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The Honourable Frederick Blake Jr, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

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Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment, including responsibility for the Business Development and Investment Corporation
Minister responsible for the Status of Women

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(Monfwi)

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YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**Wednesday, March 8, 2023****Members Present**

Hon. Diane Archie, Hon. Frederick Blake Jr., Hon. Paulie Chinna, Ms. Cleveland, Hon. Caroline Cochrane, Hon. Julie Green, Mr. Jacobson, Mr. Johnson, Ms. Martselos, Ms. Nokleby, Mr. O'Reilly, Ms. Semmler, 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.): Ministers' statements. Minister responsible for the Status of Women.

Ministers' Statements

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 333-19(2):
INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Mr. Speaker, today is International Women's Day, an opportunity to celebrate the achievements of women, to raise awareness of gender inequality, and to recommit to building a territory that values, respects, and gives equal opportunity to all women and 2SLGBTQIA+ peoples. Each of us can actively embrace the spirit of "Every Woman Counts" in the workplace, our homes, among our friends and communities. Each of us can challenge gender stereotypes, call out discrimination, draw attention to bias, and seek inclusion. From grassroots action to wide-scale momentum, we must work to support women and 2SLGBTQIA+ people of all ages and all walks of life.

Today, I want to recognize some grassroots organizations that are dedicated to this important work: The Status of Women Council of the Northwest Territories, the Native Women's Association of the Northwest Territories, the Northern Mosaic Network, the YWCA, FOXY, and the Black Advocacy Coalition. These organizations help raise our collective awareness of the equity issues facing many Northern residents today. Their hard work keeps issues of gender equality at the forefront of public discourse. Their boards, staff, and volunteers share the passion and excitement that comes with valuing and supporting difference. I would like to offer my sincere thanks to them and so many others for all of the work they do to address issues of gender-based violence, racism, and gender-based discrimination.

Mr. Speaker, the gender equity division has supported women in leadership initiatives over the life of this Legislative Assembly to encourage the participation of women in political leadership, equipping them with tools and supports to run for elected office. If we want to measure the success and importance of this program, we can simply look at all of the elected women in this room, and all of the elected women holding office across the Northwest Territories. It is an honour to be a part of the first gender-balanced Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories.

Over the life of this Legislative Assembly, Northwest Territories' voters have elected women in unprecedented numbers at all levels of government including chiefs, mayors, and councilors. And while I feel great pride for the progress we have made, I must also acknowledge that women and 2SLGBTQIA+ people continue to experience daily discrimination due to the long-standing systems that do not serve them. From unequal salaries and lack of financial independence to being victims and survivors of gender-based violence and domestic abuse, many women continue to face challenges that stem directly from gender bias and inequality. At this very moment, there are women across this territory who are stuck in cycles of poverty and violence, forced to make difficult choices every day that put their safety at risk. We all have a duty to identify and disrupt the systems that allow this reality.

Mr. Speaker, Indigenous women are 3.5 times more likely to experience violence, and we continue to hear reports of missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, and gender-diverse peoples. As the Minister responsible for the Status of Women, I reaffirm this government's commitment to address the evolving nature of work related to gender, including gendered violence and gender equity.

We are making progress on the 94 actions identified in "Changing the Relationship", our response to the Calls for Justice on missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls and 2SLGBTQIA+ people, and we continue to look to the federal government, our community

partners, and Indigenous governments to work with us in ending this terrible crisis.

Mr. Speaker, we have much to celebrate on International Women's Day. It is important to acknowledge the work that has been done to honour and recognize women, 2SLGBTQIA+ people, allies, and grassroots organizations who have gotten us here today. The work to forge gender equity is not limited to women. We must all be allies to support the social, cultural, and political advancement of women and 2SLGBTQIA+ people in the territory. And, Mr. Speaker, I believe that together we can forge equality in a world where every woman counts. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Ministers' statements. Minister responsible for Housing NWT.

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 334-19(2):
HOUSING PARTNERSHIPS

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Mr. Speaker, addressing housing needs in the Northwest Territories cannot be done by any single government. We must continue to build and strengthen partnerships - partnerships with Indigenous governments, Indigenous organizations, community governments, non-government organizations, private companies, and the Government of Canada.

Partnerships is a theme I have spoken about many times since becoming Minister responsible for Housing Northwest Territories. But over the last three years, through our strategic renewal process, it has become more prominent. We have worked with our partners to deliver home repair and homeownership programs, develop community housing plans, deliver new units in communities, support those at risk of being homeless and, recently, we have developed a plan to address a lack of market housing in communities across the Northwest Territories.

Mr. Speaker, our partnerships with Indigenous governments and Indigenous organizations are important as we address the territory's housing crisis. The Community Housing Support Initiative is a great example of how Housing NWT established this funding program to support Indigenous governments in implementing innovative and community-driven housing projects of their own design. We have partnered with a number of Indigenous governments to date, including the Salt River First Nation, Whati Community Government, and the Nihtat Gwich'in Council.

Mr. Speaker, for over 15 years Housing NWT has been partnering with the Yellowknives

Dene First Nation for the operation and administration of public housing units in N'dilo and Dettah. We also provide approximately \$1.5 million a year to the North Slave Housing Corporation for the operation and administration of 75 units to Indigenous people in Yellowknife. We have also been working with K'atlodeeche First Nation, providing them with funding to operate and maintain ten public housing units on the K'atlodeeche First Nation Reserve.

Additionally, our staff worked with the K'atlodeeche First Nation on completing their community housing plan, which was adopted on September 19, 2022.

In the Tlicho region, we work through the Tlicho housing working group which sets priorities and administers housing projects. During this fiscal year, Housing NWT is projecting to invest over \$3 million on housing programs and maintenance and repairs of its rental units in the Tlicho communities.

Mr. Speaker, as part of finding ways of partnering with Indigenous governments under the renewal strategy, Housing NWT entered into three formal agreements over the last year:

- A Memorandum of Understanding with the Tlicho government;
- A Memorandum of Agreement with the Sahtu Secretariat; and, most recently,
- A Memorandum of Understanding with the Deline Got'ine Government.

These agreements provide a framework for intergovernmental cooperation on housing-related matters and may include such priorities as community housing planning, coordinating program delivery, information and data sharing. These housing agreements can also advance the implementation of self-government agreements, including the agreement to procure and enact laws related to social housing. Outside of the formal MOUs, Housing NWT is working with other Indigenous governments with less formal approach but still with the full intent to partner on housing priorities and interests.

Mr. Speaker, Housing NWT will continue to seek opportunities for partnership to leverage funding to address the needs of Northwest Territories residents. One example of this is with the YWCA where their capital project funding from Canada required an ongoing in-kind commitment from Housing NWT to provide operational funding and Housing NWT has provided a multi-year funding agreement of \$500,000 per year to support the program

delivery. Another example is our partnership with Habitat for Humanity, a global organization that works towards stability, affordability housing with the help of sweat equity. Our partnership with Habitat for Humanity began in 2013 and included capital contributions to their project but also includes supporting them to find locations for their builds and advertising for eligible clients. Habitat currently has an agreement with Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation and Housing NWT and will see ten units constructed. Housing NWT seeks to be flexible in partnership arrangements to achieve at the end of our goal of getting more affordable housing into our communities.

Mr. Speaker, a lack of housing options in communities across the Northwest Territories is a barrier for the recruitment and retention of frontline community workers. In response to this, a number of GNWT departments have worked together to present a future need for market housing rental needs. The joint effort has resulted in identifying the need for over 260 market rental units across the Northwest Territories. As the GNWT is a lead on this work, Housing NWT will work with Indigenous governments, local businesses, and within the federal government, to put a plan in place to develop these market housing units and supporting the recruitment, local economies, businesses, and employment in the Northwest Territories. Our renewal strategy continues to work with Indigenous governments, community governments, non-government organizations, and others to improve housing programs and services and expand in our collaborative housing portfolio in the Northwest Territories.

Mr. Speaker, as this statement describes, Housing NWT has been putting a lot of emphasis on building and repairing relationships during the life of this government by continuing to deepen the relationships with our partners. We believe we can successfully address the Northwest Territories housing crisis. I would also like to thank the staff of Housing NWT for the collaboration and the work that they have been putting together within the time of this government. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Ministers' statements. Members' statements. Member for Nunakput.

Members' Statements

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1446-19(2):
INCOME ASSISTANCE AND CERB
PAYMENTS

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's good that the Minister wants to work together with the housing.

Mr. Speaker, we only have public housing in my communities. I also have residents that are on income assistance and I have spoken about this in the House many times. But our residents are not always on fixed, stable income, that means the housing can be impacted. I thought we dealt with this, Mr. Speaker. It's income tax season, CERB emergency payments, that was not declared, are impacting my residents and it is going to impact all the residents across the Northwest Territories soon. They are being told that their rents will change; the housing is in jeopardy, Mr. Speaker. The government has advised this House that they would not consider CERB payment as income and will not impact the public housing and the income support program. But, Mr. Speaker, it is impacting both.

Being impacted, some in my constituency are in support residence in public housing. The Minister, I want her to work together with us in regards to getting this sorted out, the CERB payments and the income support with the Minister. Again, my residents are telling me, CERB emergency payments are being declared and counted as additional income. The people in public housing, including seniors, have their rents increased if they received CERB payments.

Mr. Speaker, the federal government gives so easily but it's time to claw back they're going to take full advantage of that. We have to help the residents in our riding. I need to make for sure my residents are not being punished for taking CERB. That was an emergency program through the COVID-19 program. This should not penalize the poorest people in our communities. I should remind the House that my communities have dealt with COVID outbreaks, isolation, and lockdowns. We need sympathy and we need our residents here, Mr. Speaker. Our residents are not recognized in this government policy. And another example of that we cannot have these emergency funds impact the most vulnerable people in the Northwest Territories in the small communities, Mr. Speaker.

11 o'clock the other day I had an elder call me. For not declaring CERB, he was going to be evicted from his house and penalized from income support for two months. 62 years old, Mr. Speaker. Unacceptable. Unacceptable. And I will have questions for the Minister at the appropriate time. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1447-19(2):
NORTHERN RESIDENT TRAVEL
DEDUCTION

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. Confusion continues to reign for northern taxpayers despite the Canada Revenue Agency having finally published lowest airfare rates for the Northern Resident Travel Deduction. The deduction is set by regulation and has been in place since 1987 with continuous problems ever since.

I've been raising this issue for years in this House, trying to get successive territorial finance ministers, to step up and work with the other territorial finance ministers to slay this dragon.

After a CBC story about how Northerners were being audited three times as much as our southern friends, the then federal minister of national revenue promised to look into it and fix it. There was even a public consultation on setting lowest return airfare amounts that closed in April 2019. Fast forward to almost four years later and viola, the Canada Revenue Agency then posts 14 less-than-user friendly tables for taxpayers to sort through to get numbers that don't actually make sense.

The CRA figures were apparently developed with a business travel service provider. I'm only going to pick on Yellowknife, but the CRA figures are as much as \$160 higher in one case but mostly much lower, as much as \$660 lower than comparable figures published by a local air carrier. I am going to use my crystal ball and predict that Northerners are again going to be subjected to unnecessary and unfair tax audits as a result of these discrepancies.

I've asked our NWT Member of Parliament for some help in terms of understanding this mess. The last time I raised the issue in the House was February 2021, and the finance Minister said, quote, "I'm happy to commit to checking in with my colleagues in Nunavut and Yukon to see if there is an issue that is of shared interest to us and to then consider whether or not a joint letter would be appropriate, but I'll make that initial engagement first." I'll have questions for the finance minister as to what this government is going to do slay the lowest-return-airfare dragon to help northern taxpayers. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1448-19(2):
AFFIRMATIVE ACTION POLICY

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, once again, I want to talk about affirmative action, an initiative that was put in place to ensure the GNWT public sector would be representative of the population it serves. We know that over the past 35 plus years, little has changed when we look at percentages of Indigenous Aboriginal people employed in the public sector.

Mr. Speaker, the current affirmative action policy has specific groupings of priority hires, more specifically, Priority 1, 2, and 3 candidates, with priority 1 being specific to Indigenous Aboriginal persons. The current policy defines "Indigenous Aboriginal persons" as, and I quote,

"... those persons who are descendants of the Dene, Inuit, or Metis people indigenous to the present boundaries of the Northwest Territories and includes any Aboriginal persons resident at birth pursuant to Section 23 of the Vital Statistics Act and any Canadian Aboriginal persons who have lived more than half of their life in the Northwest Territories."

Mr. Speaker, the newly proposed Indigenous employment policy will change that definition. Such a change would only divide and reduce the number of Indigenous Aboriginal persons who are currently considered priority candidates. The proposed policy narrows the definition of "Indigenous Aboriginal persons" by removing those not deemed Indigenous to the present-day boundaries of the NWT, whether born here or having lived here more than half their life.

Mr. Speaker, Hay River's Indigenous population is made up of those who are Indigenous to the present-day boundaries of the NWT and many who are not but have either been born or lived over half their life in the NWT. Many of these persons about to be removed are fourth-generation Indigenous Aboriginal residents who have made the North their home. These persons I am referring to are many Indigenous fishing families who migrated to Hay River from southern Canada and who suffered the same disadvantages as all other Indigenous people.

Mr. Speaker, further dividing Indigenous people is not progress; it is colonialism. If we want real success, and knowing employment in the public sector requires formal education, let's

- Concentrate our efforts and resources on hiring Indigenous Aboriginal students straight out of post-secondary or trades;

- Consider decentralization of positions to communities where most Aboriginal people live;
- Use the training and mentoring programs we now have in place;
- Hold departments accountable in applying the policy; and, most importantly,
- Continue with strengthening the education system for both Indigenous and northern residents.

Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1449-19(2):
TERRITORIAL FIRE CENTRE LOCATION

MS. MARTSELOS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, for my statement today, I want to talk about the status of the new territorial fire centre project that has been underway by our government over the last three years.

First of all, Mr. Speaker, there has been many rumors going around Fort Smith lately saying that the request for proposals for the construction of the new territorial fire centre has been cancelled. I would appreciate if these rumors would stop being spread because this statement is simply not true.

Mr. Speaker, on Monday, February the 20th, 2023, the government held an open house meeting on procurement and capital infrastructure projects in Fort Smith. At that meeting, the Government of the Northwest Territories gave an update on the fire centre, and it was noted that while the original procurement plan has been cancelled, Indigenous governments can still submit proposals to the public tender. The Minister of Finance has assured me that this project is still part of the infrastructure acquisition plan and will still be going forward but it's currently being reassessed. In addition, Mr. Speaker, the finance minister has told me that she will work with me to provide a timeline on the re-issuance of the request for proposal and look to see if it could be out by the end of the 19th Assembly. Depending how the process unfolds, there could be potential to get the fire centre funds moving so that the Fort Smith residents are aware that the work is underway.

Mr. Speaker, it is extremely unhelpful for people to spread rumors, both around the community and around the territory, that a major infrastructure project has been cancelled. This

type of wrongful speculation only undermines the actual work being done being put into making this project a reality for the people of Northwest Territories. For these reasons, Mr. Speaker, I'm asking all residents of Fort Smith, and residents of the NWT, to stop spreading misinformation on the new territorial fire centre. While the timeline for this project's completion is not where I or Cabinet would like it to be, the public can be rest assured that a new territorial fire centre will be built in Fort Smith very soon. I will have questions for the finance minister at the appropriate time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1450-19(2):
RABIES OUTBREAK

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Northwest Territories, unfortunately, is having a banner year for rabies and, unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, last year was also a banner year for rabies. And there's a couple of reasons for this. One is it's cyclical in the Arctic fox population so it tends to spike. The other reason is that with changes in climate and warmer weather, rabies outbreaks are becoming more and more common. And, Mr. Speaker, it's worth noting that rabies is one of those public health campaigns of the 20th century that we largely solved. There are still 60,000 human deaths a year from rabies, but they are largely in the developing world. In Canada, rabies deaths are very rare and that is thanks to the vaccination of canines. Yet, Mr. Speaker, we are well behind the rest of Canada in making sure that our dogs are vaccinated and that it's not passed to humans.

Rabies in humans is virtually 100 percent lethal if not treated, Mr. Speaker. It is an extremely deadly disease. And I think many of us kind of view this as a thing of the past, and that is because it was a thing of the past that we solved, and I don't want to see the Northwest Territories in a banner rabies year becoming one of the places where we are going to have the first human death in Canada in a long time.

Mr. Speaker, there's a couple things that need to be done here because although rabies doesn't care which host it kills, the government certainly does care. The fox population, many professionals have suggested a vaccination bait program. That would be ENR. Once it stops being wildlife, though, Mr. Speaker, the government -- ENR doesn't care but MACA has to care and that's through our Dog Act, Mr. Speaker. We actually have a Dog Act, and many jurisdictions have mandated that all dogs

be vaccinated for rabies. We do not do that in the Northwest Territories. And lastly, MACA stops caring once it gets into humans and that becomes the department of health who have to make sure they have that antidote on hand and available in all our communities because absent treatment rapidly, it is very fatal in humans.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to have some questions for the Minister of ENR, Minister of MACA, and Minister of health to make sure that someone is actually paying attention to this rabies outbreak and make sure that we're not just sitting or waiting around for someone to die. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1451-19(2):
MISSING AND MURDERED INDIGENOUS
WOMEN AND GIRLS

MS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in honour of International Women's Day, I want to speak once again about the importance and value of Indigenous women and girls within our society.

Mr. Speaker, in all of the country and all across the Northwest Territories, you will find many brilliant, beautiful, capable, and resilient Indigenous women and girls who have much to offer in this world. Not only that, Mr. Speaker, but in most Indigenous cultures, women and girls are highly regarded and they hold a very important role in the functioning in our communities. Besides the fact that these women are the primary caregivers for our children and elders, they are also natural leaders in everyday life. However, Mr. Speaker, in contrast to these very positive aspects of our Indigenous women and girls, it is unfortunate and quite sad that this same population faces a level of violence and death unlike any other population in the country. Bullying and collateral violence from our very own people also contributes to the harm done to very beautiful strong women and girls.

Mr. Speaker, since the founding of Canada, Indigenous women and girls have been forced to deal with racism, sexism, and colonialism on a daily basis. And it is from these systems of oppression where the entire issues of murdered and missing Indigenous women and girls began in the first place and continues to exist to this day.

Mr. Speaker, according to self-reported data from the 2019 General Social Survey on Canada's Safety, 26 percent of Indigenous

women experience sexual violence by an adult during their childhood compared to 9.2 of non-Indigenous women. Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

---Unanimous consent granted

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Also, according to data from the RCMP, Indigenous women represent 10 percent of all missing women in Canada despite accounting for only about 3 percent of the total Canadian female population. And according to Statistics Canada, Indigenous women have a homicide rate that is almost six times higher than non-Indigenous women.

Mr. Speaker, on a day like today, International Women's Day, where we honour and recognize all the achievements of the women of the world, we also must remember the more troubling aspects of some of our women and girls. We must not forget the Indigenous women and girls who have never returned home who had such a great potential to live full lives to share with the world. We will remember them. And with that in mind today, Mr. Speaker, on this important International Women's Day, I would like to say -- I would like to send a message to all the women that are in here and to all the grandmothers, to mothers, to the aunties, to the daughters, to the nieces, that I would like to say be safe and today is an important day for all of us. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1452-19(2):
INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, International Women's Day has evolved since the women's rights movement of the '60s and '70s. Today, in 2023, we continue to celebrate the fight for gender equality, gender identity, our reproductive decisions, and the right to speak up and defend our emotional, mental, spiritual, physical, and financial well-being. We use our voices to say no to the bullying, the violence; no to the oppressive abuses against our right to decide, do, and say what is right for us, what is right for me. Being allowed to take responsibility for my life and my future and to support all who wish to do the same is my interpretation of this day.

As a settler, it is my honour, and duty, to support the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls movement that is working hard to bring attention and change to the systemic racism and colonialism that has oppressed Indigenous women and girls since

the first Europeans set sail and still today, continues to traumatize individuals, their families, and our communities by the ongoing oppression of Indigenous female voices. Women have been held in high regard and honour in Indigenous cultures all over the world for their ability to create and sustain life. That is until the residential schools, the colonialism, bullying, and laterally violent systems that changed that and taught a different way of seeing and treating Indigenous women and girls.

We are doing our communities a huge disservice, missing out on actual solutions, by not listening to the contributions, suggestions, ideas, cultural knowledge and so much more, that Indigenous women hold simply because it does not fit into our colonial systems. On this day, we can commit to beginning a new dialogue with Indigenous women, one where we don't give the answers or constrain the conversation; a dialogue held in safe spaces where we listen to the hard truth. Until we truly listen to the voices of Indigenous women, any conversation regarding reconciliation is pointless and really can only be called lip service.

And Mr. Speaker, I just want to take a moment to acknowledge a very strong Indigenous woman in my life, and that is my constituency assistant Maggie Mercredi who has done an amazing job in supporting me, and I am learning a lot from working with her. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1453-19(2):
INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Happy International Women's Day. This year's theme is Embrace Equity. Embracing equity is not about getting through the door and breathing a sigh of relief that you made it. It's about constantly reflecting and learning who hasn't made it through the door and what it takes to keep the door open.

Mr. Speaker, I need to be willing to be uncomfortable, learn, acknowledge how the status quo is benefitting me and ask how I can help others achieve the same. Changing what our businesses, professions, spaces, and even legislatures look like doesn't often come from the masses but creating momentum in any space starts with just one person. We can all challenge gender stereotypes, call out discrimination, draw attention to bias, and seek

out inclusion. Opening the door and then keeping it open means broadening the threshold and actually embracing diversity and inclusion in our every day.

This term, I stand in the only Canadian legislature that is, for the first time, gender balanced. Equity means supporting the presence and voices of colleagues and identifying whose voice is missing. Mr. Speaker, there's no point being the first if you are also the last, and I hope to see the inclusivity of this space continue to evolve. Poet Illock, when speaking about pronouns, said, quote, "pronouns then aren't just about the ability to use a word like she; they are ultimately about our ability to be. This has never just been about who gets to speak. This has also been about who gets to live. Equity, therefore, also means changing our habits, language, and continuing to learn and do better."

Last month, the National Indigenous Housing Network, along with the Women's National Housing and Homelessness Network, called for a state of emergency in the Northwest Territories when it comes to housing Indigenous peoples, particularly women and girls who have been left in the dark without safety or security as called for in the 2019 Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Report. Equity, therefore, means stepping out of the status quo, identifying systemic barriers for others to survive and thrive and pushing for meaningful change.

Today is a reminder that I have an important role to play as an ally to equity and inclusivity. Learning is an important piece of this journey, and I would like to thank Kam Lake residents Inemesit Graham and Chelsea Backer for the education they openly share. Every day there are moments in time where we decide to remain stagnant or lift equity. Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

---Unanimous consent granted

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you very much, colleagues. Every day there are moments in time where we decide to remain stagnant or lift equity. Even just one moment where someone chooses equity has significance because moments in time strung together eventually become history. The question we must all ask ourselves is, Will my voice be part of this history? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1454-19(2):
INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge International Women's Day. This day is not only an opportunity to celebrate the incredible achievements of women around the world but also a time to end biases, raise awareness of issues impacting women's equality, and highlight that change is achieved through collective action.

Mr. Speaker, of the theme of International Women's Day is Every Woman Counts. This is especially fitting here in the Northwest Territories, with a territorial election just around the corner. If 50 percent of our population are women, then why would we not want 50 percent of our politicians to be women? We not only need to encourage women and gender-diverse people to make their vote count but we also need to see their names on ballots in every riding in the NWT.

Following the 2015 territorial election, only two of the 19 elected Members to the Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly were women. This lack of representation was deeply concerning so then MLA Julie Green and I made it our mission to increase the number of women Members in this House. During our first term, we ran and participated in women in leadership programming throughout the territory. We used these forums and every opportunity to encourage more women to run for elected office. In 2019, after the final votes were counted, we saw the evidence that our efforts and the efforts of other strong women across the territory had a transformative impact on our political landscape. Since the election of the Member from Monfwi, ten of the 19 Members in this House are now women, and I am proud to say that the NWT is the first jurisdiction in Canadian history to have a majority women legislature.

