutely the report will be public unless there's things that are confidential under the Privacy Act that I have to redact, I think is the right term for that of course. But other than that, like, if there's names etcetera, those kind of things, but other than that the report should be public and the recommendations. I mean, what's the use of doing it if we don't have some kind of reply to the recommendations. So, yes, I will commit to that. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks. That's all I have on this one. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Are there any further questions under cabinet support? Seeing none. Please turn to page 124, Executive and Indigenous Affairs, cabinet support, operations expenditure summary, 2023-2024 Main Estimates, \$2,290,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. We'll now move to corporate communications, beginning on page 127 with information item on page 128. Questions under corporate communications? Seeing none, please turn to page 127, Executive and Indigenous Affairs, corporate communication, operations expenditure summary, 2023-2024 Main Estimates, \$1,512,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Directorate, beginning on page 130 with information items on page 131 to 133. Are there any questions under the directorate? Seeing none -- oh, Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. I think this is the part of the budget where the government service officers are found, is that correct?

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Yes.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. Are we adding any to the network in this budget? Thanks, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Madam Premier.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. No, not at this time we're not adding any. I haven't received any requests on over to do that as well. I do know that, Madam Chair, that they would like a one stop kind of in Yellowknife but these really are for people in the communities so that they can access. A lot of it is actually translation services, elders, etcetera, to access programs. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. Well, the Premier jumped ahead a few of my questions there. But let's start with which communities don't have GSOs right now so that they can know that the Premier's ready to fund them when they submit a request. Thanks, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Madam Premier.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I can't rattle off which ones I don't but I can rattle which ones I do based on the sheet. So we have them in Lutselk'e, Behchoko, Gameti, Whati, Wekweeti, Fort Resolution, Hay River Reserve, Fort Liard, Fort Providence, Nahanni Butte, Jean Marie River, Smbaa K'e, Colville Lake, Deline, Fort Good Hope, Tulita, Aklavik, Fort McPherson, Paulatuk, Sachs Harbour, and Tsiigehtchic. Thank you, Madam Chair. I think that's it.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks. Well, I want to thank the Premier for rhyming those off all so quickly. But let's just -- this is a free advertisement so if your community was not named, you want a GSO, the Premier's happy to entertain the proposal. So, there. So I do want to talk about the GSO function or that sort of service in the context of the regional centres and even in Yellowknife. We actually do have that in Yellowknife for the Francophone community and, as I understand it, it's actually quite well used and provides good service. So, you know, we talked in the past about is there an opportunity to partner with the federal government as we do in some of the smaller communities as well with Service Canada, then these people doing some Service Canada work as well. There's a Service Canada office in Yellowknife and, you know, is there any further thoughts about trying to work with the federal government so that there can be a combined storefront single service window so to speak for

the federal territory government in a place like Yellowknife? Thanks, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Madam Premier.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I think that really the whole purpose of the GSOs, government service officers, was to be able to provide services in small communities. It wasn't seen as a regional or a headquarters initiative. I note that there may be some appetite for it. I'm not against it either. But at this stage and honesty, Madam Chair, we're at the end of the government. We got, like, huge things we're trying to get finished within EIA. We've got, like, not only the priorities, the mandates, etcetera. We've got, like, things going on geopolitically that we're also watching for. We just went through COVID, etcetera. So I would say within the term of this government, it is not something that I'm looking at taking on at this point. It might be something the Member wants to bring forward in the next Assembly again. Those things take time to do. And my focus right now is getting done what we've already got on our plate. Now, if the opportunity slipped by me and there was conversation, I would take the opportunity, but at this point it's not something I'm going to focus a lot of time on. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. Yeah, the Premier knows I'm pretty persistent because I've been raising this now, I think, for about seven years. So maybe it needs to go on a transition report or something for the next Assembly to deal with. I think that's all I've got on this one. Thanks, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. All right, so are there any further questions under the directorate? Seeing none, please turn to page 130, Executive And Indigenous Affairs, directorate, operations expenditure summary, 2023-2024 Main Estimates, \$6,501,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Executive Council offices, beginning on page 135 with information items on page 136. Questions? There are no questions, please turn to page 135.