Mr. Speaker, while this was an exciting milestone that we should all be very proud of, improved gender representation in the 19th Assembly is only the beginning. There is an urgent need for greater representation of women and gender-diverse people in leadership roles in government, industry, education, our communities, and beyond. We all have opinions formed by our different lived experiences, and only by having diversity at the table will we be able to adequately represent the population we serve.

Mr. Speaker, no one should be held back because of gender. Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

---Unanimous consent granted

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We all know that it is not a question of women and other gender-diverse people have the necessary skills to be successful. Look around the House. We can see that women can be great leaders. I know that letting your name stand in an election is nerve wracking but it's also incredibly empowering. I hope that many of those listening to our proceedings today will consider running for office or taking on other leadership roles in their communities. You deserve to be heard, and the next generation deserves to see the promise and power of amazing women doing incredible things in the territory. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Range Lake. Members' statements. Member for Yellowknife Centre.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1455-19(2):
INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, five years ago on International Women's Day, there were only two women in this House, myself and Premier Cochrane. We put forward a motion that day that set ambitious goals for increasing women's representation in this House. A special Assembly committee held public hearings in ten communities to hear why women's voices mattered and document the barriers that prevented women from running.

The interim report released a year later identified a variety of barriers from colonization that marginalizes Indigenous women's leadership to being away from home for weeks at a time and the cost of paying for campaigns. The report recommended important changes, including allowing caregivers to be reimbursed for work-related child care and making this building itself more family friendly. The final report set a goal of four women to be elected in 2019. We were all surprised when nine Members were elected that year and one more in 2021. Mission accomplished. Or is it?

As discussion ramps up about the next territorial election, I am concerned that while we've removed some barriers, others have appeared. There have been several high-profile resignations by women leaders in the last month. They have pointed to the toxic public discussion of politics as one reason to leave, along with burnout. The most recent resignation, and closest to home, is by Melanie Mark, the first Indigenous woman MLA and minister in the British Columbia legislature. She said working in the House was torture, and she

wouldn't miss the character assassination she endured there.

Mr. Speaker, we too have a toxic strain to our politics that may deter women in the NWT from running. They may decide not to step into a difficult job made harder by attacks, particularly in social media. I am not talking about the usual cut and thrust of debate but about words that demean people and question their integrity. We can provide all the child care we want but who would want their reputation shredded in this new career that already demands so many sacrifices?

Mr. Speaker, we must continue overcoming barriers. The contributions made by women in the political arena are essential to decision-making that has positive change for residents. We need to ensure women's voices are heard and their ideas help shape the next Assembly as they have this one. Despite the obstacles, I encourage women to be champions for change and run for public office. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1456-19(2):
CHRISTMAS IN JANUARY IN NAHENDEH
AND DEH CHO

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today, I rise in the House to talk about a Secret Santa who gave some youth late Christmas gifts this past January in the Nahendeh and Deh Cho ridings.

Mr. Speaker, I can tell you I received a phone call from a friend to see if I would be interested in receiving two pallets of toys worth approximately \$20,000 for some youth in the Nahendeh riding. Of course I said I would be interested. I did ask who donated these toys and was advised that, in true Santa fashion, they wanted to remain anonymous. As the January 16th News North article stated, "Christmas came and went without the toys arriving in time." Because of the weather, the toys were delayed. When Grimshaw Trucking heard this, they took action, delivered the toys, and donated their time to get the toys to Yellowknife. With the help from Grimshaw and Summit Air, Santa was able to deliver the toys shortly after Christmas. With the toys sitting in Yellowknife, we had to find a way to get the toys to Fort Simpson. Thanks to PR Contracting, the toys made their way to Fort Simpson.

As the toys were on their way, I reached out to several people to see if they could distribute the toys once they arrived in Fort Simpson. I would

like thanks to Naila Cazon, Troy Bellafontaine, Daniel Gargan-Lacasse, Carolina Malloy, Cheryl Abraham, and Grace Berikoff for organizing the toys and arranging them to get to youth in Wrigley, Sambaa K'e, Fort Simpson, Fort Providence, and Fort Liard. I would like to thank Simpson Air and Hopes Ventures for getting the toys to Wrigley, Sambaa K'e and Fort Liard.

Mr. Speaker, these toys made it to youth in five communities in the Nahendeh and Deh Cho ridings thanks to the individuals I mentioned. They did a lot of work and came up with the plan. For this, I am very thankful.

Mr. Speaker, it's just amazing to have Santa provide Christmas in January for some of these youth. It's unfortunate that, through weather and other challenges, they weren't able to get this during Christmastime, but we thank Santa, the businesses, and my friend for extending Christmas into January.

Mr. Speaker, the toys were a generous gift, and we know that the children and families who received them will be very appreciative. I cannot thank the Secret Santa, the businesses, and my friend enough. This was a moment the youth will remember for a long time. Mr. Speaker, I would like my colleagues to give them a round of applause. Mashu Cho, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Nahendeh. Members' statements. Returns to oral questions. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member for Yellowknife Centre.

Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be joined by constituents today Maureen Van Overliw and her children Holland and Everett. Thank you for joining us today on International Women's Day.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Yellowknife Centre. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member for Yellowknife North.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to recognize one of the pages from Yellowknife North. That's Leo Ehrlich. And Leo came up to me and expressed the support for mandating a four-day work week and makes me glad to know there's at least one member in this House who does, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Yellowknife North. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member for Kam Lake.

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I understand while I cannot see Maureen Van Overloop, that she is behind me with her children, and I have definitely a soft spot in my heart for her children because I had the opportunity to photograph them both as babies. So I just wanted to say hello and welcome. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Kam Lake. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member for Yellowknife South.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, very happy to have pages in the House from Yellowknife South today. Rhiarnon Ackerman-O'Connor and Katelyn Browley are working very hard for us here, delivering many, many things. And, Mr. Speaker, I'm also going to lay claim to the fact that we have some young Yellowknife residents here. I understand they attended today because it's International Women's Day and was very happy that my CA was able to coordinate and that they are staying to see all of the exciting things that happen. That, again, is Maureen, Holland, and Everest Van Overloop. So no matter what gender that people may be, the fact that they're here on International Women's Day means there's going to be great diversity in this room, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Yellowknife South. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Acknowledgements. Oral questions. Member for Nunakput.

Oral Questions

QUESTION 1449-19(2): HOUSING NORTHWEST TERRITORIES CERB INCOME POLICY

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I told you in my Member's statement today that, you know, we have a 60-year-old elder that's being penalized from CERB in regards to housing and income support. I only have my housing minister here today, Mr. Speaker. What is the Minister, can she confirm that the government's position on counting CERB and other emergency pandemic payments as income for the residents of the public housing? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you to the Member for the question as well too. I'm quite surprised to hear

this, that earlier to the pandemic when we were looking at the CERB payments they weren't to be calculated as earned income, and they should have not been calculated on the based rent. I'd encourage the Member to encourage his constituent to go back to the LHO and receive a rent reassessment. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That's really good news because I will be reaching out to my constituent and getting him to do that.

Can the Minister advise the department and the residents in the public housing to make sure not only impacted during the tax season for the pandemic support payments, to make sure that the CERB is not being clawed back and being penalized -- elders being penalized in the housing system? It's not fair, Mr. Speaker, especially when we were told at the start that the Minister said that we weren't going to be taxed on it during the pandemic because it was monies needed because there was no work and we all had to stay home. So people took advantage of that, Mr. Speaker.

Can the Minister just make sure that the -- what are we doing with the tax season? When they bring in their income tax, can they get reassessed that day and to be -- go, I guess, back in regards to getting it reassessed for like five or six months or until they took that CERB payment and making sure they're not having to overpay? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thanks to the Member for the question. I strongly encourage all documentation that has been collected or has been received in applying for the CERB program provided by the federal government, that they provide those documents to the local housing authority and receive the rent assessment. And for the elder that the Member had spoken about, I'd like to follow up with him separately. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the Minister for that. There's a lot of assessments that are going to be done -- being done right now as to not include the CERB payments. Were received last year, Mr. Speaker. The CERB payments and clawbacks that are happening to the residents right now, they're being penalized from Housing, that's what I've been told, and from the federal government and from us in regards to income support. Income support's even worse, Mr. Speaker, when you're cutting off people who have nothing already, that are relying on that to feed their families, Mr. Speaker. We need to get this sorted out, and I'm really looking forward to

working with my Minister and my Premier to get this sorted out for the people in my riding and across the territory, because it's not only my riding that's going to get affected with CERB, it's going to be the whole territory in all 33 communities. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I've said that the CERB payments should have not been calculated into the rent calculations. But I will follow up with my department, making sure that this message gets down to our headquarters and right down to the local housing authorities. Should there be any confusion, I will follow up with the department. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Final supplementary.

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, you know, the state of our housing across Nunakput is in -- we're in pretty poor shape. We can't keep up with the, to get them retrofitted. We can't keep up with the windows, the doors, the appliances that they have to pay the power to. We have to get on top of that, Mr. Speaker, especially the overcrowding that we are going through, right across the territory right now. Especially in my riding.

Mr. Speaker, what has the the Minister done in regards to overcrowding, to lessen overcrowding in Nunakput communities? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I was quickly trying to grab -- we do have a hundred unit roll out that is happening within the lifetime of this government. My apologies as I was not able to pull up that document right away, but we do have some builds that are going to be delivered in Nunakput. And overcrowding, Mr. Speaker, is an issue that we have throughout the Northwest Territories but we do try to work with community governments in trying to address this issue throughout the North, and I do understand the Member's riding as well too, that there is limited amount of housing and in most communities, we are the only housing deliverer. But I will follow up with the Member as well too and look at further solutions. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 1450-19(2):
TERRITORIAL FIRE CENTRE

MS. MARTSELOS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, can the finance minister tell us when the revamped RFP will be going out for

the territorial fire centre? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am happy to have the chance to talk about this project a little more. It is a priority for this government. And while we were under a process that would have put the RFP out, expecting that it would go under lease programs and therefore the operations budget, Mr. Speaker, we are looking now at instead making that part of the capital plan. So that's why there is a bit of a delay here, is that obviously our -- I shouldn't say obviously, the next capital plan won't be out until August. Typically you wouldn't issue the RFP until the capital plan has been approved in this House. And so that's the sort of timeline that we are operating under right now. I certainly can work with the Department of Environment and Climate Change to see where they are at in terms of advancing this project. As I've said, it was under one set of budgetary -- under one budget and now it's under the other so that's what is changing the timing of this, Mr. Speaker. But, and that's what delaying my ability to answer the question a little bit but I am certain that over the course of time -- there will be an answer to this question -- or this project certainly continues to be a priority. Thank you.

MS. MARTSELOS: Mr. Speaker, can the Minister confirm that the supplementary appropriation bill will be brought into the House before the end of the August session that will ensure the continuation of the procurement process for the fire centre? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Member has been a forceful advocate for this project and certainly I think has convinced many of my colleagues as to its essential nature which is why it was at the place it was at already with the procurement. And although the first way that we were going to go about it as an operations budget item has changed and looking at it as a capital budget, the priority place of it hasn't changed. Again, as I've said, at this point the RFP normally wouldn't issue until the approval of the budget formally in the House even though the project might remain on the plan. And so that's the state that we are in right now. And again, I can appreciate why there is some uncertainty in that regard because the public doesn't see the long-term plans, but I am certainly comfortable to say that it does remain part of that plan.

As I have said, and as I have committed to the Member, I will continue to keep her updated in a way that we are able to do here a little bit differently than what we might do in terms of publishing all of those plans for the public. So we are looking forward to seeing this on the next round for the Environment and Climate Change -- I am not used to saying that one yet, ECC's upcoming capital plans. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. MARTSELOS: Mr. Speaker, can the Minister clarify if the new fire centre, once complete, will be a leased building to a third party or will it be a government-owned building? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, so again on this front, the Member for Thebacha, as I have said, has been a helpful, very helpful actually, in moving this project along, giving us some opportunities to discuss and engage best paths forward. There was a time where the thought was to put in as a leased building and that was the initial RFP. When that process didn't bear fruit, the thought now is to move it into a government-owned building which would mean that the RFP would simply be for construction. And that, again until -- we will wait I think, at this point, to see how the capital estimates come out, the next round coming out, which do come out in August and with a look to be approved in August and that should provide some greater certainty to the community around the process moving forward hopefully. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MS. MARTSELOS: Mr. Speaker, does the Minister have an estimated timeline for when construction of the new territorial fire centre will begin? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So actual shovels in the ground will depend on when the capital estimates are approved and then how those estimates and how the money that's appropriated goes through. But again, with the fact that we do approve our capital estimates early on an election year, we approve them in August, and depending on the way that comes out, I certainly don't want to presume any votes or any conclusions of that process, but as that process moves forward, Mr. Speaker, we will see what the next round of capital projects are, where they are at, and have a good opportunity at that point to flesh out the timelines associated with those approved projects. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 1451-19(2):
NORTHERN RESIDENT TRAVEL
DEDUCTION

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. My questions are on the northern resident travel deduction for the Minister of Finance. And, Mr. Speaker, depending on the answers, I might be able to give the Minister a new portfolio, the Minister of Dragon Slaying.

So can the Minister tell us whether she is aware of the discrepancies between the recently published Canada Revenue Agency figures and those published by Canadian North, the one carrier that maintains regular service from Yellowknife to Edmonton? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am very motivated now to answer these questions the right way. Mr. Speaker, I certainly am aware of the recently published guidelines and certainly aware that there are some discrepancies around that. One thing that I want to note, Mr. Speaker, it's been alerted to me by the department actually that this is a pilot project, and I hope that's going to give me some openings to give some positive responses of where we might go, because pilot projects mean that they are ripe for some change. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. I could probably make a pun there about pilots and planes and tax deductions. I won't go there, Mr. Speaker, but when I raised this issue of the lack of figures for the lowest northern airfare from CRA, our Minister of Finance committed to talk to her territorial colleagues in the Yukon and Nunavut in February 2021. So can the Minister confirm whether those discussions ever took place and whether there was any follow-up action? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this is a point of frustration for many residents and certainly for not only the MLA but me as well. And I can confirm that I discussed this with my other territorial finance colleagues, that we did jointly raise the issue. I'd like to think in fact that that may be why there is now a pilot project, is that we have finally raised issue to a place that it received the attention that it required. Now, that doesn't mean that those to whom we raised it get it right the first time but, again, Mr. Speaker, we will be certainly following up again, and

finance officials will be speaking with their folks -- their colleagues in the federal department, raising with them the challenges we are seeing and hopefully getting the pilot right before it becomes a final project. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. I want to thank the Minister for that. I described this longstanding problem as a dragon that has been around since 1987 where Northerners have been subjected to unnecessary, and in some cases unfair, audits. So can the Minister tell us whether she has written a letter with other finance Ministers from northern territories on this, and if so, could she table that letter in the House? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, prior to the release of Budget 2022 by the federal government, the three territories did write on some shared priorities. I would be certainly happy to share that with my colleagues. I can't share letters penned by others without their confirmation but certainly can go to MLAs. With respect specifically to the issue around the airfares, whether it was in that letter or another, I will double check. Whether we raised directly at the finance Ministers', I can confirm with my notes.

With respect to this pilot project, again I am happy to look again at whether or not this is something we want to bring to the level of being raised on its own. I suspect there is a few issues that we may want to raise but I certainly can look to doing that. Again, Mr. Speaker, I don't want to overemphasize the fact of it being a pilot project. I only want to emphasize that this is a time where if the project's not working, if the way that they are doing now is not working, it's an opportunity for residents to provide feedback, whether that's direct to the federal government or to an MLA who may want to pass that on through to the federal government, to our MP, probably best place to raise that. You know, certainly I would think they want to get this right. I have sympathy, the airline prices change but they have gotten this far, let's get them over the line to be that much better. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. I want to thank the Minister for that. No, there's a lot of good stuff there. I get her passion on this, and I too want us to get over the finish line.

But there's one other outstanding issue when it comes to northern residents tax deduction. It's the lack of indexing of the northern, the residency amount. I believe it has only ever been raised once in 36 years. So can the Minister tell us what has been done to fix this

problem for northern taxpayers? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Mr. Speaker, the Member and I are in full agreement on this particular issue. It's true. Mr. Speaker, this is a bee in our bonnet. I have asked about this one as well. I have certainly raised this one. I know certainly at the table, if not in letters or both. I was able to confirm with our department, indexing has not gone, even though not indexed, the deduction amount went up 1991, 2008, 2016, but incrementally increasing it in this way is not effective, it is not reflective, it doesn't keep up with inflation. I think I am certainly, again, preaching to the choir here with respect to this question. The challenge I am running into is that it is a national program. The northern residents deduction is not only for territorial residents, it is not only for the Northwest Territories, it does impact the situation facing northern residents in provinces. And while I don't have a crystal ball into what happens with the federal government, it is our sense that that is creating perhaps some of their challenge. I don't think we are done with this. I don't think it is not worth raising. It has such a tremendous impact on the territories as an attractive feature for us, as a way to increase labour market residents, so many reasons. So I am not done with it, Mr. Speaker. Just haven't quite solved this one yet. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 1452-19(2): AFFIRMATIVE ACTION POLICY

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, statistics going back to 1985, when the native employment policy was first used, confirms that the affirmative action policy has done little to move the needle beyond the 30 percent Indigenous participation in the public sector.

Mr. Speaker, the current definition of Indigenous person in the current affirmative action policy, in part, includes Aboriginal persons resident at birth pursuant to section 23 of the Vital Statistics Act, and any Canadian Aboriginal persons who have lived more than half their life in the Northwest Territories. Now this group is being considered for removal from the definition.

Mr. Speaker, will the Minister of Finance confirm that this is being done intentionally or was it an oversight, as it impacts a high number of Indigenous people in Hay River and is the Minister willing to continue using the current

definition of Indigenous Aboriginal persons in any future policy revision? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you Member for Hay River South. Minister for Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the current language is still outdated. It is referencing Aboriginal persons, it is very old, and so that's where -- it is for that reason that we are looking for a new definition, not certainly to exclude people. The new proposed definition is around prioritizing descendants of the Dene, Inuit or Metis people who are indigenous to the present boundaries of the Northwest Territories.

Mr. Speaker, I have had some conversations with the Member from Hay River around this and was surprised as I started to hear from him, from his constituents, about their concerns. Because it certainly is not necessarily the interpretation, and therefore certainly not intentional, that the new proposal should be exclusive or exclusionary of members of Inuit or Dene or Indigenous peoples from the Northwest Territories. So I acknowledge that there needs to be some refinement around the definitions to be more clear and that is the process that we are in now, is to get exactly this kind of feedback so that the definition can be clear and appropriate to the Indigenous people of the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Indigenous representation of public sector is at an all time low right now, at around the 29 percent. Can the Minister tell me what may be contributing to this as we have had a policy in place for some 30 plus years? Thank you.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I firstly want to say that in no way do I want to simplify the issue and while I can give some responses from the perspective of the hiring department, it's an answer that does look back to everything starting from maternal health to education to mental wellness that the more people are ready, able, willing to work, trained to work and healthy to work, then there's more people available to be hired. So this is a responsibility for all of government to ensure that we are all doing those things to have -- to achieve those goals. As the hiring department for the public service, Mr. Speaker, that too, there's a number of things that we are looking at doing, looking at job descriptions, ensuring that they are not overinflated and ensuring that they consider equivalencies that may reflect the skills and the abilities of people in the Northwest Territories and what we actually need to accomplish with

the jobs that we have, and to ensure that we are looking past internal biases, that we are looking past if there is a cultural awareness and cultural safety which training, again, is now mandatory. Everything we can do to change the mindset, often unconscious and often unaware, of who it is that we have in our roles and what we need. So, again, it's -- saying I didn't want to oversimplify and now I'm going to get a bit long. I will stop there, Mr. Speaker, just to say there is a number of fronts on which we are trying to tackle the issue. Thank you.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Mr. Speaker, Indigenous representation of public sector in 13 communities in declining. Will the Minister tell me how will the department turn this around? Would decentralization of some positions be part of the solution? Thank you.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there are a number of programs, and just in coming up to the last question before this, what are we doing this to solve and what are some of the challenges. To the extent that training and opportunity is a challenge, there is a number of programs now, the Indigenous Recruitment and Retention Program, there's the Gateway Program, the internship program, student programs, secondment programs. All of those are opportunities to increase our presence within smaller communities and to increase awareness of the opportunities to work with the GNWT.

Another thing that I'd mention though, Mr. Speaker, we do have -- this was again part of the remote work policy that was introduced. It would provide some opportunity to have people working not only in a headquarters or regional place but to be doing that work remotely. We saw in COVID that it's possible. It takes a bit of getting used to as a manager. It may be, we realize that. We want to work with our superiors and managers so that they can better supervise people to give them those opportunities for remote work, where appropriate, where operationally allowed.

So a number of things, again, happening all within the space of a last couple of years and I am hoping that they will start to grow fruit. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, one bright spot, if we can see it as that, is that Indigenous representation in senior management has reached its highest level since 2013 and currently stands at a whopping 19.7 percent.

Can the Minister tell me what may have contributed to this little increase and can we expect to see exponential increases going forward? Thank you.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate calling it a bright spot. I think that's the fourth question so maybe I am getting a bit of an easy going there. I recognize that 19.7 is not really a bright spot, at least it's on the right direction though. Mr. Speaker, I can say that one thing that was launched 2018, and finally actually got significant up gait in 2019 and 2020, is the Indigenous Development Training Program, previously known as Indigenous Management Development Program. It's an important change in terminology to go from saying management to development because it doesn't mean only for managers and it doesn't mean only to become a manager. It means it's an opportunity for someone who wants to increase their career skills to move up in seniority, in whatever path that might be, that they can do so. And it is certainly our hope that that program will continue to the extent that we expect that it has been part of the reason for this, that people will continue to apply for it and not see it -- and see that it applies to them, that it applies to any public servant who wants to increase their skills. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 1453-19(2):
RABIES AND FOXES

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first set of questions is for ENR. I'm going to start with the foxes, Mr. Speaker. That's where the rabies are most present, and then they get into dogs, and then they get into humans. So can the Minister of ENR just tell us whether the department is presently concerned with their rabies outbreak in the current fox -- Arctic Fox population. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Yellowknife North. Minister responsible for Environment and Natural Resources.

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I thank the Member for the questions. Rabies, as the Member said, is a natural occurrence occurring, and it's always present in Arctic Foxes in northern Canada, particularly above the treeline. The disease goes through cycles, and more cases seen in some years. We have more cases in the Beau-Del this year and a case in the Sahtu. ENR regularly monitors rabies in wildlife across the NWT and will continue to track numbers of

cases where they occur if rabies occur. Cases are confirmed near communities or in domestic animals; ENR provides information and support to the Department of Health and Social Services to avoid people being exposed to the disease. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. JOHNSON: Yeah, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate that, and I -- some of the people who are most at risk are our hunters and trappers, especially those who are trapping foxes above the treeline. But many of them have dealt with this; they notice the signs, and they know when not to deal with a rabid animal. I'm wondering, some experts have suggested that a bait program be put in place, specifically around communities to kind of act as a buffer zone so that rabies does not pass to other populations. Is this something ENR is considering? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, given the vast geographical scope of rabies in the NWT, vaccination of wildlife is not currently a practice or an efficient option right now. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 1454-19(2):
SUMMER STUDENTS

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions today are for the Minister of finance. It doesn't look like it outside, but summer is coming. The sun is shining, and our university students will be home soon from university, and probably some will start to book their tickets and get on planes in just probably a few short five to six weeks. So I'm wondering if the Minister of finance can indicate how many summer students the GNWT plans to hire this summer. Thank you.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there's not a formal target in place. I will say that for the last three years summer student numbers have continued to go up. We hit 327 in 2022. So if there are some competitive supervisors or managers out there, they may want to try and beat that for the coming here. That would certainly be great. There is -- and I would just note, Mr. Speaker, it is early days right now, but they -- departments shouldn't hesitate in getting their papers going now and reaching out to the Department of Finance if they want to hire a student. Thank you.

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. So, Mr. Speaker, can the Minister confirm whether or not there is a deadline that departments need to put forward applications for summer students by, and can departments continue to hire summer students into the summer months? Thank you.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there's not a deadline. Certainly if departments get their materials in by January, which I think is sometimes the idea of a deadline, what that does is it allows human resources to work with the department so that the student is ready to roll, that they would have all their paperworks ready. And in that sense -- or rather by February if they can do that. If they can't, though, Mr. Speaker, then the students might just be hired later, and, indeed, there may be students who would prefer to be hired a little bit later. So while, again, the targets are to have everything ready in February, it gives students a bit of leeway, there's not a deadline as to departments and hiring managers should not hesitate. Please check in with their client services officer because we'd much rather have the students start late than not at all. Thank you.

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I understand that my next question might be a little bit out of scope for the Minister, but I'm wondering if the Minister will then work with the Minister of ECE, because Education, Culture and Employment has a fund, a subsidy fund, that employers can take advantage of to hire their own summer students outside of the GNWT. And I heard from Kam Lake employers that the deadline associated with this subsidy is actually prohibitive for them to be able to hire summer students. I believe the deadline for that program is January. And so what happens is employers when they're looking for summer students come -- you know, when the snow starts to actually melt, they've already missed the deadline. So I'm wondering if the Minister will work with the Minister of ECE to extend that deadline? Thank you.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Sometimes, Mr. Speaker, we have a sense of some of the themes of what's coming at us, and I was just about to send a quick note over to the Member, but I've been kept busy today. So, Mr. Speaker, ECE, it's my understanding doesn't hold the summer subsidy program. These are actually quite a number of federal programs that exist, and there is a January 12th deadline, for example, for the employment and social development Canada summer jobs program, which might be the program that we're talking about. If so

and -- regardless, if those are federal programs, what we could do, Mr. Speaker -- I'm sure that the Minister of ECE and I can work together on this. We both share responsibility for labour, with my ITI hat -- is get a list of the programs that are available, get a list of their deadlines, and at least -- at the very least get that out and put it out for employers to be very well aware of. To the extent that we can then perhaps go back to our friends over in the federal government and ask them for some flexibility, we could certainly see if there -- what options there may be in that regard. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you to the Minister for that response. Mr. Speaker, one of the things I absolutely adore in the summer is seeing kids that I once knew as tiny little children in our community come back as university students and work in -- in even this building here. And it's great to get to see them gain valuable experience for what they're studying at school and what they might want to do when they come home. Unfortunately, this is an honour that is often reserved for either people living in regional centres or Yellowknife itself and that my colleagues from small communities don't have the same -- the same pleasure of seeing students from around the community come home and work for the GNWT. The GNWT does have a program called building capacity in Indigenous governments, and I'm wondering if there is a portion of that funding that is available to summer students so that summer -- or sorry -- the GNWT can work alongside Indigenous governments to provide summer employment in NWT's small communities for our post-secondary students. Thank you.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Building Capacity in Indigenous Governments Program really has been quite a success. I'm happy to say it is oversubscribed. And that's good news because in this case, two departments actually are able to support two additional secondments. So it's oversubscribed, but it's being funded. So it's being fully utilized. It's an opportunity -- obviously I won't repeat the Member's visions of it. But we can't agree more; it gives an opportunity to expose public servants and an opportunity to build capacity with Indigenous governments within their public service. As for extending it further and creating essentially a new stream by which to accept funds, right now it is intended for existing public servants, for existing employees, not for interns. But I certainly can go back to the department and see if there's some opportunity

for us to find new ways to recruit students back to the North to small communities and into the public service. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 1455-19(2):
RABIES AND VACCINATION OF DOGS

MR. JOHNSON: I've got some more rabies questions, Mr. Speaker. So once we move on to wildlife, we get to pets. And dogs is actually the number one way that humans can contract rabies. In many jurisdictions, it's actually required that all dog owners have up-to-date vaccinations for their dogs for the rabies. That is not currently the case in the Northwest Territories. So my question for the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs is whether he will consider mandating that every pet owner, every dog owner make sure that their dog has the rabies vaccine. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Yellowknife North. Minister responsible for Municipal and Community Affairs.

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I thank the Member for the question. Getting your dogs vaccinated for rabies is an important way to reduce the risk for you and your community. Responsibility to immunize your dog with a rabies shot or provide any other vaccination is the responsibility of a dog owner. To date, MACA has not heard from community government leadership that is an issue. If this is a concern for community governments, Municipal and Community Affairs would work with NWTAC and LGANT to understand the community's desire to make rabies immunizations mandatory. Depending what we heard, MACA will work to support the request through the appropriate piece of legislation, which may not be administered by Municipal and Community Affairs. For an example, Ontario is the only jurisdiction that makes it mandatory for dogs and cats, among other animals, to be immunized against rabies, and this is done through a regulation of their Health Protection and Promotion Act. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. JOHNSON: Yeah, thank you, Mr. Speaker. One of the problems with this is that it -- you know, it's a relatively simple and cheap problem to solve. The vaccine itself is only a couple dollars, or, you know, the logistics of getting it into dogs is a bit more complicated. But what I found is that the people who care about this can't seem to get anyone in the GNWT to care about it. And I know perhaps we have to -- whether it's a human health act or a

dog act, I don't really care. I just don't want anyone to die from rabies. I'm wondering if the Minister of MACA would coordinate a rollout of the rabies vaccines to dogs. This is traditionally something that Vets Without Borders and the NWT SPCA has done. I know in the past some of their funding has flown through MACA, but it's also one of those issues no one seems to want to take responsibility for. So can the Minister at least try and get the right people in the room to have a discussion about how we make sure that dogs are up to date on their rabies vaccine. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is kind of a MACA and ENR question. So I'll give him kind of an answer from both as the Minister for MACA and the Minister for ENR. Some communities have access to full-time or visiting veterinary service for their pets. But access to veterinary service remains a challenge in many small communities, as the Member talked about. In areas where rabies is common, including parts of the Beaufort Delta region, ENR has worked with the Department of Health and Social Services to help support access to rabies vaccination to communities that don't have local or visiting vets. So we do work on it; we do provide that opportunity if it's a bigger concern. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Oral questions. Member for Frame Lake. No. Sorry. Member for Hay River South.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I had a chance to talk with the Minister of health for a bit, and she said she'd be willing to take some questions. So these are pretty straightforward. Can the Minister of health tell me why Hay River is consistently without a full complement of physicians or always a limited number of physicians. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Hay River South. Minister responsible for Health and Social Services.

HON. JULIE GREEN: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, doctors are hired centrally through the NTH SSA. The NTH SSA has a Memorandum of Understanding with the Hay River Health and Social Services Authority to facilitate that. So the long story short is that it is an extremely competitive field at this point, and we are having trouble attracting doctors to come to the northern communities despite various incentives that we put in place, competitive wages, very handsome signing bonuses, and efforts that are made by human resources to attend -- I don't want to call them trade shows, but career fairs and that kind of thing where they can meet with people who are

about to graduate and pitch them on the idea of coming to the NWT. So we are aware that there should be a doctor in Hay River. As I said to the Member yesterday or the day before, we consider seven doctors the full complement for Hay River. So it's very unfortunate that we're not able to attract people there. But that doesn't mean we've given up trying. Thank you.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask the Minister when physicians are hired through NTH SSA, what is the priority for determining where they will be located, and how is location determined. Are they given a choice, I guess, to go to Hay River or Yellowknife or Inuvik or Fort Smith, or is it just kind of they just say that, you want to stay in Yellowknife, or do we encourage them to stay in Yellowknife. Thank you.

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I don't think it's an either/or. I think it's an and so the doctor may have a preference to go to a particular community. There are locums who go to the same community time and time again. But there is also a triage applied to where doctors are needed. So the highest priority always is the Stanton emergency room because all of the regional health centres and acute care centres call into Stanton for advice on dealing with emergencies. So there is some discretion by the doctor and also some need to ask doctors to come to the emergency room in Yellowknife preferentially to serve the entire territory. Thank you.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask the Minister what initiatives -- or are there any special initiatives in place or have been taken to recruit physicians specifically for the locations outside Yellowknife, such as Hay River. Thank you.

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I think that when the human resources people go to the career fairs, they talk about the NWT as a whole, and then people when they apply can potentially be directed if they don't have a particular preference about where to live to areas of greatest need. As I said, I know that there are relationships that develop between locums, and they continue returning to the same communities over and over again. That is certainly the best outcome. But there isn't a specific Hay River doctor recruitment campaign. It is done for the NWT as a whole. And, of course, the -- or Hay River health and social services is an important part of that as the second largest community in the territory. Thank you.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the other day the Minister said something along the lines of -- you know, when I asked her could Hay River -- I guess she said could Hay River do better, I guess, at hiring doctors than the NTH SSA. Well, I know we couldn't do any worse because we just don't have the full complement of doctors. We don't have enough. So I think it's -- you know, we have an opportunity. I hear the agreement is coming up between the NTH SSA and Hay River. And I'm just wondering if the Minister's willing to discuss moving physician recruitment to the Hay River's SSA and try it out and see what happens, because I think that if we're -- I'm hoping that if we're selling it ourselves, maybe we could do a better job at it. I don't know. But right now we've got to do something because, you know, health is important in Hay River; it's important to the people. You know, I hear more and more complaints, people not getting proper care. You know, I hear of people, you know, going south on their own dime now to try and find doctors that they could rely on. And so we've got to do something. And it's getting critical. And the other issue too is that, you know, without doctors, the staff are getting stressed out. And I'm afraid what's going to happen is that we're going to see some of them exit and go to places where they have doctors, such as Yellowknife or down south. Thank you.

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You did that yesterday too. Mr. Speaker, I don't have a full grasp on what is required to recruit doctors. But I think it's a fairly specialized -- a fairly specialized skill. NTH SSA has capacity to do it. They have contacts. They, as I mentioned, go to the career fairs and so on. So I guess my question about Hay River taking over the recruitment of doctors is whether Hay River Health and Social Services Authority has the capacity to do that. Do they have staff who are skilled and available. And my other question would be whether the economies of scale would work. So for the physician complement for Yellowknife -- or pardon me -- for the NWT as a whole, if I remember correctly, is around about 70. So, you know, we've got this one unit dedicated to doing that work. So it wouldn't work as well if we had people working on seven contracts at a time. It's a question that's worth answering. And Hay River health and social services, as the Member mentioned, has a Memorandum of Understanding with NTH SSA, and so there is an opportunity to discuss that when the MOU is renewed. Thank you.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a third set of questions, and surprise, it's about rabies again. Mr. Speaker, my question is -- really, my interest in doing this is making sure that no humans die of rabies. So my question's for the Minister of health and social services, just how quickly after a potential exposure to rabies must someone get treated. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, not to be facetious, but it really depends where they are. If that's a hunter or a trapper out on the land, it could take some time for that person to get into a community with a health centre and be assessed for the exposure. If they're in the town already or a community, then obviously it would be a lot faster. So if somebody has been exposed, whether that's a bite or a scratch, so in contact with the mucus membranes, the eyes, the mouth, the nose of the animal, then they should get themselves to their community health centre as soon as possible for assessment. Thank you.

MR. JOHNSON: Yeah, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think the -- one of the things about rabies is that the people most at risk are our hunters and trappers who are out on the land, often remote, and the other people are children, who perhaps just don't recognize the signs of a rabid animal. And I just want to ensure that we are treating people quickly as possible because even if you survive, there are some very nasty long-term cognitive effects if you ever get exposed to rabies. Can the Minister of health just confirm where people can get the rabies antidote. Is it presently available at all our community health centres. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. JULIE GREEN: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I think -- I just want to clear up the word "antidote." There isn't an antidote for rabies. But there is a vaccine, and it's available in each health centre or hospital pharmacy and emergency room in the NWT. And anyone who might potentially have contact with wild animals, for example, again, hunters and trappers, can go to their health care provider and ask to have this preexposure vaccination before they go out on the land. So that is an option that people who are working far away from health centres might want to consider. And even if they do end up having contact with a rabid animal, they will be protected, but they should still report the incident to their health care provider because

that is something that we track, and we warn the public about. Thank you.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just have one last follow-up. I heard the Minister of MACA/ENR say that the Dog Act is perhaps not the place to mandate that all dogs be vaccinated for rabies. And in Ontario, it was actually done under public health. I really don't care, I just think that we should be making sure -- can the Minister of health look into whether it's possible that, under public health, we mandate that dogs are up to date for their rabies vaccine. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I realize that this is a serious issue, and I look forward to hearing what public health has to say about dog vaccinations. I understand that that would be beneficial. There are lots of dogs in the NWT and lots of dog/fox interactions. Even where I live in Yellowknife, the foxes live in a den on the sliding hill, and myself and my neighbours all have dogs. So it is a serious issue. I mean, fortunately in Yellowknife we have vet clinics and so vaccines are easy enough to get. And I know the SPCA has tried to expand vaccinations out into the communities. But there hasn't been enough money to make this a complete coverage of vaccinations for dogs to ensure that they don't contract rabies. Thank you.

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

Written Questions

WRITTEN QUESTION 64-19(2): HOUSING NWT FUNDING FORMULA FOR LOCAL HOUSING ORGANIZATIONS

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my written question is for the Minister responsible for Housing NWT.

To calculate the annual funding it provides to local housing organizations, LHOs, for repair and maintenance of its public housing portfolio, Housing NWT uses a formula that multiplies a fixed amount by the number and type of housing units. The LHOs are expected to allocate the funds according to the needs identified in the annual property inspection and condition rating process.

1. Based on the Housing NWT formula, what amount should each LHO be funded to deliver public housing;
2. What amount is each LHO funded;

3. How does Housing NWT intend to fund this gap given LHOs cannot source third party funding or funding from financial institutions; and,
4. The current Housing NWT annual report does not give an adequate snapshot of Housing NWT assets, their condition, and asset maintenance costs.

In 2008, the Auditor General recommended that the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation regularly report on the condition of its public housing portfolio.

So will the Minister ensure that the corporation's full list of assets by community, their condition, and required asset maintenance costs be including in Housing NWT's annual report, including the upcoming 2022-2023 Annual Report? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Tabling of Documents

TABLED DOCUMENT 881-19(2):
SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES
(INFRASTRUCTURE EXPENDITURES),
NO. 3, 2022-2023

TABLED DOCUMENT 882-19(2):
SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES
(OPERATIONS EXPENDITURES),
NO. 3, 2022-2023

TABLED DOCUMENT 883-19(2):
SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES
(INFRASTRUCTURE EXPENDITURES),
NO. 1, 2023-2024

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following three documents: Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 3, 2022-2023; Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 3, 2022-2023; and, Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 1, 2023-2024. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

TABLED DOCUMENT 884-19(2):
LETTER DATED MARCH 3, 2023, FROM
LISA SMITH TO MLA HAY RIVER SOUTH
REGARDING A CASE STUDY ON CARBON
TAX IMPACT TO ONE FAMILY IN HAY
RIVER

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Tabling of documents. Member for Hay River South.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table the following document: Case Study on Carbon Tax Impact to One Family in Hay River. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Hay River South. Tabling of documents. Member for Thebacha.

TABLED DOCUMENT 885-19(2):
PROCESS CONVENTION ON BILLS
DRAFTED PURSUANT TO THE
INTERGOVERNMENTAL COUNCIL
LEGISLATIVE DEVELOPMENT PROTOCOL

MS. MARTSELOS: Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the Process Convention on the introduction and enactment of Bills drafted pursuant to the Intergovernmental Council Legislative Development Protocol.

Mr. Speaker, I'll be making a Member's statement on this document tomorrow but for now, I would like to draw attention to the importance of what it means.

We talk a lot about reconciliation and working closely with our Indigenous government partners in this place. As a former chief of the Salt River First Nation for 14 years, I am proud that this document gives substance to the importance of our relationships with Indigenous governments and the shared responsibility we all have as Northerners to enact land and resource legislation that reflects the rights and aspirations of all Northwest Territories governments. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Thebacha. Tabling of documents. Notices of motion. Motions. Member for Monfwi.

Motions

MOTION 74-19(2):
RECONCILIATORY REVIEW OF HOUSING
NWT'S COLLECTION APPROACH,
CARRIED

MS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Reconciliatory Review of Housing NWT's Collection Approach:

WHEREAS clients of Housing NWT fall into arrears for a variety of reasons and many clients are unable to get out of arrears in their lifetime;

AND WHEREAS opportunities for employment and to generate income are limited, especially in smaller communities;

AND WHEREAS many clients live on fixed income and limited sources of income;

AND WHEREAS it is a mandate item of this government to support seniors to age in place by increasing supports for seniors to stay in their homes and communities;

AND WHEREAS it is a mandate item of the Government to implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples;

AND WHEREAS there are elders and Indian Residential School survivors in the Northwest Territories with pensions that are being garnished to pay back Housing NWT arrears;

AND WHEREAS the garnishment of a pension to pay off a debt to Housing NWT is unreasonable and unjust;

AND WHEREAS section 62 of the Financial Administration Act provides the authority for the Financial Management Board to forgive a debt or obligation owed to Housing NWT if it is considered unreasonable or unjust;

NOW THEREFORE I MOVE, seconded by the honourable Member for Great Slave, that this Legislative Assembly calls upon the Government of the Northwest Territories to pause the garnishment of elders and the Indian Residential School survivors' pensions to pay for Housing NWT arrears immediately;

AND FURTHER, Housing NWT identify all elders aged 60 and over and consenting Indian Residential School survivors in public housing who currently owe arrears or who are having their pensions garnished.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Monfwi. The motion is in order. To the motion. Member for Monfwi. You'd like to speak to the motion?

MS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, not just now but I've been hearing a lot from my constituents, and others in the Northwest Territories, those who are living on fixed income, that their money are being garnished to pay for housing arrears and other arrears as well, and this is causing a

lot of hardship for our vulnerable, especially the elders. It is hard on them especially now with the high cost of living that they have to pay. You know, there are -- they have to pay for -- they have to make a choice of either paying for a bill or groceries and this is -- a lot of them are having difficulty making ends meet. So many are saying that they cannot afford to have their pension garnished or any income that's coming to them. So for that reason, I am supporting this motion as presented to stop all the garnishment, or all the garnishee from pension or debt and debts forgiven. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. I support this motion. As I understand it, there's about \$13 million in arrears with the Housing NWT, and that includes current and former tenants. And as I understand it, about half of that amount would be covered by the motion perhaps. So, look, this is a real issue for many people. It causes tremendous hardships, and we need to find a way to get through this and around it and over it so that our residents aren't seeing their incomes garnished. And so I support this motion in finding a better way to approach this. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm in full support of this motion because this -- we're having too tough times right now and back home in my riding in Nunakput, Mr. Speaker, in regards to it's the whole territory. I think that something like this, residential school survivors and all the debts owed in regards to housing, I mean those houses were paid ten times over by now and the state of those houses are not worth the price that we're paying. Something like this is going to really help the people and not make it so difficult to make decisions either pay your bills or feed your family, especially with what's coming forward in this House next week. So I'm in full support of this bill. I wish all my colleagues on this side of the House in an open vote to the floor too to make the right decision for the people they represent as MLAs. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Nunakput. The motion is in order. To the motion. Member for Great Slave.

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So, Mr. Speaker, I too stand in support of this

motion, and it is why I wanted to be the seconder on it. To me this is a true act of reconciliation with Indigenous people. It's come to my attention, and I want to thank my colleague for actually being really informative in helping us as a committee to understand really what the situation is like in the smaller communities. I agree with my colleague about the state of the condition of a lot of these buildings that we are, you know, putting off onto low income people in the communities. They aren't worth the money that they're being held to and often it's come to my attention that it's also an issue where perhaps at times people sign documents and they weren't aware of what they were signing. ESL plays into it as well. Don't mean to laugh, Mr. Speaker; I'm just a little distracted today. So yes, no, I just wanted to say that I agree here.

One thing that I think is really key here is any time -- and this is a conversation around the forgiving of student loans in the US. Any time that you're getting people out of debt, the money that they would be paying towards or spending on those loans or the interest will now come back into our community and our economies and, therefore, that money will stay in the community instead of going into the government coffers which is just only going to help the people that are affected but not only them, the people around them. I think one of the biggest things we noticed, or has been noticeable to me, has been the issue of overcrowding. So, you know, you hear about it and you think -- you know, you can say oh okay, there's six people living in this house, but until you go into a community like we did with the Member from Monfwi and see that there are, you know, seven adults, children, everybody living in this one or two-bedroom home and you really get an understanding of what that means and really what -- how that impacts people's quality of life. So that being said, I just want to say that I strongly support this motion. I think it's a true act of reconciliation and it goes to furthering the priorities that we set as the 19th Assembly. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Great Slave. The motion is in order. To the motion. Member for Thebacha.

MS. MARTSELOS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too support this motion. I stood up in this House many times about the lack of compassion by the NWT Housing department and how seniors are -- I like the one part where it says -- especially with the motion that says "and whereas it is the mandate item of this government to support seniors to age in place by increasing supports for seniors to stay in their homes and communities."

Now with the two cases that I've had on my agenda and mandate for -- since I've been here and nothing has been done with either one, that to me is unacceptable. And I want to -- I support this motion 150 percent to ensure that this -- justice is finally -- hopefully the other side would listen and understand where many of us are coming from. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as some of my colleagues have stated, the current state of arrears in the Northwest Territories is just over \$13 million held by about 914 people. The housing corporation has -- already has a collection policy and the principles of that collection policy stipulate that Housing NWT will

- Adhere to a standardized and consistent approach to collections;
- That arrears should be collected in a timely and efficient manner;
- That tenants and clients should not accumulate large rental or mortgage arrears that are difficult to collect, and,
- That arrears should be forgiven where collection is not possible.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's valid to talk about and share some of the stories that were shared with us as committee members when we travelled to communities and had the opportunity and privilege to sit with elders across this territory and hear their stories. Some elders lived in homes for their entire lives and all of a sudden one day received a bill for arrears. They had no idea where they came from.

Some elders came to us and told us of their stories at the age of -- in their 80s and in their 90s, and they're paying over half of their pension towards their arrears. That leaves many elders with less than \$300 to pay for all of their monthly expenses. \$300 today in Yellowknife, not even in our small communities, you leave with maybe three bags, four bags of groceries. And that's not the only expenses that somebody would have to live and survive in the Northwest Territories.

So garnishing pensions in an unreasonable manner off of our elders is not taking care of our elders and empowering them to survive and thrive in their home communities let alone even here in Yellowknife.

Mr. Speaker, some of the elders who are carrying arrears are women who have

experienced family violence in their homes and are carrying the damages that were inflicted to that infrastructure through family violence and are walking around with this huge weight on their shoulders from those damages and those arrears, unable to access additional housing programs to secure stable housing. There are other elders who spoke to us and they are carrying arrears from income that was earned by other members of their family. And so by preventing homelessness and allowing people to live in their homes, like their children or their nieces and nephews and their cousins, they were incurring arrears. And this policy was changed over the life of this Assembly, but those arrears were not addressed and mitigated by the housing corporation.

In addition to that, Mr. Speaker, these arrears, as you've heard my colleague say, they cause extreme hardship for the people that are holding them and prevent them from being able to move on and address other concerns in their lives. Some of those concerns are really privileges. So rather than holding on to arrears or -- or sorry, rather than the weight of arrears and being able to turn around and help their family maybe take care of children, because that's a role that a lot of our elders fill in the territory, is that care provision for the younger generation and that care provision ends up turning around and enabling a lot of healing in our territory. So that's a very important one.