Executive and Indigenous Affairs, Executive Council offices, operations expenditure summary, 2023-2024 Main Estimates, \$4,176,000, does committee -- oh, Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. You're just speeding through all this stuff so I commend you for that. But I think this is the section of the EIA budget, if I've got it correctly, where negotiations funding is found. And I'm just wondering what is happening with negotiations. You know, in the last Assembly, the Premier -- when he was a candidate for Premier, he promised to have all the negotiations completed at the end of four years -- oh, I'm in the wrong section. There's one more. I'll wait, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): All right. So please turn to page 135, Executive and Indigenous Affairs, Executive Council offices, operations expenditure summary, 2023-2024 Main Estimates, \$4,176,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, committee. Indigenous and intergovernmental affairs, beginning on page 138 with information items on pages 139 and 140. Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Wow, thanks, Madam Chair. I think I'm on the right one now. So I mentioned, in the last Assembly there was a promise to get all the negotiations done by the end of the four-year life of the Assembly. And the only thing that happened was an agreement-in-principle on self-government for Norman Wells Metis. And so where are we at with negotiations? Look, I fully recognize that COVID was not helpful in terms of meeting and working together and so on. And I'm not asking the Premier to divulge I hope anything that's confidential, but I think there was a mandate commitment to get two agreements. Are we anywhere near that? You know, we got less -- what, six months, eight months left; are we going to get two agreements? Thanks, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member. Madam Premier.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Actually, yes, so I'm going to try to do this politically correct because negotiations are confidential so you can't really share the process where they are. However, what I can say is that I'm just going to be bringing an information item to Cabinet within the next day or two, and then I'll be providing a confidential briefing, if AOC wants, to the Members to actually tell them where they are. What I will say, Madam Chair, is we're really close and we're a lot farther along than I thought we'd be. And if things aren't done in this government, it'll be really early in the next

government. But that's all I'm going to say at this point without going further into that. But I am willing to brief committee at any time. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: I can hardly wait. Thanks, Madam Chair. Yeah, look forward to some good news on that front and getting more information.

So I guess the next topic is where are we at with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples? You know, it was a mandate commitment to do some work on this and just can the Minister kind of describe where we're at, recognizing that there's also a special committee that tabled an interim report on this topic. So thanks, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member. Madam Premier.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I feel like I've already briefed that Member on this item. But for the public, absolutely we are -- again, another exciting piece of work that we're looking. And this work was done with the Council of Leaders table. It wasn't easy. You know, it took a lot of work and not everybody's on board; the majority are on board. This work will be bringing forward a legislative bill in this session. I think we already did the proposal -- give me the right term there, Martin. Legislative proposal he says, because we recognize the committee has to, for 120 days take it on the road. We're at the end of the Assembly. We only have a short amount of time. So we're going to work as close as we can with committee. That is another commitment. I don't know if we've usually done that but I think it's important we work together to get this across the line if it's going to happen. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. So there's a big difference between a legislative proposal and a bill. Are we actually going to get a bill? Because the legislative proposals usually pretty high level shared with Regular MLAs so there can be some, you know, reaction, initial input. But are we going to get a bill? Thanks, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Madam Premier.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you for asking for the clarification; that's what I was hoping to get. We

are going to have a draft bill before this session is finished. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Okay, thanks, Madam Chair. Well, that could be good news; we'll see. But I want to encourage the Premier, the department, I think there's going to need to be a lot of public education, communications work around this. I know that MLAs have been looking at this, how other jurisdictions have attempted to deal with this from some academics and so on, some, you know, Indigenous government leaders. That's all great stuff but I think there's a real big need for some public education and well-crafted education -- sorry, communications materials. Is that something that the department is working on right now as well? Thanks, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member. Madam Premier.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Absolutely there is going to need to be a lot of communication and a lot of explaining to the public. I'm actually quite proud of the work that this Legislative Assembly has done on this work. Other jurisdictions have done it, the federal government's done it, and BC has done it, but my understanding I know the federal government didn't consult with us. These things weren't done -- the amount of consultation that we've actually done in the Northwest Territories. So the biggest thing that -- the proudest thing I am for this work is that it was co-drafted with Indigenous governments. It wasn't for Indigenous governments; it is by Indigenous governments. So yes, Madam Chair, we have a lot of education to do and I'd really appreciate actually -- because I know the Member has experience -- if he wants to meet with me at any time after to talk about what he thinks we should do in communications I'd be more than willing to hear that. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. Yeah, I'm going to take the Premier up on that offer. Thanks.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): All right. So are there any further questions under Indigenous and Intergovernmental Affairs? Seeing none, Executive and Indigenous Affairs, Indigenous and intergovernmental affairs, operations expenditure summary, 2023-2024