Mr. Speaker, it is incredibly prudent that -- or it's incredibly important that the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation have prudent management when it comes to managing arrears, managing rents, and managing the policies that they actually put in place. So they need to not only understand why people have rent but also be able to mitigate why people have arrears and address that properly. And if the housing corporation is going to have policies to address this, then they actually need to follow them. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Yeah, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I too, you know, agree with this motion and support it fully. You know, in the past years the federal government, you know, they've got to take responsibility for some of this. This government has to take some responsibility as well. And, you know, and I've been around long enough that -- and worked with people and went to meetings with them and seeing, you know, the lack of understanding of agreements being signed and what they are getting themselves into. You

know, we do have legislation out there that allows this government to look at all these arrears and write off the ones that are uncollectible. And it's a simple process. We just have to start that process somewhere. So I think, you know, with this motion I think this is a good start and hopefully it gets done sooner than later. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Hay River South. The motion is in order. To the motion. Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes.

MS. SEMMLER: Yeah, thank you, Mr. Speaker. And Mr. Speaker, I too support this motion. You know, I've been dealing with the housing concern of a constituent of mine who has actually passed away, and the estate of her -- her family is trying to deal with arrears that were done. You know, and now we're going -- like, when we look at what my colleague has said as how are we going to get these arrears paid for when we've lost this person; we've lost this family member and we're dealing with this? So, you know, this is a way that, you know, we can move and push the housing corporation forward to actually act on what they say they are going to be doing. And so yes, again I'm not going to repeat anything that my colleagues have said, but I just wanted to highlight that, you know, this is an issue even when people are gone, we're trying to collect arrears. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes. The motion is in order. To the motion. Member for Monfwi.

MS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the support of all my colleagues. Can we have a recorded vote, please.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Monfwi. The Member's requesting a recorded vote. All those in favour, please rise.

RECORDED VOTE

DEPUTY CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland): The Member for Monfwi. The Member for Great Slave. 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 Nunakput. The Member for Yellowknife North.

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

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland): 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: The results of the recorded vote: Nine in favour, zero opposed, six abstentions. The motion is carried.

---Carried

Motions. Notices of motion for the first reading of bills. First reading of bills. Minister responsible for Environment and Natural Resources.

First Reading of Bills

BILL 74: FOREST ACT

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I wish to present to the House Bill 74, Forest Act, to be read for the first time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. The motion is in order. To the motion. Oh yes, sorry. Thank you, Minister. Pursuant to Rule 8.2(3), Bill 74 is deemed to have first reading and is ready for second reading.

First reading of bills. Minister responsible for Status of Women.

BILL 75: COUNCIL OF WOMEN AND GENDER DIVERSITY ACT

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Mr. Speaker, I wish to present to the House Bill 75, Council of Women and Gender Diversity Act, to be read for the first time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Pursuant to Rule 8.2(3), Bill 75 is deemed to have first reading and is ready for second reading.

Second reading of bills. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters, Bill 23, 29, 60, 61, 63, 66, 67, 68, and 73, Committee Report 40, 43, 44, 45-19(2), Minister's Statement 264-19(2), Tabled Document 681, 694, 813, Tabled Document 881, 882, and 883-19(2).

By the authority given to me as Speaker, I hereby the House to sit beyond the reasonable hours of adjournment to deal with matters before the House, with Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes in the chair.

Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters

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

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Madam la Presidente. Committee wishes to deal with Committee Report 45-19(2), Report on the Review of Bill 60; and, Tabled Document 813-19(2), 2023-2024 Main Estimates, with Department of Infrastructure. Mahsi, Madam Chair.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

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

---SHORT RECESS

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): I now call Committee of the Whole back to order. Committee, we've agreed to consider Committee Report 45-19(2), Report on Bill 60: An Act to Amend the Petroleum Products and Carbon Tax Act. I will go to the chair of Standing Committee on Government Operations for any opening comments. Member for Yellowknife North.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, Bill 60, An Act to Amend the Petroleum Products and Carbon Tax Act, received second reading in the Legislative Assembly on November 1st, 2022, and was referred to the Standing Committee on Government Operations for review.

In its review, it was important to the committee to identify what changes could help mitigate the economic impacts of the tax. Committee also wanted to understand implications of reverting to the federal backstop.

Committee held a public technical briefing from the Minister of Finance and the department officials on November 25th, 2022. Following that, the committee sought public feedback on Bill 60. Committee heard from several stakeholders both through written submission and oral comments. Committee heard serious concerns about the carbon tax approach.

As a result of the review of Bill 60, the committee presented a report with five recommendations to the Legislative Assembly on March 1st, 2023.

I would like to thank committee for its work on review of Bill 60. Individual Members may have

additional comments. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. I will now open the floor to general comments on Committee Report 45-19(2). Members. Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. I want to start by thanking the committee for its work on Bill 60. I sat in on I believe all of their proceedings. I was there for the public hearing and so on, meetings with the Minister and staff. And I think they've come to a -- given the state of information that was available and what they heard from the public, I think they've put forward a reasonable set of recommendations. Probably -- but I think it's important to kind of review how we got here first.

And back in 2021, the federal government set new targets for reductions in greenhouse gas emissions partly based on, you know, an international consensus that the Pan-Canadian Framework targets, the old targets were not going to get us where we need to as a planet. And, you know, the federal government went out and informed all the provinces and territories that there was going to be some new goalposts, new benchmarks, put in place. And the federal government required as of April 1st, 2022, an indication from each of the provinces and territories whether they were going to have their own carbon tax approach that would meet those goalposts, collect the revenues themselves and decide how to use the revenues, or whether they would prefer to go with the federal backstop. And if a province or territory decided to go onto the federal backstop voluntarily, the federal government would transfer all the revenues to that jurisdiction and allow that jurisdiction to decide what to do with the revenues. And if a province or territory decided that they didn't want to voluntarily go into the federal backstop, the federal government would, of course, collect the taxes but then rebate most of the taxes to individual taxpayers in those jurisdictions. And a number of jurisdictions have done that including Alberta, Ontario, and a longer list that I'm not going to go through.

So that was the first sort of gatepost, was April 1st, 2022.

The second was September 1st, 2022, when if a jurisdiction decided that they wanted to retain their own carbon tax, they had to submit specific proposals to the federal government so that they could evaluate that they would fit within the goalpost that the federal government had set. They even issued some guidance around that which, you know, jurisdictions could use in designing their own carbon tax.

Now, the first meeting that, you know, the Regular MLAs had with the Minister of Finance on this approach happened in July of 2022. So by then decisions had already been made and then of course the bill was introduced in October of 2022. So I think it's -- from my perspective, what this is really all about is Cabinet's approach and whether, you know -- I think it really is a struggle here about power and authority over who sets the carbon tax, at least within our jurisdiction, and who decides on those revenues and what role will be the Regular MLAs, and perhaps even the public, have in all of that.

So I think it's important to look at how the first carbon tax bill came in the last Assembly. It provided basically total authority jurisdiction to Cabinet to decide how to set the carbon tax rates other than they were set in the legislation but they tweaked -- they get to tweak it, but they also get to decide how the rebates are going to be set through regulations. And the Regular MLAs had no say whatsoever on the regulations, nor did the public, other than providing feedback and then they can take that. But Cabinet can change regulations at a whim. So I think it's important to look at how that exercise of discretion has been used between the first carbon tax bill and where we are now.

So I said that there was these two important mileposts, April 1st and September 1st last year for deciding if you're going to keep your own carbon tax and then submitting a design for that. And I think it's fair to say that that first milepost of April 1st, 2022, Regular MLAs, we didn't even know it was happening. There was no effort to reach out to us to look at options, get or seek our input. That decision was made completely by Cabinet.

Now, the -- so then I think, you know, other discretion that could have been exercised when we did start to talk with the Minister and staff about this, we suggested that there be some robust public communications around that. There was one presentation to standing committee, and that's all you can still find I think on the Department of Finance website about the carbon tax. That's it. So there really hasn't been much in terms of public communications around that, and I think that's borne out by what we heard in the standing committee from the public. They want more information about this, and they didn't get it.

So another -- some further exercise or discretion, the kind of approach the Cabinet has put forward, and I will go on record about this, is unfair. It treats the large emitters more favourably than other businesses, small businesses, NGOs, community governments.

It's unfair. That's how Cabinet exercised their discretion with Bill 60. They brought forward an unfair approach.

The only consultation that happened in developing Bill 60 was with the large emitters. The public wasn't consulted. Regular MLAs, we had some input; it didn't start until after some of the major decisions had been made. So I believe that that was unfair the way that Cabinet decided only to consult with the large emitters.

Cabinet also got an exemption for methane emissions. Methane is problematic when it comes to greenhouse gas emissions and its effect on climate change. It's 80 times worse than carbon dioxide. There are methane emissions that happen in the Northwest Territories, fugitive emissions flaring. These happen at Norman Wells, but Cabinet went and sought an exemption for whatever reasons. This is not environmentally friendly to get this exemption, quite frankly, so.

So Cabinet proceeded on. Cabinet has decided they do not want a legislated approach because Cabinet wants to continue to control how the carbon tax revenues are used. And so the impact, mitigation, offsets, rebates, will all be done through regulations with no input from Regular MLAs, no input from the public. That's not how we should be doing this.

I also tried to get some accountability, transparency, inserted into the bill. I gave the Minister even wording around this from what I tried to do in the last Assembly. That was not included. So there's no separate accounting for this money. There's some public reporting that happens; it's discretionary, it's not very good. I've been critical of that as well, but I think it should be right in the bill itself.

So all of this leads to the need for a legislated approach to set down a fairer approach, greater accountability, sharing of the revenues, and that's what they do in the Yukon. That's not what we have here. And I'm not prepared to yield that much authority and control to Cabinet because of the way that they've exercised that since the last carbon tax bill legislation that was brought in. I'm not prepared to give them a blank cheque to continue to exercise that kind of control and authority given what has happened and transpired here.

So to try to further some of the debate and discussion on this, I did table a model bill for NWT carbon tax rebates in the House last week. That, I think, needs to be plan B. That's the approach that we can and should be taking, Madam Chair. And I've also reached out, offered to discuss this, try -- I've said that we have to find ways to work together with Cabinet

to come up with a better plan for the Northwest Territories. I haven't seen any willingness on the part of Cabinet to actually do that. Those are my remarks. Thanks, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member. General comments. Member for Nunakput.

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. In regards to Bill 60, the heating fuel and the gas over the last heating fuel and the diesel, gasoline has gone up in Nunakput. Heating fuel is up 25 percent. For automotive is 24. Gasoline is an average 12 percent. It's gone up to \$2.75. Madam Chair, it's a rippling effect across my riding. Food prices are going up. We can't afford to buy food. Nunakput has the highest food price index in the Northwest Territories. Over 50 percent in Nunakput are worried about having enough money to buy food, and almost half the residents in Nunakput are worried that they don't have enough money to feed their families at any -- all the time or very often. We have to hunt, hunt to eat, Madam Chair. 67 percent of households in Nunakput eat country food. And if you're buying gasoline at \$2.75 a litre, you have to get something on that hunt. If you don't, you're going hungry. We have a -- the price of power continues to go up across the Northwest Territories, which affects my riding. The power in Nunakput riding is among the highest rates in the Northwest Territories. For example, Sachs Harbour pays \$2.37 a kilowatt.

Madam Chair, for the housing, you know, the insufficient housing that's built poorly, leaking energy, residents have to pay for poorly built public housing units that are 30 plus years or older. Also with that, approximately 8 percent of housings need in the region. Housing NWT will never renovate units fast enough to keep the housing problems at a minimum. 30 percent of the homes in Nunakput are overcrowded.

The inflation across Canada is at an all-time high, Madam Chair. The NWT has inflation, is higher than Canada at 7 percent. And going this way, where we have issues providing service already, why can't we do the federal backstop? I'd rather do it federally because I don't -- I don't trust -- in regards, I don't trust Bill 60 going into the government's hands in regards to what we're going to do and what's coming forward.

Nunakput has the highest cost difference in the NWT. 18 percent of the people in Nunakput are considered to live under low income. Nunakput has over -- is \$50,000 below average on family income but the NWT's price of all goods and services in our region is the highest. We have to pay for where we live, Madam Chair. 10 percent of the families in Nunakput are less than \$30,000 a year. 344 people in Nunakput

live in income assistance, which is 17 percent. And I know that's higher. There are little employment opportunities in my riding since that moratorium hit and that M18 has gone into review from the federal government. We're resource rich and cash poor.

Impact to Nunakput communities on Bill 60, Madam Chair, the estimated total house carbon tax burden for the Nunakput residents is \$899 plus, for 2023-2024. The people in Nunakput are already -- can barely buy food for the table, find employment, earn income, pay heat and power and housing. How can we tax people who have nothing?

The residents shouldn't be penalized for where we live, Madam Chair. The GNWT is not going to provide enough offsets, cost of living offset, the right direction? No. Madam Chair, this has to be sorted out. We should not support Bill 60. It's going to -- a rippling effect across the territory. It's going to be a rippling effect for all residents. Ottawa and the GNWT is looking out -- is not looking for the Beaufort Delta and Nunakput communities, Madam Chair. Ottawa is squeezing us financially with the tax while it imposes the moratorium and blocks resource development. The GNWT is doing Ottawa's dirty work, Madam Chair. If Ottawa insists on this tax, they should impose the tax that they thought and do the backstop. The GNWT isn't taking a meaningful role with this side of the House to try to work with us to get this done so I'm in total -- I'm in total disbelief in regards to why are we doing this? Why are we going to have more taxes on our people that have nothing? We have no jobs. It's just really disheartening. We're here to make a difference and put our people first. That's who we work for across the territory, and we're not. They're going to tow the Cabinet line; do the federal government's dirty work. Ain't going to happen. Whoever supports this bill, Madam Chair, they're not doing it for the right reason. They should be -- the right reasons is standing up for their people, their constituents that they represent, and not have this extra tax and extra burden on the families that are having a tough time. People are going hungry. People are not being able to pay bills. They're having to choose what to pay. This is not right. Our territory should be doing better.

Madam Chair, this bill will impact all residents, especially those in small communities in the High Arctic who already face the highest cost of living. Madam Chair, I oppose this bill, and I encourage everyone who's concerned about this, rising cost and living impacts of Bill 60, to talk to your MLA. And once this comes to the floor of the House, Madam Chair, everybody's going to have to answer for this to their

constituents on why you supported Bill 60. I really -- I'm hoping that our Cabinet and this side of the House vote for the empathy for the people of the Northwest Territories and let the federal government do their own dirty work and so where we could be able to try to live a little bit.

And in regards to our moratorium, that's got to be lifted. We never used to have to worry about work in my riding. We always had work. We always had oil and gas but we're not -- we're not green. All the green projects, look at your windmill. They give us solar panels. Man, we're dark six months of the year, how does that help us? Nothing. Doesn't help. But here you could make a difference and stand up to Ottawa and tell them to do their job. Right now. We have to stand up. And I can't say this enough - stand up for your constituents, Members. Don't support Bill 60 because you're going to have to answer to your constituents when it's time for election. So Bill 60, please, let's kill Bill 60 and send it back to the federal government for the backstop and then we'll go from there, and we'll work together in regards to try to do better things instead of arguing in the House over something like this when the federal government should be taking full responsibility of it. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member. Are there any other general comments on the committee report? Member for Thebacha.

MS. MARTSELOS: Thank you, Madam Chair. I too will be voting against Bill 60. I have -- I said that right from the beginning. I feel that sitting with all the Indigenous leaders across the territories for the 14 years before I came to the House, I know the hardships of Indigenous people, I know the hardships of the poor, and I know the hardships of every small business and the senior population. And I feel that I stand for that when I stand up in this House. I feel very strongly that the business community, whether they be small or large, it will affect them. I feel that the NWT Senior's Society had written a written submission to the standing committee, and I'm listening. The Indigenous governments also had written letters to the standing committee, and I'm listening. Ordinary people within my community are concerned about this bill, and I'm listening. I will not be changing my mind on this bill because once I've decided that I'm going to do something, I usually make sure that that's what I'm going to do. I'm not -- I don't waiver. I refuse to waiver on anything that I believe is best for the people of the North and people of my community. So I will be voting against the carbon tax bill, Bill 60. And like my colleague said, the federal government should

not be making decisions on behalf of the Government of the Northwest Territories and making us do things that divide us. And we don't have to be divided. I think that this should be a free vote, and people should stand up and decide on how they feel in their heart on this whole issue. I have no problem standing up and voting against Bill 60, and that's exactly what I'm going to do. I will be following the majority of my colleagues on this side of the House. And thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. General comments. Minister Wawzonek. Oh, you don't want to go. Member for Yellowknife North.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm not going to make any substantive comments on the bill itself. I believe the report does that and, you know, it was my job as chair to try and navigate the multiple submissions we got. I just, for the record and for the public, want to explain the process we are in.

We are currently reviewing the committee report which has recommendations. Each of those will be voted on. The report itself is not the bill. In order for this bill to pass, there are still a number of steps that would need to occur. One, it would need to be called in Committee of the Whole, a clause by clause with the Minister and witnesses in the chair, would have to occur; each clause would have to be approved; then it would have to get out of Committee of the Whole and past third reading. And so I just think it's important for the public to understand how our processes work. We're all used to them by now but they're rather confusing, and they're long to make sure there is multiple debates awarded to all Members. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member. I will now -- Minister Wawzonek.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, typically -- and I suppose if we're talking process, typically you'll find Members of Cabinet don't always speak to recommendations to reports, and it's not because we're not listening but it's the typical practice that it's a direction to Cabinet to do something which is why we abstain typically on these votes. But this has been a very public process and one that I agree with comments already that putting more information out in this particular instance is really for the overall benefit. So I have had the benefit of sharing some remarks with my colleagues just so that they're -- to that extent hopefully there's no surprises, if not everyone on Cabinet speaks again. That is our usual process and we are

able to discuss in advance what one Minister might say such as in an instance like this one.

I understand firstly, and I think it's technically the last recommendation, that there be a response in 120 days. That's fairly standard. Again though, I'm speaking today, again in part, because 120 days is a bit late. April 1st, the federal carbon tax rates increase and any jurisdiction, as you've heard from the Member earlier, that hasn't made a change will have the backstop imposed. So while if committee's recommendations in the report is accepted, we are going to try and have a formal response back as quickly as possible and much sooner than that. I nevertheless want to take this opportunity to speak here.

Firstly, Madam Chair, why did we not want the federal system voluntarily or imposed? In short, really, there was just no sign at any point earlier on or now that we'd be better off as a territory, that our economy would be better off, that residents would be better off under the federal system. I disagree that it's unfair or that there's any lack of open accounting.

Madam Chair, every single dollar that gets spent by the Government of the Northwest Territories is approved by the Legislative Assembly, and every single dollar that is spent is then reviewed by the Auditor General of Canada. So there's ample opportunity to have a lot of control in this House about what is spent and how and then to have that process reviewed through the public accounting process. But, Madam Chair, we do want to ensure when we are having the opportunity to have revenue from income -- or revenue from taxes that we continue to have control and oversight over those revenues and that really is all that's happening in Bill 60. And once you give up that control, if you opt into the federal system or have it imposed, either way, it's irreversible. That federal system is then implemented. It's here in whatever fashion. And the goalposts have already changed. The federal government's changed the goalposts for those who opted in earlier under the previous original system. They've eliminated the heating fuel rebate. They've made other changes, things you can or cannot do with your rebate system, in or out. And if we had opted in or if we opted in now, we'd be under that circumstance going into the future. We don't want to do that. We find one of the big things -- and I know that one that hasn't had as much time is the large emitter system in favour of the federal output-based production system, or OBPS.

There are down sides to OBPS for the Northwest Territories. First, Madam Chair,

adopting OBPS would create an inequitable carbon tax burden. Let me explain that.

We've used fuel tax data to show that greenhouse gas emissions are about the same whether you're the three diamond mines or all other fuel consumers. So if you have the OBPS system where we'd be getting less tax revenue, basically it means that even though 50 percent of fuel usage is coming from the diamond mines, they would not be paying 50 percent of the carbon tax burden. We would not be receiving that enhanced revenue from them. OBPS would have them actually right now today paying less tax. So it seemed, frankly, rather obvious that we want to keep that system. But I acknowledge that perhaps it's been poorly understood. And as I said, it's less government revenue overall. That means less revenue for everything that we want to do here in this Assembly. But also importantly, besides being a hit to ourselves in terms of what we can do with our resources and revenues, the OBPS approach also isn't very responsive to the nature of the mineral resource industry in the North. And while they might pay a little bit less right now, that benefit would disappear as a large mine starts to, or may have to, reduce production if they move to or when they move towards closure and reclamation. There's also no offset system or process if a mine is coming in and being constructed and built.

So it's talked about in this House all the time, the high costs of doing business, the high costs of development, the lack of infrastructure. And here we have a made-in-the North system that provides a different way for large industry to invest, to build, and to exist, rather than the federal style system which uses an industry standard and a standard that may well be relying on a standard developed using lower cost jurisdictions. That has no benefit to our industry here in the North.

Madam Chair, I'll speak now just briefly to the recommendations, which really weren't focused on that large emitter system. But the large emitter program, really again, is a big part of why it seemed, quite frankly, quite obvious that we wanted to stay out of the federal system. But the recommendations in the report, I do -- I'm hearing people. I'm hearing my colleagues. And if I sound frustrated, it's not at them; it's frustrated that I share the frustration and it seems like we're all actually saying the same thing and yet continue to disagree, which is frustrating.

The recommendations, from what I've read and from what I've heard, are largely a dissatisfaction with the federal carbon pricing benchmark. It increases the carbon tax rates

and puts a tax on heating fuel and that's what brings us largely here. So of course, there's a public engagement process. That is conducted by standing committee in the usual course after first reading of a bill. That public briefing was back in November. And in response to that briefing, in response to the concerns raised particularly from high cost zones, is exactly why we went back and created the zoned system for the cost of living offset. It was precisely to benefit residents in the highest cost zones, in particular Nunakput, and to ensure that those residents would get a higher amount to reflect the higher costs.

So in February, we thought it would be clause by clause and that turned into another public hearing. But in the course of that, we received more feedback.

The first formal feedback was this report that we have now. But nevertheless, even before receiving this report, Madam Chair, we were able to go back and realize that we could, indeed, find a way to do a revenue sharing agreement with -- or revenue sharing approach with the communities. We've done that. We've proposed to put in 5 percent for communities. Well, Madam Chair, I have to knowledge again, that's clearly been unsatisfactory, and we're proposing to, frankly, to double that, to bring that up to 10 percent revenue sharing.

The idea -- some of the other recommendations, Madam Chair, we'll go through. As I said, we'll try to have a formal response because they are speaking to concerns with the carbon tax system and the imposition thereof and not necessarily to Bill C-60, which is really just trying to find -- really just imposes the carbon tax rates. That is all it does.

Now as for whether or not we would relinquish the -- or yes, relinquish control and power, Madam Chair, respectfully, it's not about that. It's about maintaining flexibility. So in terms of ensuring that we as a government have flexibility to determine, you know, today, where do we want to see the revenues go, how do we want to recycle revenues, the idea of doing the graded system based on averages to best serve the residents in the small communities who have the highest costs, maybe we do have to make some changes to those zones. Is 10 percent enough? It's more than what we've calculated based, again, on our fuel tax use rates; it's more than what we have calculated to be required but maybe that needs to be adjusted. Madam Chair, it seems that we would indeed want to keep those things in regulations so that they can be changed more easily. That is the way of things here.

I know I'm running short on time, Madam Chair, and so I think I'll probably wind up putting a lot more of what I wanted to say in a formal response. But the other thing I feel compelled to speak to is the idea that we haven't gone to the federal government about this. Madam Chair, this doesn't appear anywhere in committee's report. Madam Chair, I've shared my correspondence, multiple letters with committee. They weren't present at various in-person opportunities but I've had in-person opportunities too. And even though there's a multitude of issues that we want to raise with the federal government, I raised this one. And I raised this one in some of the strongest terms available to me. I have had no positive response. I have had no indication of change. It gives me no confidence that putting control over the carbon tax in the hands of the federal government would put the residents of the Northwest Territories better off. It is the opposite. We relinquish the control and we put ourselves under the federal government system. From based on the kind of response I've had, which is none, we would not be better off; we'd have no control of our revenues and residents wouldn't see anything better coming to them. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Are there any further general comments? Seeing no further general comments, Member for Yellowknife North.

COMMITTEE MOTION 373-19(2):
COMMITTEE REPORT 45-19(2): STANDING
COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT
OPERATIONS REPORT ON BILL 60: AN ACT
TO AMEND THE PETROLEUM PRODUCTS
AND CARBON TAX ACT – CALLS TO
FEDERAL GOVERNMENT,
CARRIED

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I move that this Assembly call on the federal government to better recognize the specific needs and circumstances of the Northwest Territories in its climate change approach. These specific needs include significantly more funding to make renewable energy options accessible and affordable for all Northerners;

Further, committee recommends that the Premier of the Northwest Territories convey this motion without delay to the Prime Minister of Canada with a letter requesting a reply.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. The motion is in order. To the motion. Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. I guess I find it necessary to respond to some of the things we just heard from the finance minister, but I also want to put this recommendation in context in terms of what the committee heard and saw. So, you know, Regular MLAs, we asked for this correspondence between the Minister and the federal government. We asked for that in July. We didn't get it until January, months later, months later after repeated requests. Repeated requests, Madam Chair. I've reviewed it, and of course I can't talk about it in any great detail here but what I saw was some pretty -- I think the federal government was quite flexible in how jurisdictions could approach a carbon tax, how they could design a system that would meet their own needs, and even if they decided to go into the federal backstop it was laid out in pretty clear terms. I think there was a lot of flexibility shown on their part. I don't think I can say much more, but I think that there was some commitments on our part that weren't fulfilled, but. I saw the correspondence. I reviewed it carefully. But it took us months to get that. Months.

So this recommendation, though, is not from Cabinet, not from the finance minister, this is from the Legislative Assembly. And if the motion passes, I think it reflects the will of this House. That's different than a finance minister writing to, you know, the Minister of Environment and Climate Change Canada. This is a letter that would go to the Prime Minister of Canada. The Prime Minister of Canada also, as we understand, made some commitments to this government when GNWT did sign on to the Pan-Canadian Framework. And I think there's probably still some room to maneuver and try to work with the federal government to get greater investment here so that we can develop more alternatives on renewable energy to help give people more choices and reduce their cost of living. And that's what this is really aimed at. So I don't think this is necessarily a criticism of Cabinet or the finance minister. This is trying to follow up with commitments that had been made in the last Assembly and making sure that this expression comes from the House, not just from the Cabinet's side. So I support this motion, Madam Chair. And I think it's a reasonable one. Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I too wanted to speak to this recommendation. I feel strongly that Northerners are currently in a kind of northern double jeopardy where right now Northerners are being -- they're seeing

increases to their power rates through NTPC for using archaic energy infrastructure and then on the flip side they're going taxed through the carbon tax for using that infrastructure and not using alternatives but these alternatives don't exist to Northerners. And so if we're going to turn around and kind of, so to speak, slap Northerners on the wrist for not using these alternatives, then we need to make sure that these alternatives are available and that they're affordable. And this speaks not only to the NWT being able to achieve its greenhouse gas goals but also to the entire country being able to achieve its goals in partnership with all of its jurisdictions.

I also want to say here, Madam Chair, that increasing the cost of living in the Northwest Territories is not only a concern about cost of living; it also has huge impacts on whether or not people are going to stay in the Northwest Territories and, in turn, that has impacts on Arctic sovereignty, Arctic security, and also on reconciliation. So I support this recommendation. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. 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.

---Carried

Member for Yellowknife North.

COMMITTEE MOTION 374-19(2):
COMMITTEE REPORT 45-19(2): STANDING
COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT
OPERATIONS REPORT ON BILL 60: AN ACT
TO AMEND THE PETROLEUM PRODUCTS
AND CARBON TAX ACT – INTERMITTENT
RENEWABLE ENERGY,
CARRIED

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I move that this committee recommends that the Northwest Territories Power Corporation increase the cap on intermittent renewable energy generation that the residents and communities can install to offset their power use and develop a plan to support projects above the current cap.

And further, that NTPC and the Department of Infrastructure provide their response to the May 2021 net metering and community

self-generation policy review. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you.

MR. JOHNSON: And furthermore, that each recommendation, NTPC and the department should indicate whether it agreed its work plan for implementation and its progress towards implementation. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. The motion is in order. To the motion. Member for Great Slave.

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I support this motion and I want to thank, first of all, my colleagues for doing all this work on this. I am not on this committee and it has been a struggle to keep up with everything that's been going on. So what I like about this or what I think is really important about this one is that I don't think that the people of our territory or the residents of our territory, private business, should be paying for the failure of the Northwest Territories Power Corporation to maintain its grid properly. It was really shocking to me when I came into Cabinet actually, as a Minister, and was told that the Town of Inuvik could no longer add any future solar panels because it would cause too much of a drain to the power corp and it would no longer be able to sustain itself in that region. I know since then we've had some other projects come up but it is still my understanding, and again not an expert, that, you know, the power corp is -- or the rate, the cap, is restricting people from doing their own work or for creating innovative industries around renewables and such. So to me, while I understand that this is likely going to have a huge issue and cost to the power corp, I no longer think that's the problem of the residents of the Northwest Territories; that's the problem of the power corp. And the power corp being run by the board of deputy ministers, I think then becomes a problem of the Government of the Northwest Territories. Clearly if we'd been putting money into renewables 20 years ago, we wouldn't be in this problem. So I support this motion, Madam Chair. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. To the motion. Member for Kam Lake.

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, this is something that I spoke about in the House last week. And it's one thing to have the actual energy alternatives available to Northerners, but it's another thing to actually empower Northerners to use those energy alternatives. And NTPC needs a progressive plan to actually welcome these energy alternatives into its system and to

the people of the Northwest Territories while still being able to maintain the affordability of a shrinking client base, and that's really the policy work that needs to be done here, is how do they both maintain energy as -- maintain energy provision as other people are shifting off and on to alternatives. So I support this motion, and I think it's an important one, and as my colleague said it is well behind the times. Thank you.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Yeah, thanks, Madam Chair. I too support this motion. And I think it's -- you know, if you look at this in the context of the report itself, it comes back to how residents that have expressed to us as Regular MLAs and through the committee review process that they feel that there's not enough alternatives in terms of energy choices for people. And as I understand it, this -- you know, we've talked about net metering for at least the seven years I've been an MLA, the need to review that and improve it. It's tied up with our energy future, bigger picture issues. You know, we've got NTPC; there's governance issues, problems there; there's also -- they have a huge grid. And while the world is moving towards smaller grids and energy self-sufficiency, and this is really about transformation of all of this, but giving people more energy choices. As I understand it, this specific recommendation around reviewing net metering is something that's already in the next action plan under the energy strategy. It's something that as I understand committee -- or sorry, Cabinet, the government, is actually going to start to do anyway. So I expect when we get a response back that they're going to say that this work has already started. But I think this is some extra pushing along the way to make sure that we get the right kind of policy direction to the public utilities board, to look at net metering again, but also to redirect the Northwest Territories Power Corporation to encourage greater use of renewables and alternatives to help build energy self-sufficiency and give people more energy choices. Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I want to read something that a constituent sent to me yesterday, and I tabled it today, but I just want to read a portion of it, and I quote: "The bottom line is that the carbon tax is purely punitive for Northerners. There's no evidence that the carbon tax will drive down carbon emissions in the North nor that the minuscule reduction in carbon emissions will have any meaningful impact. If

anything, the carbon tax will have the effect of driving industry, jobs, and population away from the Northwest Territories."

Madam Chair, you know, we've slowly killed off -- or we're slowly trying to kill off the oil and gas industry which has -- you know, which has provided some benefits to, you know, the people in the far North. And with carbon tax, we are slowly killing off, I think, you know, the Northwest Territories itself. And we have to do something. We have to make the federal government realize that, yes, we are different. We're living in a -- you know, in an area that's remote. It's costly to live here. We choose to live here mind you. So I think it's very important that that message gets conveyed to the federal government and that they actually look at -- they look at ways to, you know, offset those costs. I don't think they're going to go away. And so I -- you know, with this motion there, I'm glad to see it in front of us and I support it. But at the end of the day, I think it's a bigger picture and we have to do something and, you know, for the NWT I guess, looking after and keeping control of the system I have no problem with that, but at the end of the day, it's -- you know, it's about the people in the North. It's about the cost of living. And it's slowly slowly killing -- you know, killing the people off, you know, by, you know, just keeping -- piling, you know, costs on top of costs. And we can't -- we got to stop somewhere. And this one here is probably a good place to actually take a stand and let the feds know that, you know, we don't want to -- you know, we don't want to take any more. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. To the motion. Minister Wawzonek.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I'll be very brief. The Member from Frame Lake actually made my point which is that this -- the matter of finding a solution to incentivize alternative energy within the power corporation has been acknowledged as a challenge and a problem and one that is -- a solution is going to be sought for. So did want to emphasize that, again, the finding of the issues, defining the problems, I certainly share that view of it. Bill 60 isn't connected to the -- it's not directly connected and certainly can't solve this problem. Bill 60 is just, again, raising the tax rates so that we can keep our system and keep the revenues from it. And, quite frankly, Madam Chair, it may well be that some of those revenues get directed to efforts on -- in the energy strategy to provide those kinds of alternatives. That's one of the reasons, again, we want to maintain those revenues here and to maintain the higher revenues through the

large emitter system. But just I wanted to make sure that folks were aware that Bill 60 doesn't impact directly on the work that's happening already to solve that problem. That work does need to happen.

And just so there's no confusion, electricity generation, that is still exempt. So to the extent that communities are relying on diesel to generate electricity, that diesel is still exempt, just so, again, so the public is aware. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

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

---Carried

Member for Yellowknife North.

COMMITTEE MOTION 375-19(2):
COMMITTEE REPORT 45-19(2): STANDING
COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT
OPERATIONS REPORT ON BILL 60: AN ACT
TO AMEND THE PETROLEUM PRODUCTS
AND CARBON TAX ACT – COMMUNITY
COMPENSATION FOR INCREASED
CARBON TAX,
CARRIED

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I move that this committee recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories provide funding to community governments to compensate for their increased carbon tax payments;

And further, that this committee specifically recommends providing an additional \$2.2 million in the 2023-2024 fiscal year with subsequent funding increasing proportionally to any future increase in carbon tax rates. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. The motion is in order. To the motion. Member for Kam Lake.

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, when committee was doing its work, it took a significant amount of time to do the -- oh sorry, I just ran down the stairs. It took a significant amount of time to actually look at a jurisdictional scan and look at what other -- what other regions across Canada were doing, particularly other territories. And what we came across was the -- what is used by the Government of the Yukon, which provides municipal governments with 3.5

percent of its total carbon rebate. And while I appreciate what the Minister is talking about in terms of meeting committee a little bit closer to where we're at, the \$2.2 million, really, that we are asking for here, ends up being equal to nearly the 3.5 percent that is being stipulated in legislation by the Yukon government.

One of the things that I think is really, really important is that within the territory within our communities, there are some that are tax-based, some that are not. The communities that are tax-based have indicated that if they do not receive any kind of rebates that their property taxes will go up. I've said already that I believe that the carbon tax is yet another increase in cost of living in the Northwest Territories that is going to continue to hollow out our middle class; it is going to continue to push people and industry away from the territory if it is costing them more to employ people, costing them more to they themselves operate a business here and also to pay their workers here. And this is a huge, huge concern when we are trying to grow our territory.

The people that I serve cannot afford additional increases. They feel like they are being squeezed at all ends right now and they feel, especially business owners post-COVID, that they need time to catch up. They held their breath for years while they were on lock downs and trying to mitigate public health orders and they need some time to catch their breath, Madam Chair.

That doesn't speak to the nontax-based communities that can't turn around and increase their property taxes. Nontax-based communities, we heard through NWTAC, are going to have to turn around and cut their programming from somewhere in order to pay for the differences in carbon tax. And the number one programming, they said is cut first in their communities, is recreational programming. This is a huge concern from the Standing Committee on Social Development because when we went and spoke to communities about child and family services, so how to lift northern families and support stable environments for families to grow in, when we went and spoke to communities about homelessness prevention, and when we spoke to youth about suicide prevention which is another report that we intend to table in this sitting of the Assembly, the one theme that connected all of those pieces so powerfully was access to recreational programming. And this is a massive concern in our territory, and our youth cannot afford to have less programming in their communities. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Yeah, thanks, Madam Chair. I support this motion. And just a little bit more background, committee did receive a presentation from the Northwest Territories Association of Communities, and in their written submission and in the discussion that was had with the representatives, this particular ask is based on what actually happens in the Yukon. That's how they calculated what they would like to receive to help offset and mitigate the impacts of the carbon tax. And I'm not going to attempt to explain what kind of impacts they anticipate. I think my colleague from Kam Lake did an excellent job on that. But that's what the ask is. And, you know, a bit of a surprise here today to hear the Minister of Finance say that Cabinet has reconsidered this and is willing to look at a 10 percent, I guess, use of residual funds from the carbon tax and provide that to community governments. I think I'd rather kind of see a percentage of the total rather than the residual amount.

And I guess the other area that's uncertain for me in what the Minister has offered is how that's going to be done. You know, I guess the mechanism's going to be a regulation because Cabinet, if Bill 60 does pass, has total discretion about rebates. They can -- the Minister might call it flexibility; I call it total discretion. And I think what we have here is a crisis in trust, quite frankly, but. So I presume that this would then be done through a regulation, and that regulation might be good from this Cabinet but what happens when the next Cabinet comes in? They could change it. That's why, Madam Chair, I preferred a legislated approach that -- where we could probably build in some flexibility, but a legislated approach, then you have to come back to the House if you're going to start to change that in significant substantive ways, take away the money that should go to communities. I'm sorry to say, Madam Chair, for me this is a crisis of trust. And from what I've seen with how that discretion was exercised from the first carbon tax bill to now, I'm not prepared to go there. So I think we still need a plan B, and that will be the next recommendation, Madam Chair. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. To the motion. Minister Wawzonek.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, just to start, yes, I mean I'm sad to hear that there's this crisis in trust. I happen to be the same Minister that goes through the budget negotiations twice a year every year. So, and I actually as much as

that process gets stressful at times, Madam Chair, we are a consensus government. We always somehow manage to come together. We always somehow manage to find pathways forward, even when there are large divides between us at times. Madam Chair, I just -- I guess I haven't seen any reason to think that the consensus system doesn't apply to absolutely everything else that we do, whether it's motions on legislation, whether it's recommendations in reports, it's still a consensus government and no dollar is going to pass this House unless we come to those agreements in the big picture. And bills don't pass this House unless there's agreements on the big picture, much like Bill 60. So I keep trying to come back to Bill 60. I'm not trying to narrow it, you know, inappropriately. I'm trying to just make clear for the public that this is just about raising the amounts to comply so that we can continue to go and do the things we had been doing, which was to ensure we have an industry to have jobs and to provide dollars back into the hands of residents so that they aren't unnecessarily impacted. I don't have the math, if you will, or the evidentiary basis for the \$2.2 million ask that's being put forward. Madam Chair, I do have, however, records of total utility costs paid by communities. So in looking at the total utilities paid by communities, we are able to calculate what the impact of the carbon tax increase would be. That's where the 5 percent comes from, just so everyone is clear. It is approximately \$940,000. And that seemed to make sense as a number. But, again, it is a consensus government and we want to try to be responsive. And so yes, we are certainly trying to be alive to the fact that everyone is facing some pressure on this bill, that there are going to be increases in costs. We've tried to account for the indirect costs. But, yes, Madam Chair, I do have ability to increase what we're proposing would be the sharing of revenues on this. I think it's appropriate to get into those details maybe with committee, not in this process but in others, and I would be happy to do so prior to the bill potentially coming forward. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. 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.

---Carried

Member for Yellowknife North.

COMMITTEE MOTION 376-19(2):
COMMITTEE REPORT 45-19(2): STANDING
COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT
OPERATIONS REPORT ON BILL 60: AN ACT
TO AMEND THE PETROLEUM PRODUCTS
AND CARBON TAX ACT – REBATE FOR
CARBON TAX REVENUES,
CARRIED

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I move that this committee recommends that the Northwest Territories create a law that requires all carbon tax revenues to be rebated to households, business community, businesses, community governments, Indigenous governments, and non-governmental organizations.

And further, in creating this law, the government should consider how rebates to each group will work and whether the carbon tax system should be revenue neutral.

And furthermore, this law should also require a separate accounting and annual reporting. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. The motion is in order. To the motion. Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Yeah, thanks, Madam Chair. It's kind of a weird situation that we're having some debate and discussion back and forth in this kind of forum, but I think it's an important debate and discussion that the public needs to hear, and maybe we can still reach some kind of a compromise. But, you know, I guess the other thing I want the public to know is that the ability of the Regular Members to change this bill is zero. We cannot change it in any significant way. The way that it was crafted, the way that it was put together, it's a carbon copy of what happened in the last Assembly. In the last Assembly, I tried to get an amendment to the bill that would build in a requirement for public reporting, and it was ruled out of order because the way the bill had been drafted. So our ability as Regular MLAs to make any changes to this is zero. You know, as much -- and, you know, I raised this issue with the Minister right at the very beginning. I said, you know, I don't want to see a carbon copy come forward that we have no ability to change. And that's what we got. There's no room to negotiate in terms of making changes to the bill itself. And it does leave all the discretion and authority with the Cabinet. You know, I would have much rather prefer that we work collaboratively on an approach where we could have made, in our view, my view, a fair set of offsets, rebates, for all of the business communities. But that's not what we got. We got a bill that sets out a schedule that meets the

federal targets, and that's about it. So our ability to change it is zero. We can't do it. We can't make any changes. We can't even insert a requirement for public reporting, separate accounting. And the Minister's right, that does happen. But it happens perhaps a little bit after the fact. It is discretionary right now. I'd actually rather see it right in the bill. And that kind of reporting should include something about the effectiveness of the carbon tax in actually reducing greenhouse gas emissions. As difficult as that might be at times, that should be in the bill itself. But we can't do it. We can't make any changes to it.

So I guess the other thing I want to say is while I have characterized this as a crisis of trust, that's me as an individual, and that's with regard to the carbon tax and the way that this has been done. I think I have a good working relationship with the Minister of Finance on most of the other files. Most of the other files. Perhaps we disagree on some. I'm not even going to use one word that seems to be a trigger so I'm not going to go there. But, you know, I guess -- and I just don't understand how we got to this point where we didn't find a way to work together. And I still think that there is a way for us to work together between now and March 31st, and this is the way to do it, is to sit down, try to develop a plan together that puts in the right kind of offsets. But I'm just not comfortable leaving it to regulations in the future that a future Cabinet can change. Yeah, they want flexibility, but we also want some -- a framework somehow, Madam Chair, that creates a comfort zone that we know where we're going, and we have a path forward. That's not what we have in the bill. So I think there's still an opportunity to try to work together, and I would really like to be able to do that, and I think we've made some progress. But for me, I want a legislated approach that creates that certainty, that comfort of where we're going. And I think we can do it, and I think we can do it together and still allow for some flexibility setting some of the things through regulation. But I want to know, and I think the public deserves to know, that community governments are going to get something back and it's going to be in the legislation itself. Indigenous governments are going to get something back and it's in the bill. NGOs, small businesses are going to get something, and it's in the bill. It's not left to the discretion of Cabinet in setting through regulations. That's the kind of framework that I think we need. And if you want differential cost of living, put it in the bill. Don't leave it to regulations. That's why we need a legislated approach, and I think we could do it on our own. And if we needed to, we could even do that under the federal backstop like the Yukon has done. And that's what this recommendation is

about, and I want to work with my Cabinet colleagues to get this done. Thanks, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. To the motion. Member for Nunakput.

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. Let's just keep it simple and kill the bill and go to the federal backstop. Pretty simple. My colleagues on this side of the House, you know, I -- I'm really concerned with this like I said in my opening remarks on the bill. We have to make a way for our people in the communities that we represent. People are going hungry. People are needing. And if we add this carbon tax, 17 percent across the board, that's a rippling effect. Our carbon right now, and across the territory, is 0.05 percent, Madam Chair. You know, if we add that 17 percent, that's going to be paying in my riding four and half times more than what we pay. It's not going to -- any kind of monies that you have, you do have, you're not going to be able to buy anything. People are -- people are suffering right now. It's easier to go to the federal backstop and make it simple. Kill the bill. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. To the motion. Member for Kam Lake.

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I won't keep everybody very long here. But what I really wanted to say here is there's zero guarantee that anybody in this room who is debating this right now will be here in six months. None. And so if it's important to anybody in this room, for example, that the revenue sharing from carbon tax goes to community governments, Indigenous governments, non-governmental organizations, then that needs to be in legislation. If it's not in legislation, we don't have the opportunity for changes to how that revenue sharing is happening to come forward in a bill. And that means that it doesn't have the opportunity to then go to committee where committee gets to look at it and from that process, members of the public get to participate in public hearings. We had the opportunity to hear from individual residents, from the NWT Senior's Society, from NWTAC, and from Indigenous governments on what they wanted to see within this bill. And if we don't have the opportunity to hear from people, we don't have the opportunity to really learn how it's working or how it's not working. And from there, we don't have the opportunity to uphold the democratic process and the beauty of consensus government where we get to have these conversations, and we don't get to have conversations to this extent about

accountability of public dollars. So I think having it in the legislation is really important. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MS. MARTSELOS: Thank you, Madam Chair. I want to reiterate some of the things that I said. You know, this carbon tax is going to affect every single person in the Northwest Territories, including children. Right now we have high inflation. We're taxed out to the limit. We seem to be sending every -- you know, sending everything to Ottawa and then they give it away to some other place, but they don't look after us. You know, that should not be happening. If we don't look after our own first, then we look after no one. We're not in a situation where we can build new businesses. I am very pro-business; always was and that will never change, whether it be small or large, because for a business to thrive you have to have -- you have to have development. You have to have all these other things with it. And I support the Minister on that, always. But a 14 percent increase overall will affect each and every person in this room, outside this room, and the people on the street. A lot of people will go without because they're just trying to pay the bills just to make sure that they still have a roof over their head. Those are very serious situations that our people will be in. Whether you have a high-paying job, a low-paying job, or a middle-class job, it doesn't matter. They're all our people, and we have to look at it from a wide -- like, with a different lens. Every single person, including our children, are going to be affected by this. And who speaks on behalf of these people? We do. That's why we were elected. We were elected to speak for the wishes of the people of our constituency and for the people of the Northwest Territories. And I feel very strongly on this bill, and I said so right from the beginning, and I will not be supporting this bill until drastic changes are made to ensure that we're addressing all those concerns with business, with seniors, with Indigenous governments, and with ordinary people and for the poor. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

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

---Carried

Mr. Johnson.

COMMITTEE MOTION 377-19(2):
COMMITTEE REPORT 45-19(2): STANDING
COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT
OPERATIONS REPORT ON BILL 60: AN ACT
TO AMEND THE PETROLEUM PRODUCTS
AND CARBON TAX ACT – GOVERNMENT
RESPONSE TO RECOMMENDATIONS,
CARRIED

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I move that this committee recommends the Government of the Northwest Territories provide a response to this report within 120 days. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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? Abstentions? The motion is carried.

---Carried

Thank you, committee. Do you agree that you've concluded consideration of Committee Report 45-19(2)?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, committee. We have concluded consideration of Committee Report 45-19(2), Standing Committee on Government Operations Report on Bill 60: An Act to Amend the Petroleum Products and Carbon Tax Act. We'll 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 Infrastructure. Does the Minister of Infrastructure have any opening remarks?

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thanks, Madam Chair. I am here to present the 2023-2024 Main Estimates for Department of Infrastructure. Overall, the department's estimates propose an increase of \$16.4 million or 5.6 percent over the 2022-2023 Main Estimates. These estimates support the mandate objectives for the Department of Infrastructure while continuing to meet the GNWT's fiscal objectives to prioritize responsible and strategic spending.