Main Estimates, \$7,515,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. There are additional information items on page 141 to 143. Are there any questions? Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. I want to ask about the budget, or the funding allocation for the Status of Women Council found on page 141. And I think we'd heard earlier that a number of NGOs have received forced growth increases in their funding, and that doesn't appear to be -- well, maybe it is the case for the Status of Women Council, but can the Premier speak to that, please. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Madam Premier.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I don't have it with me. Maybe you can find it if you have it. I do know that within the last year's budgets there was an increase to both the Status of Women Council and the Native Women's Association. I do know that we're also doing the work with the NGOs and so I'm assuming that some of that will be taken into consideration. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): And if we can get that commitment to get that to the Members, that would be great. Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Yeah, thanks, Madam Chair. Well, I'm just looking at, you know, page 141 and the contributions from the Government of the Northwest Territories in 2021-2022, the actuals were 582. Then it went down to 444 and it stayed there. So why was it higher in 2021-2022. Maybe there was some extra funding somewhere? But it doesn't look like they've actually received any kind of an increase, forced growth, you know, cost of living, inflation running at 6.3 percent. What's happening here? Thanks, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member. Madam Premier.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm going to ask Lauren if she wants to expand on it but my understanding is that the contributions are from the whole of the GNWT. It's not just from the executive. So sometimes agencies like Justice, for example, with this one, will give money, and then -- but it might be for a short-term contract so that's showing but it's not longer term. But, Madam Chair, if I could turn to Lauren.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Ms. Alexandra.

MS. ALEXANDRA: Thank you, Madam Chair. As far as some additional funding from the department, there was additional funding provided to the Status of Women Council to support their engagement on the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls engagement. So that's some additional funding that the department provided.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Okay, thanks for that. So I take it then, though, that there is no increased funding for Status of Women Council for 2023-2024; that's what the numbers show. Why is there no forced growth increase for this NGO but there was for others? Thanks, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Madam.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. We'll have to get back to the Member. I do know that within the term of this government there was an increase to both of the organizations, so we'll get back to them and let them know what that was. But, again, we're just still at the process of doing the work with other organizations. So it's work that needs to be ongoing but we will commit to getting back to you when the last increase was and exactly what it was, how much it was.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Okay, thanks, Madam Chair. I guess, I don't think I can ask any more questions. I'm going to make a statement. I think the Status of Women should have had an increase of forced growth like the other NGOs. Maybe that's clear because that's not what the numbers here show on the page and I think we need to be more consistent in how we treat NGOs across the board in our forced growth increases. And that's all I have. Thanks, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member. Are there any additional comments to the information items on page 141 and 143? Member for Great Slave.

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. I also agree that the work of the Status of Women is super important. And I'm just wondering if the Premier can speak to the process for hiring an executive director. It's my understanding that that position has been empty for quite a while and if the department

could speak to what's happening there, that would be great. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Madam Premier.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. So the Status of Women Council is an arm's length. It's not the -- the GNWT does not oversee them and tell them what to do. They provide reports through them; there is an Act for them but they really govern their own. So, Madam Chair, I'm not sure -- I don't even know why the last executive director left. I do know that it's not for the GNWT to determine their executive director. That's a process that they do. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. I don't think I said that the department was responsible for it. I asked what was happening with the fact that there hasn't been an executive director there. Given the importance of the work and that we are funding them from the GNWT to some degree, what does the department plan to do with the fact that there is nobody leading that organization? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Madam Premier.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I think that we can send a letter asking them, an email asking them what their process -- where they are with the process and we'll provide an update to committee. Like I said, Madam Chair, it's not something that we take too much. I don't -- I don't even know -- like I said, I think it's only been a month or two that that position's been open but I could be incorrect. And those positions are often hard to get. Executive directors aren't a dime a dozen. But as soon as we reach out, we'll try to find out what's going on and then we'll submit an email or let all Members know what's going on with that position. Thank you.