Highlights of these proposed estimates include:

- Forced Growth increases of \$1.8 million, that include \$821,000 for

increased costs to winter and all-season road operations, \$364,000 for mobile equipment fuel, \$208,000 for regional airport contract services, and \$381,000 for DIIMS software licenses, maintenance, and support;

- New initiatives of \$1.9 million include funding for the updated energy action plan, and electric vehicle charging stations funded through the Zero Emissions Vehicles Infrastructure Plan;
- The estimates also include total sunsets of \$1.3 million that is primarily associated with the Low Carbon Economy Leadership Fund, which is currently in the process of being renewed;
- Amortization estimates increased by \$4.1 million to reflect new assets coming into service; and,
- Finally, a budget increase of \$10.4 million due to a required change of accounting treatment for costs related to agreements previously classified as projects on behalf of third parties to comply with the Auditor General and accounting standards.

Notably, these estimates also include the inter-department transfer of \$14 million from the Department of Finance to support annual service payments for the Tlicho Highway. This change is not reflected in the proposed increase, as prior year amounts have been restated for comparability.

These estimates support the priorities of the 19th Assembly and the vision of Budget 2023 by:

- Continuing the work in expanding the reach of energy conservation and efficiency initiatives guided by the 2030 Energy Strategy, continued core and supplementary program funding to the Arctic Energy Alliance, and the release of the most recent energy action plan with new rebates and grants;
- Ensuring government procurement and contracting maximizes benefits to residents and businesses, through collaborative work with other GNWT departments in reviewing procurement policies and practices and exercising procurement processes that align best with the

interest of NWT businesses and residents;

- Continuing to increase regional decision-making and authority through ongoing engagement with our Indigenous partners; and,
- Maintaining our annual investment of \$1.5 million of financial contributions to communities through the Community Access Program to improve local transportation infrastructure for access roads, winter roads, ice roads, marine facilities, and trails.

That concludes my opening remarks. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Yes.

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

Minister, would you please introduce your witnesses.

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, to my left I have my deputy minister for asset management, David Moore. And to my right I have my director Connie Lee, director for corporate services.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Does committee agree to proceed to the detail contained in the tabled document?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Committee, we will defer the departmental summary and review the estimates by activity summary beginning with asset management, starting on page 258, with information items on page 259 and 260. Member for Yellowknife North.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I promise I'm only going to try and only talk for about ten minutes this whole main estimates review, and all of it's going to be about asset management. And I know this section's called asset management but I guess more in regards to all of the assets in the department.

Last -- earlier in this session, the Minister gave an update on road construction and she said

there was, you know, \$45 million improving our highways and bridges and 160 kilometres of chip seal. And as she was giving that statement, I tried to look through previous, you know, main estimates and the capital budget and whatever documents existed to get a sense of what that number meant. You know, it's kind of a completely meaningless number, I think, in context without any context. You know, the department's budget is over \$300 million. We spend hundreds of millions on capital for roads and bridges so it's just hard to know whether \$45 million is any amount of money. And, you know, I get the department wants to kind of celebrate its work, but it would be helpful if there was some sort of public information on how much we spend each year, what is the state of our roads and bridges, how often they're inspected, you know, and so you could look back in time to see whether we're spending more or less or whether maybe we did far more than 160 kilometres every single year before that. But that's not currently public information. Many jurisdictions publish -- their departments of transportation publish some sort of highways report, roads and bridges report. It just kind of summarizes the quality of everything and the cost of everything and the work that's going on. I know the department obviously has all that information, but is publishing it in some sort of form that's coherent something the Minister would be willing to do? Thank you

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. So, you know, the Member's speaking to one of the comments I made in earlier session and right now the Department of Infrastructure is working on what we're calling a dashboard. So the dashboard is kind of a big picture of all the different highways, you know, Highway No. 1, 3, 4, 7, 8, 9, 10, all the different highways, and to be able to have a picture of what it is we're doing. And if you can, Madam Chair, ask David -- Mr. Moore to speak a little bit more about this because I think this is really exciting, and I think that's what the Member was asking us to do. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. MOORE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just reinforcing the Minister's note that, yes, we are indeed working towards the development of a dashboard that will look at all our assets, including our horizontal assets or our highways and our bridges as, you know, it's very important to understand the condition of those assets and how they're changing over time as

well as the investments that we're making in those assets. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yeah, you know, I am probably very excited for this dashboard, and I guess it's a bit of a wait and see what's in it. Yeah, and I think there's a bit of a tension that goes on in that, you know, we as Regular MLAs in confidence get the kind of long-term capital planning and the needs assessment and, you know, I have requested it, you know confidentially, to see, you know, the asset management planning that we do and the deferred maintenance but none of that is public, you know, and there's this tension, I think, of we don't want to necessarily show everyone how bad our deferred maintenance is and that we're not funding it. But I think we got to make some step in the middle to show, okay, this is all the things we should be doing but we're not actually going to do it. So in terms of a question there, can the Minister just provide us an update when they expect that dashboard to be complete? Thank you.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, we're aiming at the fall. Thank you.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. And then I guess there is, you know, there is -- to me, there's the goal of reporting on the quality and condition and all the work that we're doing with all the assets everywhere that we own, the multi-billion dollars worth, and then I'm wondering if the dashboard would speak to kind of tracking ongoing infrastructure projects or whether that would be another initiative. What I picture is, you know, we often pass these capital estimates and they -- and some community says they're going to get a small local project done and then it gets carried over and carried over and it never actually gets complete. And, you know, unless you're really diligent in following up, you don't actually know what's being complete. So is -- would the dashboard speak to kind of tracking how ongoing construction is going with regards to infrastructure projects? Thank you.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I'm going to get Mr. Moore

to speak a little bit more about some of the details because I think that's very technical. Thank you.

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

MR. MOORE: Thank you, Madam Chair. The vision of the dashboard is, as the Member mentioned, to look at the status of our assets over time and to monitor it over time, looking at the state of all vertical and horizontal assets in the territory. We're also working with other GNWT departments in this regard.

With respect to looking at projects themselves, there's a couple of avenues there. We work with our partners in the Department of Finance on the annual IAP, the infrastructure acquisition plan, which is posted on the Department of Finance website. We also do an industry day, a session each year, which details the projects on a year by year basis. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Yeah, thank you, Madam Chair. I guess a comment, you know, is that perhaps the department could look into a final way of confirming when something is actually complete. There's no actual place you can find "oh, this project got finished" unless some sort of press release is done because it falls off the infrastructure acquisition plan and it's not on the capital budget anymore, we just assume it's done. But as we know, there are plenty of buildings that are not done or years later, you know, not occupied or various reasons for not being done. So can the department look at some sort of way of reporting what finally got finished? Thank you.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I'll take that as a comment. But, I mean, I'm hoping that the dashboard will be able to collect some of that information as well. Thanks.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): All right. Are there any further questions to asset management? Member for Great Slave.

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just wanted to ask -- I appreciate the questions my colleague was asking around sort of getting a better handle on reporting and where our assets are at. I remember at one point trying to ask for a lessons learned presentation at NAPEG on the Deh Cho Bridge and everybody being like oh my god, we can't talk about that. So I do hope there is a move towards, you

know, more transparency because there isn't a way to learn if we don't actually look at what -- and that was -- sorry, that was way back in my earlier life, not this Assembly.

So my question here is that I have some concern, and this information could be given to me after the fact, about the level of expertise in the department these days. I am concerned about whether or not we have the adequate number of engineers and technical design and project managers that we really need for the execution of a lot of our projects. Particularly asset management is a struggle, people with building experience, etcetera. And I do recognize that the ADM himself is an engineer although I do know that your background -- or his background is more with governments versus project leads. So I just -- I do have some concerns there. And could the department or the Minister speak to where we're sitting at respect to the vacancies or the filling of those types of technical positions but also what's being done -- I'm also concerned about the retirement of some of our technical staff. So if there could be some information provided there, that would be great. Thank you.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, David is the ADM for asset management which means he's in charge of all the engineers in the department. So if I can just turn it over to Mr. Moore.

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

MR. MOORE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I would completely agree that recruitment and retention of professionals, engineers and architects specifically, is a challenge nationally and in the GNWT. We have positions posted, for example, that are open trying to get applicants as do other jurisdictions. That being said, we have an amazing team of highly qualified professionals in all aspects of asset management. And we also work with private sector very closely and academia leveraging that expertise both within the GNWT and nationally and internationally. So I think we are well represented. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. And, yeah, I've definitely had the opportunity to work with several of the technical people in the department, and I do agree. I just know that yeah, as stated it is competitive and one where we wear a lot of liability. I think it's an area

where you can't just sort of say it's the general issue with, you know, recruitment because you can't just put warm bodies into these positions. So it is something that I think the department really needs to start getting a grasp on. And given also too that I'm not sure where we're at from the recruitment or sort of the graduation rates of engineers, but I don't believe things are really picking up that we're really graduating a lot more engineers in Canada. So I think that's just one that I'll leave but follow up later.

When the -- I hear the deputy -- or sorry, the assistant deputy minister talking about working with the private sector, and I note that there are \$3.328 million of contract services that will be coming up, I have a couple concerns there. I think that the GNWT in all departments has a tendency to find one consultant at a time that they really like, and it's much easier to generally deal with one company so therefore there isn't always an impetus to break those contracts up or to find other people that could do them. When I hear and have raised concerns in this House about per diems that are paid on some of these projects by these consultants, and I've not had any resolution to it in three years, and it's the government's favourite consultant for all of their technical design work, I have a lot of concern there. I believe there's an issue with contracting out of this department towards people that are friends of high-up bureaucrats as well as Ministers in this Cabinet. And so I really don't feel there has been a good handle on ensuring that procurement here has been fair and is being done through proper free trade routes.

That being said, I would like an answer as to why they've signed off on a \$70 per diem for workers of the Northwest Territories on specifically projects in Inuvik and flood management, which I know is not this department. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Member, I'll just get you to --

MS. NOKLEBY: (audio) dollar per diems on their projects. So it is this.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): (audio) Minister.

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, we'll have to take this back and just have a look and perhaps provide the Member with an explanation. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Member.

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, I'd appreciate that. Can the Minister or the department speak to whether or not there are any health and safety

or project manager positions within this department or this area of the budget? Thank you.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, we -- I do have a human resource summary here and it just kind of speaks to some of -- some of the employees. I'm going to ask Mr. Moore to speak a little bit more about -- a little more details. Thanks.

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

MR. MOORE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Most definitely asset management has a number of project managers on staff. In the transportation, for example, we have staff on site on projects and supporting all the projects in the transportation sector. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. Maybe -- sorry, I got a frog in my throat. But I asked about health and safety project manager, health and safety officers for the projects. Thank you.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, we do have a health and safety coordinator within the department. Thanks.

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

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. Is that position here under, say, design and technical services; does it work with the groups, or is that position located with this group? Thank you.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, no, that position doesn't fit within asset management. It's more of in the program service area. Thank you.

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

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. But does not design and technical services, is that not the group that then works with projects and

ensures the project execution? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I'll get Mr. Moore to speak to it.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Mr. Moore.

MR. MOORE: Thank you, Madam Chair. We actually work with contractors responsible for their projects on a project by project basis. Projects have health and safety plans applied to them. As a department, as the Minister mentioned, we have a health and safety coordinator to the department at the OSH level. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. So as part of the contract services, are contractors required to submit their health and safety plans for projects ahead of the project or as part of the project bid? Thank you.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, as part of the project.

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

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. Does the department actually sign off on the project plan? Do they -- for example, do they review it and check it for any deficiencies? Thank you.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, yes. Thank you.

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

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. What is the policy or the procedure? Is there a standard operating procedure for reviewing health and safety plans? The reason I ask is that our current Prohibition Creek contract has now had its third safety issue, two vehicle incidents plus the fibre optic cut back in January, and I'd just like to know if the department had signed off on their health and safety plan prior to that project. Thank you.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, we do -- we did review it. I'm going to ask Mr. Moore to just speak a little more detail about that. Thanks.

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

MR. MOORE: Thank you, Madam Chair. As the Minister mentioned, our department does review those plans. We do not approve them. That's in the -- under the auspices of the contractor. With respect to that specific project, yes, there were two incidences and they are currently under investigation with our department. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. So given that there has been incidents, it would seem to me that not approving plans and just looking at them is leaving the government open to a liability here. Ultimately we are responsible for the projects that we have on the ground and the people that are working on them. And when we go ahead and just not ensure that that's being done, I would suggest that that's actually a failure on our part to ensure the safety of our people.

Madam Chair, can I just get a question on the decrease of the transportation costs from the actuals of 2021-2022 to the main estimates coming up? I believe it's about just under a million dollars. Thank you.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I'll get Ms. Lee to speak to it.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE: Just because under actuals for the 2021-2022 fiscal year, there is an amortization cost that was coded to asset management and that was actually in error. The budget side of it is with regional operations so you'll see a corresponding surplus on that side.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. All right, are there any further questions under asset management? Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Yeah, thanks, Madam Chair. I too want to thank the Minister and staff for the commitment on an asset management dashboard. I think we've raised that issue

before in the House and look forward to seeing what that looks like.

I'd understood that there was going to be some changes to the standards that we use for -- well, the amount of chip sealing we could do. Is this the right place to ask about this? And I think something about bridge inspections as well, is this the right place to ask? Thanks, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Yes. Yes.

MR. O'REILLY: Perfect, thanks, I'm ready to go. So I think that we're -- how many kilometres of chip seal are we doing this year?

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Minister.

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, we're doing 150 kilometres. Thank you.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. How many did we do last year, or how much -- (audio). Thank you.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, every year we try and target about the same amount. So last year we did 150, and we're planning to do another 150. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Okay. Yeah, that's kind of not what my notes show but we're doing the same number, that's great. If we're not, I guess I'd like to understand why. Maybe I'll just ask if the Minister could double check. Thanks.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, you know, I answered very quick. I do want to just clarify that we did about 200 before but because of inflation, we've had to reduce the number of chip seal we're doing. So now it's about 150. Thank you.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Yeah, thanks, Madam Chair. That's what I'm kind of concerned about, is the -- you know, okay, over the last three or four years, my wife and I we've driven a lot of the highways in the Northwest Territories. The

Liard Highway, terrible condition. Terrible condition. The road to Fort Simpson, there's this stretch after the pavement ends to maybe around where the campground is there at Sambaa Deh, terrible condition, unbelievable. We almost went off the road when we were going out there for a committee meeting a couple or three or four years ago. I don't know what to say, Madam Chair, but we can't even maintain the roads we got let alone build new ones anywhere. And when I see this I know, you know, maybe we can only afford to do a bit more but we can't even maintain the roads that we got. So how are we going to, you know, make sure our residents are safe, try to attract tourists, when our roads are in really bad condition? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, every year, as I mentioned, we do a little bit of work on the highway to do -- on each of our highways. And, you know, the Member mentioned that Highway No. 7 was bad, the Liard Highway. This year we're looking at the rehabilitation work, the embankment widening. So I mean, this is something that we are doing. We're hoping to have that done August of 2023. That's just one specific highway, Madam Chair. And I'm not going to use the Member's time because I'm sure he's got lots of other great questions as well. So that's one example. But we are doing work on the other highways as well. Thanks.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Yeah, no, thanks. I think there's also something around the cycle that we use for road and culvert inspection or replacement. There was some changes there. Could the Minister speak to that as well? Thank you.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I'll ask Mr. Moore to speak to what's our plans in order to get some of these road work done.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Mr. Moore.

MR. MOORE: Thank you, Madam Chair. All our bridges and structures, including major culverts, are inspected on a three-year cycle throughout the territory. All our linear infrastructure, so all our roads and side roads, are inspected on a regular basis, utilizing a

number of aspects, including private sector. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Yeah, thanks, Madam Chair. Yeah, I guess I -- I don't know what else to say other than I've lived here 35 years -- 37, maybe 38 years now, and I will say I think the condition of some of our highways is deteriorating. And if we can't maintain the roads that we have, I'm just really worried about putting more money into roads, period but that's more of a philosophical discussion. So I really want to get this asset management stuff in place so that the public can see what our cycles are, how we stack up, you know, one highway against another. But I think it also gives us a way to benchmark ourselves against other jurisdictions, which is a really important thing for us to do. If we want to make sure we have safe highways for our residents and, you know, attract tourists, we just got to do a better job. Thanks, Madam Chair. I don't think I have anything else.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. I didn't hear any questions there so just take that as a comment. Are there any further questions under asset management? Seeing none, Members, please turn to page 258.

Infrastructure, asset management, operations expenditure summary, 2023-2024 Main Estimates, \$18,146,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. We will now turn to corporate management, beginning on page 262 with information items on page 263. Questions.

Seeing no questions, please turn to page 262 -- oh, Member for Frame Lake.

Sergeant-at-arms, please switch the witnesses. Thank you, Minister, will you please introduce your witness for the record.

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, to my left I have my deputy minister Steve Loutitt.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. I guess I would -- I think this is probably as good a place as any to ask, but where are we at with the government renewal initiative for this department? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, we've completed phase one. The overall plan is led by Department of Finance.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Okay, thanks, Madam Chair. So for those that are listening, what's phase one? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I'll ask Ms. Lee to provide a little bit more of the information. Thank you.

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

MS. LEE: Thank you, Madam Chair. So phase one is having our interviews and our inventory of programs being completed and documented. So we have had that work done with the GRI staff with the Department of Finance, and we have completed that as scheduled. And I believe that there is a schedule online that presents our status. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Okay, thanks. So this was kind of a new department that was created in the last Assembly by jamming together public works and Department of Transportation -- public works and government services and Department of Transportation. Has there ever been kind of like any kind of review done of that merger and kind of where we've ended up and how we could look at maybe reorganizing parts of the department, making it more efficient and effective? Part of my difficulty in going through this department is we get these big activities that are so vague and amorphous that I don't even know where I'm supposed to ask questions. So anyways, has that kind of, you know, review been done of what, you know, lessons learned from jamming together these two departments, and where we're going? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, yes, that's correct. I mean, the previous governments have amalgamated public works and Department of Transportation. So we as a department are looking at the re-org

review. And if I can ask my deputy minister to speak a little bit more about this, the review. Thanks.

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

MR. LOUTITT: Thank you, Madam Chair. The Minister's correct. We're in the process of redoing or reviewing and doing a re-org review of all of our services, and we're looking at how projects flow through the department from a value stream analysis standpoint so that we're not double tracking, and we're also making sure that we're -- the processes are clear and concise. And as the Member noted, very clear there for people to understand where they are. So if a project comes in as a no show plan and how it comes out from final project through the licensing and permitting through the design and technical portion and then for the execution of the project. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. Yeah, okay, that sounds quite interesting. And if I can get the Minister to tell us when that work is going to be finished and whether a draft with a report could be shared with standing committee? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I'm going to ask the deputy minister to speak about a little more on the timelines to be able to see where we're at with this. Thanks.

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

MR. LOUTITT: Thank you, Madam Chair. The process right now, we don't have a defined timeline; however, we have just recently allocated resources specifically to this process because it is something that -- this was actually conceptually supposed to take place one year or two after we amalgamated and looking at where we can gain those efficiencies. And doing so off the corner of people's desks wasn't feasible so we are opening resources on. We anticipate that within the next probably nine months we should have this process complete. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. I guess I can't probably ask whether that can be shared with the standing committee. But if there's some

terms of reference or some kind of summary of what's taking place and a timeline, can the Minister commit to share that with standing committee? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, yes, I don't see why not to share with the standing committee. We'll just have to be able to look and find more information on what exactly the Member would like us to share, a little more detail so we can definitely have that discussion and set some time up to be able to make time with committee. Thanks.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Yeah, thanks, Madam Chair. So just -- I can't speak on behalf of committee, we haven't talked about this, but I think probably Regular Members would find it helpful to at least have the terms of reference or a statement of work or some summary of what's going done along with the timeline so, you know, we understand what's underway now. And if that's, you know, some kind of information in a letter -- I don't want to ask for a briefing but some more detailed information about what's being done, if that could be shared, that would be great. Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, yes, absolutely. I mean, you know, we're all busy doing committee meetings and if the Member doesn't feel like this is -- warrants committee time, then we can perhaps provide an update through a letter or some sort of format. Thanks.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. It's not that I don't want to hear my friends from Infrastructure, I just can't talk on behalf of the committee because we haven't even talked about it. So a letter with some information, and then I think committee could look at it and decide whether we want to, you know, get a briefing or something. But, no, I appreciate the Minister offering to share some more information on that with us, that's great. And I don't think I have any further questions on this activity. Thanks, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Corporate management, are there any further

questions? Seeing none, please turn to page 262.

Infrastructure, corporate management, operations expenditure summary, 2023-2024 Main Estimates, \$7,989,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, committee. We will now turn to energy and strategic initiatives, beginning on page 265, with information items on page 266 to 269. Questions. Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. Well, let's -- sorry?

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

Although we know our witness, we'll ask you to introduce for the record.

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, and I appreciate the Members' patience while we flow each of the different assistant deputy ministers in. I have with me Robert Jenkins, who is the assistant deputy minister for energy and strategic initiatives. Thank you.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. On page 265, the energy line, it kind of bounces all over the place, you know, as low as \$9 million -- or about \$10 million, as high as almost \$20 million. Can someone explain to me what is happening here? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, as I mentioned in my opening marks, that we did have some funds that are moving back and forth between the energy section. I'm going to ask Ms. Lee to be able to speak a little bit more about the transactions. Thank you.

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

MS. LEE: Thank you, Madam Chair. So there is some fluctuation, as the Member has stated, on the energy line there. And the main driver for that actually is updates to the appropriations for our LCELF program so our LCELF program being funded by the federal government. We do have to ensure that we have access and

appropriations to utilize the LCELF funding. And because it is driven by application base, there are times where we would need to move the flow of funds in order to continue accessing that money. So we do see some fluctuations but really it is to maximize our ability to utilize LCELF funding. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. So if I wasn't confused before, I am now. I know that LCELF is Low Carbon Economy Leadership fund. It's federal money. So what's the issue here - we can't get the projects out the door? They keep changing the program? What's the issue here? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I'm going to start by just saying that this is an application base. And I'm going to ask Mr. Jenkins to just speak a little bit more about the Member's question. Thanks.

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

MR. JENKINS: Thank you, Madam Chair. So the Low Carbon Economy Leadership Fund, so that's a fund that started back in 2018. It was originally for four years for \$31.2 million. It was extended for an additional two years. And as the Minister mentioned, it's largely an application-based program for energy efficiency for buildings and other things. Really, uptake has been a challenge over the past few years and some of the variations in budgets, as the Member mentioned, is moving funds forward so we have the ability to utilize those funds and move them forward three years. And the program was extended for an additional two years but the amount of money from the federal government did not increase. So it was carried forward to those additional years. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Okay, thanks, Madam Chair. Yeah, I think have some vague memory of some of this. There's kind of like four pots of money or something. And so is the -- I think we got the money. Is this, like, application-based by third parties and is it an issue of us -- you know, I don't know, maybe a combination of things - COVID, supply chain stuff, people weren't applying, or do we need to better communicate what the parameters are of this, and maybe evaluate submissions faster? I'm

just trying to understand where -- what the block or the barriers are. Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, some of it is application-based and, you know, we've done more outreach to be able to look at the program. And I'm going to ask Mr. Jenkins if he can speak a little bit more to that. Thanks.

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

MR. JENKINS: Thank you, Madam Chair. So there is six streams under the Low Carbon Economy Leadership Fund. And some of those are things like energy efficiency upgrades for public housing right through to things like active carbon sequestration in forestry. So there's different programs there. But largely there is a -- it is an application-based program. And we've been doing more outreach. We've been sort of cold calling different places. We've seen an uptake in some of the GHG grant programs for buildings and industry, and we've had some announcements now. We've got a number of projects that were announced last year on that. But it is an application-based program. We've been working hard to try to have people apply but at the end of the day, it has been a challenge through COVID. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Yes, thank you. Minister.

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I just want to note too that this program, there needs to be application -- or applicant input as well to be able to contribute to this program. So, I mean, yes, we do offset it but, I mean, anybody applying to the program needs to be able to be a contributor as well. Thanks.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Yeah, okay, thanks for that. Maybe we should just give a lot of that money to Arctic Energy Alliance and they can get it out the door more quickly.

But I do have another area I want to explore, Madam Chair, and that's the federal government, federal minister of northern affairs recently announced that a regional study would proceed for the area between Yellowknife and the border with Nunavut. And I'm just wondering what implication that has for any work that might be done by the department on -- I think it's called the Tibbitt to Lockhart

Road, or whatever you're calling it these days. Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, for that project, we are still continuing to gather engineering and environmental information to be able to support the application. Thanks.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Okay, thanks, Madam Chair. How much is being budgeted for that in 2023-2024? Thanks.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, we're looking at around \$9 million. Thank you.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks. How much of that's carried over? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Sorry, can I ask the Member to repeat the question.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): How much is that carried over?

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I don't have that number in front of me. I might have to get back to the Member. Thank you.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Yeah, thanks, Madam Chair. I think a lot of it is. But when does the department expect to make a submission to, say, the land and water board for permits, licenses, to carry out that project? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, we're looking at in the year 2024. And if I can ask Mr. Jenkins to just speak a little bit more about that. I'm sure the Member won't be happy with me just throwing out a year so I think it's -- I think it would be appropriate for Mr. Jenkins to speak more.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Answer it really quick. Thank you. Mr. Jenkins.

MR. JENKINS: Yes, thanks, Madam Chair. So the Minister's right, looking at 2024, with environmental engineering work occurring up to that point. Thank you.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Yeah, thanks, Madam Chair. I would be -- I'll be very concerned if this government continues to push and then actually apply for the road while the regional study's going on. I just don't think that's a good idea. The whole idea of a regional study is to actually allow some time to carefully consider the future of the area. So proceeding with regulatory applications, getting into an environmental assessment while that is on, not a good idea. So does this -- what's the position of this government on proceeding with that and getting it into permitting/licensing and possibly a separate EA, environmental assessment, while the regional study is on? I don't think that's a good idea. Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, some of the information that we're going to collect will help inform some of the applications that's going forward. Thanks.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Yeah, thanks, Madam Chair. I don't object in principle to gathering data and information. I just don't think you want to trigger an environmental assessment by submitting land use permit/water licenses while the regional study's on. So I want to know if that's what this government is going to do? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I'm going to ask Mr. Jenkins to speak a little bit more about that.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Mr. Jenkins.

MR. JENKINS: Thank you. Thank you, Madam Chair. So, yes, the RSCA has been approved by the federal minister to be undertaken. One of the things that the federal minister did mention was that things in other applications need to be able to continue while this process is underway and be informed. And we're collecting a multitude of information that will

help actually be used in the RSCA and contribute to the outcomes there. But we do have \$40 million to advance the application for the Lockhart All-Season Road. That is money that needs to be utilized up to 2027. And we feel that we could continue with that process while the RCA is underway and be informed as those processes move together. Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Questions to energy and strategic initiatives? Member for Great Slave.

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. I actually had a lot of really excited people talking about the e-bicycle rebate and the Minister's announcement that they were expanding that to other regions outside of just Yellowknife. So my question there is will the \$10,000 be enough now? Are we actually going to add more money in given that we've expanded the area of eligible people. Thank you.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, you know, in previous budget, we didn't have a line item for electrical vehicles. I've heard from the Members that, you know, this is of interest here in the Northwest Territories so we added a line. Actually we're calling it a pilot project. So this year, although it's only \$10,000, it might not be enough but it's a pilot; it's a test. We will be able to assess it and perhaps if we have a good uptake, then perhaps we can set aside more money next year. And, actually, I think the amount for next year is a bit higher so, you know, we are working with what we have. Thank you.

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

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you. And I do recognize this is, like, a tiny amount, a drop in the hat of this department's budget. But, you know, every, you know, new journey is taken with the first step. So this is a start. And I do appreciate that, you know, it did sound like if there's more than the \$10,000 that is wanted that we would perhaps be looking to add money here so that's great.

I just wanted to ask a bit about around the Arctic Energy Alliance. It always noted and sort of touted as being the solution of getting money out the door, etcetera. And, you know, I'm always in support of NGOs doing work because I think that they often are more creative and efficient than the government can be in doing that. But that being said, I look at the board of directors for Arctic Energy Alliance and it is all,

for the most part, Government of the Northwest Territories employees, public utilities employees, Northlands, things like that. So I have a lot of concern, given the conversation we've had around deputy ministers on boards, that perhaps this, again, is an area where while this is an NGO, the government is very heavily directing what happens here. That being said, then I wonder if there's perhaps opportunities for this to now start being put into more of the communities' hands. And I recognize there are employees within Arctic Energy Alliance that are representative to the different regions and I think that's great. So can the Minister or the department speak to the ability of Arctic Energy Alliance to actually execute? Do they always spend their money when they're given it, and what is the plan to diversify the board here and really stop having it be government directed? Thank you.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, although Arctic Energy Alliance is arm's length, we do work in good partnership. You know, there's a lot of great things that the Arctic Energy Alliance are doing on behalf of the Government of the Northwest Territories. And, you know, they have -- we're starting to expand different things and the people that are at the table are, you know -- are people that provide good advice to the board. If I can have Mr. Jenkins just speak a little bit more to that, thanks.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Yes. Mr. Jenkins.

MR. JENKINS: Thank you, Madam Chair. So our partnership with Arctic Energy Alliance is a really important one under our 2030 Energy Strategy. And in 2021-2022, they did invest about \$4.5 million of GNWT funding into a number of energy audits and rebates and retrofits and wood stoves and other things like that. \$1.8 million of that was rebates and incentives. So one of the things that we constantly look at with Arctic Energy Alliance, and talk to them about, is it is application-based and how can we try to remove, if there are, any barriers to uptake on those programs. So that's a key piece of delivery and spending the money that they've received. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Member, do you have --

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yeah, I understand what you're saying but nothing was responded to about the fact that this is a directed by government people. So

when I hear that it's arm's length, I have to kind of laugh at how arm's length is it when you're just putting money over in a pot that's then directed and controlled by people that also work for the government. When I hear that it's because these people -- from the Minister, that it's because these people can offer advice, well, I can right now think of someone in your riding, Madam Chair, that would be an amazing technical advisor to a group like Arctic Energy Alliance. And given, though, that history of what goes on sometimes with this department, these types of people are not interested in being part of this work and I think that's a mistake, and I think it's a loss of good input here. The private sector, to me, is completely missing from Arctic Energy Alliance's board. And to me, that's just -- I don't know even know what to say about that. So maybe I'll just leave it at that. I don't feel that my question was answered about their efficiencies and how much they spend their money and how well they do it. But the other piece to that, actually I will add is that, you know, again, this is -- Arctic Energy Alliance's programs are often for people that are living in Yellowknife, that have a lot of money, that have good paying jobs. It's not for people that are living paycheque to paycheque. I do recognize there was some money that's put aside to help people offset the money that has to be put up upfront but, really, this program is designed for non-Indigenous people living in Yellowknife, is my opinion.

Moving forward, I would like to talk a little bit about some of these projects that are here that are very small but I think could be quite effective in, you know, getting some money out. And things around like the biomass energy projects, there's only \$100,000 there. You know, there's community -- sorry, commercial energy conservation efficiency program, only \$200,000 there.

You know, if we really want to get smart with having our communities and our businesses become energy efficient, we need to put the money in their hands. And this doesn't seem like enough. And so could the Minister or the department speak to what their thoughts are on whether this is -- these are subscribed funds, do they need to be increased, could we be putting more money there? Thank you.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, the -- you know, there's perhaps never enough money out there for any type of assistance. But, I mean, we are working with the federal government in partnership with the Arctic Energy Alliance to be able to look at

what sort of federal programs are out there so that we can look at perhaps adding more programs into the alliance.

And I do -- just going back a little bit, Madam Chair, so we had about 2,716 rebates. And I'm looking at all the different regions and, for example, the Beaufort Delta was the second highest at 644 rebates. So, I mean, all the different regions has a fair share of rebates. Thank you.

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

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, I stand corrected. But then I still don't see that that's probably making its way into places to like Tulita or Fort Liard or places as that. So I will get myself more informed on where the money is being spent. But, again, I still stand behind that it is a program that is accessed by people that have disposal income to upgrade their homes and not by people that probably desperately need their homes upgraded and need the rebate on their energy.

My last -- or sort of my next area of question is around the electrical vehicle charging stations, and sorry if somebody already asked this. But I'm interested to know there's sort of this idea of a corridor and such. And so will the eventual plan be to have this -- if we could have the Mackenzie Valley built and all that, is that basically any highway in the Northwest Territories would have stations along it and that we would be sort of promoting people to come from the south to use those? Thank you.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, that's the intent of having the electrical vehicle. The study says that the charging corridor would be set up on Highways No. 1 and No. 3 from Yellowknife to the Alberta border. That's our kind of big picture right now, Madam Chair. So we're hoping that some of the stations could be placed along the way to Fort Smith. So, I mean, this is a bigger picture. We are working on smaller little parts of this. You know, having said that, these don't happen overnight but this is the bigger picture for us. Thank you.

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

MS. NOKLEBY: Luckily, with a minute left. That's appreciated. All right, Aurora Research Institute's Energy Project, it's only at 70. You know, again, I want to -- sorry, I'm just looking

to make sure I know where I'm talking about here.

So the wind potential. Has there been any sort of new areas of interest where we are looking at potentially bringing in wind? I always hear very anecdotally that the wind is picking up here in Yellowknife and such. I mean, whether that's true or not, I'm not sure but it sure feels very cold so -- and fast and hard. So I'm wondering if there's a potential for that in other areas that we haven't looked at yet before now. Thank you.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, you know, we have targets to meet within reducing greenhouse gas emissions. So, I mean, we as a department, we as a government, are looking at, you know, innovative ways to be able to reduce that. And if I can have Mr. Jenkins speak a little bit more about some of the things that we are doing and looking forward to. Thanks.

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

MR. JENKINS: Yeah, thank you, Madam Chair. So the Aurora Research Institute, so they are coordinating the installation and monitoring data gathering equipment for wind potential. And the funding is going towards wind monitoring through ground-based lidar units. We did do some work previously in Norman Wells and Sachs, and the wind conditions weren't conducive to establishing power generation sites at those locations. Unfortunately, I don't have a list of the sites -- prospective sites the lidar was looking at so we will have to return with that. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Are there any further questions from Members under energy and strategic initiatives? Member for Monfwi.

MS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you. Thank you, Madam Chair. This transmission Whati line, it's 125. I mean, like that was 2021-2022 and there's nothing to date. So this tells me that project -- the study must have been completed. Can we get an update on this? Like, you don't have to update us now but maybe send me a -- send an email regarding this project.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: So thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, as part of the consultation

engagement and planning activities for this Whati Transmission Line, Department of Infrastructure provided funding to the Tlicho government to begin updating the existing technical work, the work plan, and the traditional knowledge study. So this is -- although this is early stage of the work, it's still underway to be completed by the 2022-2023-fiscal year. Madam Chair, we are also working with Tlicho on many other projects. And this is good government to government working relationship and partnership. Thank you.

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

MS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you. Thank you for the answer there. Yes, because a while ago I did propose -- I did ask about if there was another study to be done going from Yellowknife to Whati on the highway because I think -- I'm just wondering if there was a study done for that project before or, like, an alternative route?

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, the highway goes north-south and the routing for this is going east-west so, I mean, it really doesn't line up. But I'm going to have the -- Mr. Jenkins just speak a little bit more because, I mean, he's got a little bit more technical knowledge. I just know that road's going this way and that transmission's going that way, and that don't line up, so. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. JENKINS: Yes, thank you, Madam Chair. So this is a 60-kilometre transmission line, and it's connecting to the existing facilities at Snare Hydro. And so, really, again, as the Minister mentioned, the highway's going north-south and quite a ways west of that, of those facilities. So it really doesn't sort of pair well in terms of, you know, connecting the Snare Hydro System to the community of Whati. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you. Thank you. No, the reason why I asked is that because I know there's a lot of cabin on the highway, and people have been inquiring about that too as well, because I know this -- if the power line goes through, then people will benefit from them. So that way they can live

there year round and they can -- you know, it's part of their traditional culture as well that they do lots of things on the highway that, you know -- so that's why I ask if there was a study done. But I do understand about the Whati Transmission Line going across, you know. And another one too is that Gameti was asking as well and just wondering if there was any study was done from -- going from Gameti -- I mean, from Whati to Gameti to extend that transmission line?

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member. Just please remember to address your questions and so that the sound -- so we know when you end. Minister.

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you. Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, in Gameti, we are not looking at a transmission line however we are working at looking at perhaps a mini hydro. Thank you.

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

MS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Yeah, well, I wasn't aware of that mini hydro in Gameti. But if they do have some of these studies, these reports, it would be nice if they can share it with us. Thank you.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, if the Member's asking us to share what we have in terms of -- I believe this is still in the planning stage, you know. So we are looking at that as an option. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Member for -- are there any further questions under energy and strategic initiatives? Seeing none, Members, please turn to page 265.

Infrastructure, energy and strategic initiatives, operations expenditure summary, 2023-2024 Main Estimates, \$16,886,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Minister, did you need to switch our witnesses again?

Okay, sergeant-at-arms, please switch the witnesses.

Minister, please introduce your witness.

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, Connie is still to me right but to my left I have assistant deputy minister

Tracy St. Denis. And she's ADM for programs and services. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Programs and services, beginning on page 271 with information items on page 272. Questions. Member for Great Slave.

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, can the Minister or department please tell us why Marine Transportation Services has disappeared here from this part of the budget? Thank you.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm going to have Ms. Lee speak to the explanation on the budget.

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

MS. LEE: Thank you, Madam Chair. So Marine Transportation is actually a revolving fund so there is a subsequent information item for them. We do have to include this line item here under our 2021-2022 actuals because per the Revolving Fund Act, any kind of accounting deficits that is being shown by revolving fund does need to be absorbed by the administering department. So this is the line item that just shows that funding towards that revolving fund. It doesn't actually get budgeted within the programs and services activity. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. So then is it fair to say that when we come to the -- if I'm here -- that we've come to the next year's mains estimates, we would see another number show up in the actuals for 2022-2023? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. The answer is yes, but I'd want to give Connie an opportunity to explain that really quick. Thank you.

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

MS. LEE: Thank you, Madam Chair. So, yes, that is correct. Assuming that there is an accounting deficit that's being -- that is going to be incurred by the Marine Transportation Services revolving fund, you will see another actuals there. In any year where there is not

one, you will not see a line item there. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MS. NOKLEBY: I think we could all safely assume there's going to be a deficit for this revolving fund next year so I'll -- so then my -- and I don't want to go down -- too far down the accounting rabbit hole, but why then do we not sort of try to anticipate what this number would be and include it in the forecasting? Why is it only added in retroactively, if I've got it right. Thank you.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I'm going to ask Connie to speak -- or Ms. Lee to speak a little bit more to it. Thanks.

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

MS. LEE: Thank you, Madam Chair. So, yes, while the Member is correct in stating that we may want to anticipate such a cost, that is not how the Revolving Fund Act works and has stated that situation. So we do not budget for it, and we do not ask for appropriations for that until the fact is complete. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. I will leave it at that. So if dictated by the Act, good enough for me.

My next question is could the Minister or department speak about the fluctuation or change there in the amount around the technology service centre? I note that it's about a -- I can't do math today -- \$600,000 change order -- change. So, on page 271, so if the Minister or department could just tell us what that's about? Thank you.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, the technical -- Technology Service Centre, there's the variance there. So the budget was underestimated for the assets that were pushed into service, and then the increase is more about the amortization for any of these GNWT assets. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I'd like to congratulate the Minister and her department on reopening up the driver's vehicle centres for walk-ins. Ya, thank you. When I saw that, I was quite happy as last year I realized I had an expired driver's license for two days that I didn't realize because I couldn't walk in on the Friday. So can -- or the Saturday or the Sunday. Probably not the Monday either. I think I had to come back on Tuesday at that point.

So, can the Minister speak just a little bit around compliance and licensing. I do understand that we have moved towards a more secure driver's license over the last few years. Is there a way that we're going to be able to sort of -- and I know there's been streamlining being done. So maybe I'll just ask for an update on all of that. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I'm going to ask Ms. St. Denis to speak to a little bit more about that. Thanks.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Ms. St. Denis.

MS. ST. DENIS: Thank you, Madam Chair. The Member is correct about the security value that we actually have in our driver's license. We actually were the second jurisdiction in Canada to get that heightened level of license. As far as implementation, it's fully in effect across the territory. So continuing to look to continue to have that driver's license in place. No plans to make any amendments at this time. It seems to be working well. Thank you.

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

MS. NOKLEBY: Sorry, I -- yeah, I have questions. Sorry, I just wasn't looking at that. And, yeah, sorry, my apologies. My next question is around the inspection services. So I note that that's a pretty stagnant item for the last couple years or last year unpredicted. Is there where the boiler inspections lie? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): I'm not sure. Minister.

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes, I hope you're not sure. Just kidding. Yes, that is where this area lies. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. So it's come to my attention -- I'm going to be very specific here on an issue -- that, you know, this at times that people are paying their boiler fee, their registration fee, and yet they're not really getting inspected and then, you know, for the first time they've been inspected in a few years but, really, there's no -- there's not really any need for that. And given that the sense that they already have to have their servicing done every year, it does really come across to my constituents as a cash grab almost, especially the years where they don't show up to even look at the boiler. So my question is there an opportunity to change this type of inspection to where rather than having people come out and take a look or not even and then charge people, have them submitting their service records instead so that every year they get their boiler serviced they submit that record to the GNWT instead of having someone come out and try to coordinate all these visits and people feeling that they're not really getting any value for this registration slash inspection for their boiler? Thank you.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, this is -- this is something that we'd have to look at to see if it fits within the program. I really respect the Member's, you know, bringing forward some of these ideas and that is something we can look at as well. Thank you.

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

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. And, yeah, I have been going about that one through the red tape working group but maybe I'll just come directly to this Minister and update her on what my specific instance is.

I'm just looking at enterprise information management. It's up about \$400,000. And my understanding, is that a software program that's used by the department? Maybe I could get a bit more information as to why we've seen a bit of a jump there. Thank you.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm going to ask Ms. St. Denis to speak to the line item. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Ms. St. Denis.

MS. ST. DENIS: Thank you, Madam Chair. The term "enterprise information management" is actually the unit that does DIIMS, which is the storage of data and also the warehousing of data by the GNWT. So the particular item that she's talking about was some unbudgeted contracts that were required for processing of those documents around Fort Simpson related to damage to the flood. So it was an unexpected item. And then we did see an increase of some funding around software licenses related to maintenance on records management. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, I appreciate that. I got time for one more probably here. Just curious around air marine and safety. How -- maybe I don't know if I can ask this here but -- no, I probably can't. So answer my own question; I was going to ask about the airport upgrade. That's somewhere else.

Fuel services, can the Minister speak to whether or not we're going to see a potential supplementary coming later? Is this \$1.8 million stable given the sort of fluctuation and cost of living and supply chain issues that we're seeing currently. Thank you.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm going to ask Ms. Lee to speak to that.

MS. LEE: Thank you, Madam Chair. So the fuel services line within the programs and services. Again, the fuel service division is actually an operating revolving fund. So what you see here is actually the amortization for the fuel service assets as they are a revolving fund that does not have the ability to own capital. So in terms of a supplementary for the air lift, there would be discussion on potential requests if there is that need to go to the revolving fund itself in order to ensure that it does not result in increased -- additional increased costs because of that matter. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Are there any other questions from Members? Member for Yellowknife North.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you. You know, I think we started the DIIMS project about a decade ago. Can I just confirm if everybody is now on DIIMS? Thank you.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, we have almost everybody. We're not quite there yet. We still have colleagues and friends over at Education, Culture and Employment as well as Health and Social Services. So I mean, we are getting there. We are working in different parts. We've been piloting a little part of one of the departments in health to see how that works. But, I mean, that is the intent to get everybody into one system and I thank the Member for, you know, his question because I think that's important information to get out there. Thank you.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Yeah, thank you. Can we perhaps -- well, can we get an update when we think we can get ECE and health on DIIMS? And I think perhaps if I -- my understanding of the situation is that there's parts of them that will probably never get on DIIMS. You know, health is going out to get brand new health records software that I think is 10 million plus dollars, and ECE has been trying to get student records software that -- it's not that much, but it's millions of dollars as well. They just have unique records that, you know, need their own software that's not DIIMS. But the rest of the kind of operational parts of the department probably can get on is why I think they got blocked is my understanding. So a) can someone just confirm that's kind of why those departments are last; and b) when we actually think they'll get on DIIMS? Thank you.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. So the Education, Culture and Employment is planning deployment in 2023, so within this year, for four more divisions. We will work with them to see what additional supports that they may need to perhaps add on some of the other divisions.

As I mentioned, Health and Social Services has two divisions that could go forward but we'll need to see how else we can support them in migrating other -- into other units to be able to get this all transferred.

I'm not aware that -- the Member mentioned that perhaps some of the -- the whole of Education, Culture and Employment can't get in within DIIMS. I'm not aware of that. But, I mean, we as a Department of Infrastructure will provide supports to the departments to ensure that if they need -- if they need any help going forward that we support that. End of the day,

that's what we want, is everyone to be on DIIMS. Thank you.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. Can -- maybe this is in the weeds but I -- or, you know, somewhere and perhaps we can update it, I'm sure there's some sort of DIIMS work plan. Can someone just tell me when the license for the software for DIIMS goes to? One of my great fears is that we're going to get everyone on and then every once in a while we get these notices from Microsoft or someone saying oh, we're not renewing this software, and we're going to have to restart with a whole new information management system. Are we confident that when we're done all this that we have a license for this software for -- well, at least a decade or something? Thank you.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, at this time we're not getting notifications as to this situation. Perhaps -- I hope we don't because, I mean, it does take a lot of time to get -- to get everybody on board with this. And, you know, if we get everyone on board and then we get notification, that's a lot of work and a lot of time, a lot of money that's being put into getting everybody on board. So, you know, my hope is that this doesn't happen. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Are there any further questions on programs and services from Members? Seeing none. Infrastructure, programs and services, operations expenditure summary, 2023-2024 Main Estimates, \$17,836,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, committee. Minister, did you need to switch your witnesses?

Sergeant-at-arms, please switch the witnesses. Minister, will you please introduce your witness.

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, Connie to my right is still here but to my left I have my assistant deputy minister Gary Brennan for regional operations. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Welcome, Mr. Brennan. All right. So Members, regional operations, beginning on page 274 with information items on page 275. Questions. Seeing -- oh, just about. Member for Thebacha.

MS. MARTSELOS: So, Madam Chair, she thought I was not going to ask any questions. I just have a very short question. One of them is filling the vacancies, the job vacancies at highways and the airports.

You know, I know it's a -- it's a real concern for me how long it takes to fill a vacancy. And these are -- like, I'm just -- as an example, are the heavy duty mechanic positions at the airport in Fort Smith and at the highways, I want to make sure that they're filled as soon as possible because those are very vital infrastructure that we -- or personnel that we need to ensure that safety and everything continues as usual. And I know both positions are open and they're not -- you know, we lost one person who looked after two of them, and it was a major problem but he went with a different division in government. And so I'm just concerned about the vacancies in positions. I wonder if I can have the Minister answer that question. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, it's always our intent to have, when we have vacancies to get them filled for several reasons, because it puts extra stress on some of the other staff that's having to do the job. And so, I mean, it is something that we're looking at. I do want to give Mr. Brennan an opportunity to just speak specifically about what's going on in the Member's area. Thanks.