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

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. I would just comment that I find it quite concerning that nobody seems to be aware that this is happening in the Premier's office. This position has been empty for months now, not just one. I think almost at least since the fall.

My question then is given that NGOs are often underfunded for wages and benefits, etcetera. Given that we're only contributing \$444,000 to this organization, how does the GNWT expect an NGO like this to attract any sort of good

quality people to work for them if we're not going to be properly -- or they're not being properly compensated? Can the Premier speak to whether or not we're going to bump this money back up at least to the pandemic level? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Madam Premier.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. My understanding is, yes, we give the 444 but the federal government also gives \$1 million, Madam Chair. If the chair wants to do -- I do believe the Minister of Status of Women does know a little bit more on the executive director position if we wanted to turn it to her. If you're okay with that, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): I'll turn to Minister of Status of Women.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, so there were some challenges I understand in terms of the staffing at the Status of Women over the last several months, and the gender equity unit was able to provide some supports during that period of time. It is the board of the Status of Women that does do their own hiring and does manage their own human resources process. So the role that I would have on behalf of the GNWT, as the Minister responsible for Status of Women, is to appoint the board and then they do their own hiring. So I certainly can reach out to them for an update as to where they're at. But they, as I said, to the extent that there were some challenges with staffing, we were able to support them but it is their role. And then with respect to, I think the Member was asking what the funding would be, and obviously the main estimates are before Members right now, and they are not -- well, not certainly at all taking away from the importance of the work that they do, they are an advocacy-based organization and not one providing essential services. And so they may not then necessarily have been subject to the same forced growth process that NGOs that do provide essential government services for which the GNWT would have to step in would then be subject to it. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. Could I have a clarification on where this million dollar from the federal government is? I only see \$595,000 here. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Minister of Status of Women.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. So that was funding that came through -- I believe it was announced by MP McLeod roughly a year ago now and it was -- I can't speak to the nature of exactly -- I believe it was -- it was probably some sort of project funding but, again, it was federal dollars. It is not the only external funding that Status of Women receives. They certainly receive other program dollars through other federal departments, and I can't speak to that entirely. I believe, however, I can commit to providing Members with a copy of their annual report which would then give a fuller picture of the entirety of the funds that they have from all sources. Thank you.

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

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. And I appreciate the clarification around the essential services. Although I do want to note that the Status of Women does do a lot of other work that is quite key, whether or not it's actually deemed essential by the government. I know that they've been doing a lot work with, like, RCMP and analyzing things around domestic violence, etcetera.

Can the Minister or the Premier answer whether or not the gender equity unit is actually being positioned to replace the Status of Women given that there's more funding there than there seems to be to the Status of Women. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Madam Premier.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'll start, and then the Minister of the Status of Women might want to expand on it. At no time -- so I'm not sure if I'm understanding the question quite right. But the gender equity unit is not to take the place of the Status of Women. It's totally different. The gender equity work is to work with Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, around that kind of work that we're working on. But at no time have we had any discussions about taking over and replacing the Status of Women. Madam Chair, I'm not sure if the Minister of Status of Women wanted to expand, or if she's okay with that.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Did you have anything to add, Minister of Status of Women?

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Only to further echo what the Premier's already said. Gender equity unit, just to be very clear, replaces what was formerly

known as the women's advisory office, which had exactly one person working in it which is not a whole lot of horsepower to deal with when you have the breadth of matters that come through. As the Premier said, Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and the response to the national action plan comes through gender equity as is work in terms of training departments on gender-based analysis as well as work in terms of intimate partner violence, and there's multi-department initiatives that touch on both of those things that then have to run through or do run through. Also the campaign schools are running through this division. So there's a lot of work happening there that is separate and apart from what the Status of Women are doing and certainly, as the Premier said, not the intention to step on their toes. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. So this is what this seems to me, and I hear a lot of what the description about the gender equity unit does actually seem to me to quite overlap with some of the work that is being done by the Status of Women. So, again, just like our shelter situation where we put it on NGOs that can't afford to pay proper wages to do work, it seems like this is another one of those types of situations where we underfund an NGO to do work but then we have a parallel department or other department doing some of that work. Those people are making more money. They're getting better benefits and wages than the people that are working for the NGO or the arm's length entity. And as a result, we are seeing a mass exodus of those NGOs and those nongovernmental groups to the government. So maybe just more of a comment. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Are there any further questions on the additional items on page 141 and 143? Member for Kam Lake.