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

MR. BRENNAN: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yeah, so the Member is correct. There are a couple vacancies of our mechanics in Fort Smith right now so our mechanic at the Highway's Camp, which was doing work at both the airport and the camp for quite a while, recently left the department unfortunately. So we are in the process of reevaluating that position so it has to go through a job evaluation process at which point in time it'll be advertised. I think we've recently advertised for the airport mechanic as well. So both of those are in process. I can't give the timeline when they'll be filled, but it is in process currently. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MS. MARTSELOS: No, I don't have any other questions, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Are there any other questions from Members under regional operations? Member for Monfwi.

MS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Yes. This winter road, 6.2. So I just wanted to ask how many roads does it cover?

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you. Thank you, Madam Chair. So the -- you know, the Member's speaking more specifically, I believe, around the Tlicho road system. So the winter road includes a winter road from Highway No. 9, which is the new Tlicho Highway to Gameti, which is about 151 kilometres, and then you're going to over to Wekweeti which is about 243 kilometres. Also, we have the one to Aklavik which is about 129 kilometres. So yes, we do -- I don't have any more further details other than those are the three I could just speak to on the top of my mind.

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

MS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you. No, I was just asking in general, not just Tlicho specific. You know, I was just asking in general. But I know that winter road to Gameti was opened late and same thing with Wekweeti, it's going to be opened late. And I know there's a lot of people that are concerned about the climate change. And, you know, because of that that ice road, they're opening late and it's going to be, you know, like a short season for the ice road. So I'm just wondering now that it's -- because a lot of people are saying, you know, like, especially the elders, they -- you know, even to Wekweeti, there's big lakes that you have to go on. And same thing with Gameti too, you know, there's at least three big lakes. So they are very concerned. So they were asking that, you know, maybe to change the route from -- you know, to go more on land. So I'm just wondering if there was -- if there was any study done from the department to possibly change the route for next year? And like I said before, with one of the mine closing, we're going to have a lot of people with class 1 and class 3, and then they're going to be looking for employment. So I'm just wondering if there's any study done to possibly change the route for the winter road?

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I do want to go back to the Member's previous question. We have about 2,438 kilometres of all-season highways; about

1,227 are paved; we have about 1,211 that are gravel here in the territories. We have 1,435 kilometres of public winter and ice roads that connects all our communities overall in general.

Now I'm going to answer the Member's question more specifically about Gameti.

Yes, the road was opened to light traffic to only about 10,000 kilograms on February 27th, which is quite late. Madam Chair, we've been seeing a lot of our communities connecting, you know, wanting to get goods into the communities and we just -- it's a matter of safety. We have to ensure that our roads are safe for people to travel on. I just -- I can't say that enough. And until the roads are safe in profile, only at that time we're able to ensure that we get the right traffic loads on the road. So that is -- that is what we're trying to work on now. Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

MS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Yes, okay. With that in mind, so with the climate change, is there a plan to increase engineer and safety inspection on the winter road, including profiling more often?

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I'm going to use one example for Aklavik. We've had the contractors reach out to the department wanting to increase the weight loads on the Aklavik ice road, and we sent our profilers out. You know, we try and -- you know, the profilers are on a schedule but if the community and the contractor feels that, you know, it's ready, then we would send our profiler out. That was one example. And if I want to, just see if Gary wants -- or Mr. Brennan wants to perhaps expand on that. Thank you.

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

MR. BRENNAN: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yeah, for the Tlicho winter road system, I don't believe that the number of inspections or number of profiles is the issue right now. We do profile on a regular basis as required. It has been a challenging year as the Member noted but, you know, warm temperatures to start and increased snowfall in the region. We're aware there's -- we're behind schedule, working with the contractor closely to make it up. Our two highway folks are up there right now. Just one profiled Gameti two days ago and working on Wekweeti right now to get the status updates. So we do profile on a regular basis on those

there to increase the weights as fast as we safely can. But as the Minister noted, safety is the top priority for us when working on ice roads for both the staff and travelling public. So thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Yeah, thank you. And I'm just wondering if there's a way that -- I'm just wondering if Tlicho if-- how are Tlicho involved in the profiling? Is there an opportunity to train local people?

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I'm going to ask Mr. Brennan to just speak a little bit more about what we as a government are doing, because we have that partnership with Tlicho, and I just would like to give him the opportunity. Thanks, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Mr. Brennan.

MR. BRENNAN: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes, so when it comes to profiling, a number of years ago we had an incident on a different road where a truck went through the ice and at that time, I think it was 2016, the department made the change in policies whereby we do our own profiling and do our own interpretation. So we have had that in the past. Currently, due to some liabilities incurred from a previous incident, we do all profiling and interpretation of the data. Could we look at training Tlicho residents in the future? That's something that we can certainly discuss, absolutely. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just to clarify, this year the winter road to the Monfwi area to Gameti and such is actually being constructed by the Tlicho themselves, is it not? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes, that is correct.

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

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. And this is a new thing then that's been happening more recently? In the past, it was constructed

by other contractors, is that correct? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I'm going to ask Mr. Brennan to just speak a little bit more about what was done in the past versus what's done now. I'm really happy to know that currently we are working with the Tlicho government and doing this work together. In terms of what is done in the past, I'll get Mr. Brennan to speak a little further to that. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Mr. Brennan.

MR. BRENNAN: Yeah, thank you, Madam Chair. So, yeah, so I think that the -- in the past, we always had a contract with the Tlicho Investment Corporation and Construction Corporation for the construction of the roads, and they used a significant number of subcontractors. This year they are doing it on their own although more recently, and because of the challenges that were faced this year with the environmental concerns of, again, warm temperatures, they did bring in a subcontractor late to help get ahead of the game. So the Tlicho are building the majority of the roads and the communities are also involved as well, both from Gameti and Wekweeti, working from their communities south basically. So the communities have always done a little part as well so. But, yes, the Tlicho are doing the majority of the work this year. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. And I think that's good. I mean, we definitely want to be increasing capacity within Indigenous organizations to do the work, and I'm glad to hear that it's not just being subbed out and hopefully will lead to some of the longer term jobs that my colleague was mentioning. I guess I just want to say that I have heard some issues around safety that did not have to do with climate change, and I just want that to be noted that it is out there and perhaps the Minister needs to get a better look at that or be aware of that.

My next, though, is around the highway operations. I do note that there is a 3 million -- no, that's not quite right, 3 million, is it -- probably under \$3 million -- increase there. But I'm just curious to know given the way that the supply chain issues and everything is going, but more so here around maybe the lack of staff

and employment, are we anticipating any issues with maintaining the highways and operating them and any sort of future costs given that we've seen, you know, some flooding issues around -- I can't remember the name -- Sweet Creek, is that it -- down in south of Hay River and such. So can the Minister speak to whether or not we're going to even see more cost increases there? Thank you.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, you know, with climate change being so real up here in the North, you know, it's affecting us way more than it is across Canada, we are seeing things that are just -- things we've never seen before. I mean, one example is the -- you know, one of our barges were not able to make it into our one community as a result of climate change. And so, I mean, there are a number of factors. You know, we do -- we do think about things like that when we're looking at our budgets because, you know, it's really hard to predict what's going to happen anywhere in the territories. And, you know, finding extra money for this is always a struggle. And if I can ask Mr. Brennan if he wants to add anything further to the Member's question. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Mr. Brennan.

MR. BRENNAN: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yeah, I think just adding a little bit more to what the Minister said, staffing wise on highway operations, I don't think we have any concerns. We have the North Slave and South Slave operate their own forces, and we're always able to find qualified individuals to do that work. And in the Deh Cho and the Beaufort Delta, have contracted service and we have -- you know, we have plenty of good talent in those regions as well. In terms of cost increases, we're seeing the same inflationary pressures that we see across the board. The price of asphalt, oil, as the Minister noted earlier, is impacting the amount of chip seal done. It's also impacting the amount of maintenance that we can do. Cost of aggregate is going up, same as everything else. So, yeah, we are starting to see those impacts, and we'll go through the business planning process to seek increases for budgets as we need to. So thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MS. NOKLEBY: Two things there, just because the Minister opened the door. If you send the barge in earlier in the season, you aren't going

to run into problems trying to send it in in October. So I won't get into that with you today. However, is -- so given what the ADM said, is this three -- or under \$3 million increase here, is that actually anticipated inflationary pressures, forced growth per se, or is it going to be something where we would have to come back? Is this sort of a real actual one or does it have that contingency built in already? Thank you.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, if I could ask the Member to clarify which line that she's referring to. Under our highway operations, we have three different areas, item 6, 7, and 8. So I want to be able to provide an answer if I know specifically what line the Member's speaking to.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Minister, we don't have that much detail in our budget. So we just have highway operations. So Minister.

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Okay, well, in that case I'm just going to pick one of my lines. The 1.35 -- \$1.3 million is amortization increase for some of the GNWT assets. We have about 364 for mobile equipment fuel forced growth. We also have about \$589,000 for regional highway operation for the dust control under forced growth. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. And if you want to send that list, you can give it to us. Member for Great Slave.

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. This Minister's great for always, like, triggering other questions for me. So my next one sort of is around that dust control. I do know that one of the things we did here about the Whati road was that it was quite dusty. And I do appreciate that the department did appear to respond fairly quickly after our visit and get some dust control measures on the road. That being said, I again wonder if we're going to be seeing over time an increased need for dust control and other measures. So where does it become a point where, I guess -- or is it being looked at when doing the dust control no longer seems to be worthwhile, and then we would be looking at, like, chip sealing? Around Whati, are we looking for that -- around this specific road, are we waiting to see if the mine goes ahead before we make those types of decisions? What would sort of trigger the chip sealing of a road like that? Thank you.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. And I will turn it over to Gary in case I trigger any further questions here. It'll just be yes, no answers, and that -- that's the case. Mr. Brennan.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Mr. Brennan.

MR. BRENNAN: Yeah, thank you, Madam Chair. So for the Whati road, that there is actually a road that was a P3 project. So we current -- have a current agreement with the contractor to maintain the road in its current state for 25 years. So there's no plans to chip seal that road for the life of that agreement. Currently no plans. So thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. So within that P3 agreement, though, is there the opportunity should there be a required upgrade to the road given the advancement of any of the mining activity in the area? Is there flexibility within the agreement to allow for road upgrades and sort of how does that work given that there is a third party entity here. Thank you.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I'm going to say yes, only if we revise the agreement. So, I mean, there is opportunity going forward to look at the agreement, and if it is required, that is something we can look at. Thank you.

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

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. I think I'm good. I'll let the Minister off the hook for the rest of the minute and a half. Thanks.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Are there any more questions under regional operations? Member for Hay River South.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hopefully this is the right place to ask this, but. My medical for my driver's license expires next month. I'm just wondering if I can get an extension? No.

Actually, I want to talk about -- and I'm hoping it's the right place -- is the EVL books for log books.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): That would be in programs and services. programs and services. Programs and services that would

have been in. Ask in the House tomorrow. Did you have any questions under regional operations?

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: (audio) they are for weights. I know that Deline was probably a little bit behind there, and I'm just wondering if fuel is getting into communities, how the roads are holding up as well up the valley? Thank you.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. You know, Deline is one of the communities that we need fuel going in. I know we didn't have enough weight restriction on the road so there was a delay. I'm going to see if Mr. Brennan has any further updates as, you know, the community was quite concerned about getting the fuel, and I'm -- in speaking with the leadership as well. But, I mean, we are working to try and get the right amount of fuel to get them through. But if I can see if Gary wants to speak -- or Mr. Brennan wants to speak any further. Thank you.

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

MR. BRENNAN: Yeah, thank you, Madam Chair. So for Deline specifically, I do believe the weight was just increased I want to say to 40 or 48,000 kgs. We're currently 76 percent complete on gasoline and 51 percent on diesel for Deline for this year. So we have no concerns about fuel delivery in Deline this year. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you. Yeah, and the rest of the roads, like, for Good Hope and Colville as well, what are they -- what condition are they in and are they getting in their supplies? Thank you.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, in Colville Lake, we have about -- we're about 93 percent with the fuel for gasoline in the community, and we're about 78 percent to get our diesel into the community as one example. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Member for -- are there any further questions under regional operations? Seeing none, please turn to page 274.

Infrastructure, regional operations, operations expenditure summary, 2023-2024 Main

Estimates, \$248,478,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Committee, there are additional information items on page 276 to 287. Questions. Member for Frame Lake

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. Now we're coming to my favourite part of the Infrastructure budget. I've been patiently waiting hours. Marine Transportation Services Revolving Fund, and it's on page 281. Oh, she's going to -- rats.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): We stopped the clock. Sergeant-at-arms, can you please switch out the witnesses.

Welcome back, Ms. St. Denis. All right. Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. I love revolving funds. So MTS, can someone tell me where in the budget, you know, we -- the barges didn't get into some of the Nunakput communities. Where in the budget do I find that expenditure 2022-2023 to airlift fuel into those communities, and how much was it? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, the Member is correct. It was quite, you know, expensive as a result of us not getting the barges in. We did commit to, you know, do the best we can do ensure we get the supplies back to the community members. I believe the number was about \$3 million. I just want to just turn it over to Ms. Lee to just perhaps speak a little bit more about where we're at. That was the number I was given a while ago. So if I can, thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE: Thank you, Madam Chair. So within this budget, you wouldn't see the costs for this year's actuals just yet. That will be in the subsequent year's main estimates under the 2022-2023 actuals at that time. The way that the budget's information item is structured, you also wouldn't see that figure called out separately; however, the Minister is correct, that currently the airlift cost for the Sachs Harbour delivery situation is about \$3 million to date. We are still working on working through that process. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. So that estimate, does it include any compensation to individuals in Sachs Harbour for what happened or any claims that individuals might have had? Thanks.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, no. We did cover the cost to bring the supplies into the community. There is no additional cost. Thank you.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Okay, thanks. So this incident has happened twice now in the short tenure of MTS. Does the MTS actually have any written policies or guidance about where they deliver stuff first or the priority? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I'm going to ask Ms. St. Denis to speak to our plan. I know we have one in plan. We've got our six tugs. They all have different areas to go. But I want to see if Tracy can speak to it. Thanks.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Ms. St. Denis.

MS. ST. DENIS: Thank you, Madam Chair. The Member is correct that there is planning that is underway. Preplanning gets done in advance as far as what community is done by which piece of equipment. That work is currently underway for the 2023 season as far as what planning needs to happen and when. And as well part of that exercise is doing a review of last summer, the 2022 season. And the plan is to have the Minister to share that report with standing committee. Thank you.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. Yeah, look, I'm not asking about planning. I'm asking about a policy that says MTS will deliver fuel first to communities. Anything else comes after that. Is there any written policy, directive, whatever you want to call it, that says that's what MTS is going to do? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Okay. Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I'm going to ask Tracy to speak further to that. Thanks.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Ms. St. Denis.

MS. ST. DENIS: Thank you, Madam Chair. The core function and the core priority of the organization is delivering fuel and food to the communities. Part of the review from last year is at what point do we institute standard operating procedures if things are not going as planned. Preplanning happens in advance of the season. What are those things that are going to trigger? So agree with the Member, standard operator procedures are important. Last year was an anomaly, understanding that the Member referenced an incident a few years prior. But, yes, standard operating procedures are key but the core of delivering food, fuel to the community is priority number 1 for the organization.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. Well, if that's a priority, MTS has failed twice in my short-term here since we took it over. That's not a good track record. So is there an intention to ever create a written policy that says we're going to resupply communities first and everything else comes after that? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, yes.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Okay, thanks, Madam Chair. That's great. When can we see that written policy? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Minister.

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, we'll have to get back to the Member. That is -- not tomorrow. We'll have to get back to the Member in terms of what our plans are. You know, it is very important that we -- you know, we look at this, and it's -- I'm presenting to standing committee on some of the lessons learned through MTS. And that's -- you know, we're looking at dates now. And I think, you know, that's a really good opportunity to be able to explain what are some of the challenges that we face in getting our fuel into the communities or supplies into the communities and having to deal with climate

change and getting our tugs out of Hay River, for example. So, I mean, that is something that we will -- we are gathering some information now so that we can present to the committee. Thank you.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. I can hardly wait for that meeting. But I do want to ask now about Yellowknife Airport Revolving Fund on page 283. It's now a staggering \$49 million of accumulated surplus. When are we going to start to get some of that money out the door to actually improve what's happening at the airport? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I want to start by saying this is not real money that's on here but I'm going to have Ms. Lee explain why. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MS. LEE: Thank you, Madam Chair. So the Minister is correct in that it is not cash dollars when it comes to the \$49 million. When it comes to the accumulated surplus, it is a total of operational surpluses and funds but it is of majority of it assets. So if these are all in capital asset figures, they are not money that we can spend, unless we choose to sell some of them. But it is not cash dollars. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Okay. Before the clock runs out completely, can I get a number for what is available to actually spend on capital improvements at the airport and when we're going to start spending some of that money? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, we are looking at about \$10 million -- just over \$10 million. Thank you.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thank you, Madam Chair. And thanks to the Minister. Okay, that was the first part. Second part, when are we going to start spending that money? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, we are starting to spend the money. We've got a list of all the different projects that we're doing with the revolving fund. And there are things like pre-board screening upgrade, the lounge expansion. The list goes on. I'm not going to use up the Member's time, but we are spending this money. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Minister. Are Members able to get that list? Thank you. Member.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. Yeah, I'd love to see the list. Does that mean the master plan is now finished; we've got a fully functioning committee, whatever that thing is called, and is appointed by the Minister rather than the deputy minister. So the money's going to start to flow, changes are going to happen. That's what I want to see. People have been paying airport improvement fees for a long time without seeing a lot of progress. You can't even get a cup of coffee apparently on the air side of the terminal at 6 o'clock in the morning. So what's -- when are we going to start spending this money and get some improvements going? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you. Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, as I mentioned, we are spending the money. The YZF master plan is in the final stages. The contractor will present some of the more recent findings, information. We do have a YZF -- it's called the economic advisory committee. So, I mean, this is a committee that continues to meet, and it's made up of a number of people that are impacted at the Yellowknife Airport. The regional office is working with the contractor finalizing some of the data, and we're hoping to update standing committee perhaps in the spring. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. And just to clarify, because I don't know if you got -- the list that you were going to go through, you're able to provide that to the Members?

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, we can come back to the Members or whoever's interested in looking at what we've spent out at the Yellowknife Airport in terms of using some of the revolving fund. We can get back and see if we're able to share. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. All right. Are there any further questions? Member for Yellowknife North.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. We've come to my favourite part of the main estimates, which is page 285, \$127 million we are going to pay in future lease payments largely to one company. But I wanted to start with a question about the new government building, the **Sot Dene** -- I've actually never said that out loud. The theory was when we spent that \$25 million was that it would save us money yet we were required to do a lease to own commitment. I'm just wondering if we've ever followed up with whether that was a cheaper option or a more expensive option to build ourselves a seven-storey office building. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, we'll have to -- it's not something we can just answer right now. It's something that we need to look into and perhaps get back to the Member with that. Thank you.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yeah, and part of the reason -- well, I'm interested is because our current leasing policy requires us to do a lease versus ownership analysis every time we enter into a lease. I'm quite confident we're not doing that, especially not on renewals. But could the Minister perhaps commit to looking at all of this leasing money and just doing some sort of desktop lease versus ownership exercise. And I get sometimes we do it for new space but we kind of just seem to roll over and renew the buildings last minute without doing that required analysis as per the policy. Can we do that for our whole portfolio perhaps? Thank you.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, when evaluating the lease versus ownership, every scenario is unique. Although the building ownership may provide the best value in one situation, it doesn't mean it's the right approach for all the situations. And I think I've mentioned this before, the larger leases such as office buildings would not -- you know, there's a variety. In some of our communities, we lease from local. Within the

larger centres, you know, we have different approaches as well. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Yeah, thank you, Madam Chair. I recognize each one's unique. And one of my favourite unique ones is actually not Northview, it's Northern United Place. We signed a long-term lease with Northern United Place. It's allowed them to provide multiple units of discounted housing for vulnerable people for decades. And we were actually willing to pay a little more for that long-term lease knowing that it would be kind of a combined commercial and residential that would house some people. I think it's kind of a great model, and we never did it again for some reason. But I guess in the form of some questions, can someone let me know whether Northern United Place is included in this \$127 million of lease commitments, or would that be found under Aurora College? Thank you.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you. Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, yes, it is.

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

MR. JOHNSON: I don't know, I guess I'll just end with a comment. I would encourage the department to relook at its whole leasing portfolio; use the NUP model. I also am very concerned that we are going to eventually end that NUP lease and put a lot of vulnerable people at risk. But I guess I'll just leave it at that. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member. Are there any further questions to the information items? Seeing none, thank you, Members. Please return now to the departmental summary found on page 251.

Revenue summary, information items on page 252 and 253. Questions.

Seeing no questions, committee, I will now call the department summary of Infrastructure, operations expenditures, total department, 2023-2024 Main Estimates, \$309,335,000. Member for Frame Lake.

COMMITTEE MOTION 378-19(2):
TABLED DOCUMENT 813-19(2): 2023-2024
MAIN ESTIMATES – INFRASTRUCTURE –
DEFERRAL OF DEPARTMENT (PAGE 251),
CARRIED

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Madam la Presidente. I thought we'd never get here. I move that this committee defer further consideration of the estimates for the Department of Infrastructure at this time. Mahsi, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): 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 Department of Infrastructure, 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.

Member for Frame Lake, what is the wish of committee?

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

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

---Carried

I will now rise and report progress.

---SHORT RECESS

Report of Committee of the Whole

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

MS. SEMMLER: Mr. Speaker, your committee has been considering Committee Report 45-19(2) and Tabled Document 813-19(2), 2023-2024 Main Estimates, and would like to report progress with six motions adopted. And, that consideration of Committee Report 45-19(2) is concluded. And, Mr. Speaker, I move that the report of the Committee of the Whole be concurred with.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Inuvik 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. Mr. Clerk, orders of the day.

Orders of the Day

DEPUTY CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Orders of the day for Thursday, March 9th, 2023, 1:30 p.m.

1. Prayer
2. Ministers' Statements
3. Members' Statements
4. Returns to Oral Questions
 - Oral Question 1343-19(2), Impacts of COVID-19 on Education
 - Oral Question 1404-19(2), Child Care Funding Supports for Teen Parents
 - Oral Question 1411-19(2), Renewable Energy
5. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery
6. Acknowledgements
7. Oral Questions
8. Written Questions
9. Returns to Written Questions
10. Replies to Commissioner Address
11. Petitions
12. Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills
13. Reports of Standing and Special Committees
14. Tabling of Documents
15. Notice of Motions
16. Motions
 - Motion 75-19(2), Maximum Allowable Rent Increase for Private Rental Units
 - Motion 76-19(2), Extended Adjournment of the House to March 27, 2023
17. Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills
18. First Reading of Bills

- Bill 76, An Act to Amend the Elections and Plebiscites Act
19. Second Reading of Bills
- Bill 64, An Act to Amend the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act, No. 3
 - Bill 74, Forest Act
 - Bill 75, Council of Women and Gender Diversity Act
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 60, An Act to Amend the Petroleum products and Carbon Tax Act
 - Bill 61, An Act to Amend the Ombud Act
 - Bill 63, An Act to Amend the Official Languages Act
 - Bill 66, An Act to Amend the Property Assessment and Taxation Act
 - Bill 67, An Act to Amend the Fire Prevention Act
 - Bill 68, An Act to Amend the Child Day Care Act
 - Bill 73, An Act to Amend the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act, No. 4
 - Committee Report 40-19(2), Standing Committee on Government Operations Report on Bill 61: An Act to Amend the Ombud Act
 - Committee Report 43-19(2), Standing Committee on Government Operations Report on Bill 63: An Act to Amend the Official Languages Act
 - Committee Report 44-19(2), Special Committee on Reconciliation and Indigenous Affairs Final Report: A Northwest Territories Approach to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and Negotiating Agreements
 - 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
 - Tabled Document 881-19(2), Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 3, 2022-2023
 - Tabled Document 882-19(2), Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 3, 2022-2023
 - Tabled Document 883-19(2), Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 1, 2023-2024
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 Thursday, March 9th, 2023 at 1:30 p.m.
- ADJOURNMENT
- The House adjourned at 7:56 p.m.