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Just while we're talking about the Status of Women, I believe it was last summer there was engagement done on the Status of Women Act. And I'm wondering what the expected timeline is on that act and if we'll see a bill in the life of this Assembly? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Madam Premier.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I do know that the bill will be coming in this Assembly, but I'd like to transfer

it to the status of women Minister who will know the timing better than me. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Minister responsible for Status of Women.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I think the Premier's given -- oh no, hang on, Madam Chair, I may actually have it here handy. If I don't, I can certainly provide it. But the Premier is correct, it is going to be coming in the life of this Assembly. I think -- this session, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): This sitting? This sitting? Okay, just to clarify. Member for Kam Lake.

MS. CLEVELAND: No, that's excellent. We look forward to seeing it and working with Cabinet on it. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): All right. Are there any additional questions? Seeing none, Members, thank you. Please return now to the departmental summary found on page 119, revenue summary information items on page 120.

I will now call the departmental summary, Executive and Indigenous Affairs, operations expenditure, total department, 2023-2024 Main Estimates, \$21,994,000. Member for Frame Lake.

COMMITTEE MOTION 366-19(2):
TABLED DOCUMENT 813-19(2): MAIN
ESTIMATES 2023-2024 – EXECUTIVE AND
INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS - DEFERRAL OF
DEPARTMENT (PAGE 119),
CARRIED

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Madam la Presidente. I move that this committee defer further consideration of the estimates for the Department of Executive and Indigenous Affairs at this time. Mahsi, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Just a moment while the motion is being distributed. All right. Members, the motion is in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried. Consideration of Department of Executive and Indigenous Affairs, 2023-2024 Main Estimates, operating expenditures, total department, is deferred. Thank you to the Premier and thank you to the witnesses for appearing before us.

Sergeant-at-arms, please escort the witnesses from the Chamber.

What is the wish of committee? Mr. O'Reilly.

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

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. The motion is in order. The motion is 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, with two motions adopted. 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 Twin Lakes. Do we have a seconder? Member for Monfwi. All those in favour? All those opposed? Any abstentions? The motion is carried.

---Carried

Third reading of bills. Minister responsible for Justice.

Third Reading of Bills

BILL 57:
MISCELLANEOUS STATUTE LAW
AMENDMENT ACT, 2022,
CARRIED

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Inuvik Boot Lake, that Bill 57, Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2022, be read for the third time. And, Mr. Speaker, I request a recorded vote. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. The motion is in order. To the motion?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. The Minister's requested a recorded vote. All those in favour, please rise.

RECORDED VOTE

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Tim Mercer): The Member for Hay River North. The Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes. The Member for Hay River South. The Member for Thebacha. The Member for Kam Lake. The Member for Frame Lake. The Member for Yellowknife North. The Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh. The Member for Monfwi. The Member for Great Slave. The Member for Nahendeh. The Member for Yellowknife South. The Member for Sahtu. The Member for Range Lake. The Member for Inuvik Boot Lake. The Member for Yellowknife Centre.

MR. SPEAKER: All those opposed, please rise. All those abstaining, please rise.

The results of the recorded vote: 16 in favour, zero opposed, zero abstentions. The motion is carried. Bill 57 has had third reading.

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 28th, 2023, 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
 - Oral Question 1343-19(2), Impacts of COVID-19 on Education
8. Acknowledgements
9. Oral Questions
10. Written Questions
11. Returns to Written Questions
12. Replies to Commissioner's Address
13. Petitions
14. Tabling of Documents
15. Notices of Motion
16. Motions

17. Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills

18. First Reading of Bills

19. Second Reading of Bills

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

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

- Bill 23, An Act to Amend the Public Utilities Act
- Bill 29, Resource Royalty Information Disclosure Statute Amendment Act
- Bill 56, An Act to Amend the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation Act
- Bill 61, An Act to Amend the Ombud Act
- Committee Report 40-19(2), Standing Committee on Government Operations Report on Bill 61: An Act to Amend the Ombud 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

21. Report of Committee of the Whole

22. Third Reading of Bills

23. Orders of the Day

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. This House stands adjourned until Tuesday, February 28th, 2023 at 1:30 p.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 5:33 p.m.