



NORTHWEST TERRITORIES LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

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The Honourable Jackson Lafferty, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

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Box 1320

Yellowknife, Northwest Territories

Tel: (867) 767-9010 Fax: (867) 920-4735 Toll-Free: 1-800-661-0784

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YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

Thursday, February 23, 2017

Members Present

Hon. Glen Abernethy, Mr. Beaulieu, Mr. Blake, Hon. Caroline Cochrane, Ms. Green, Hon. Jackson Lafferty, Hon. Bob McLeod, Hon. Robert McLeod, Mr. McNeely, Hon. Alfred Moses, Mr. Nadli, Mr. Nakimayak, Mr. O'Reilly, Hon. Wally Schumann, Hon. Louis Sebert, Mr. Simpson, Mr. Testart, Mr. Thompson, Mr. Vanthuyne

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

Prayer

---Prayer

SPEAKER (Hon. Jackson Lafferty): Good afternoon, Members. Item 2, Ministers' statements. Minister of Education, Culture and Employment.

Ministers' Statements

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 144-18(2):
UPDATE ON EARLY CHILDHOOD
DEVELOPMENT PLAN: EDUCATION, CULTURE
AND EMPLOYMENT MILESTONE STATEMENT

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, one of the most important areas we can invest in is early childhood development, and the Government of the Northwest Territories has made a commitment in its mandate to do this by implementing its Right from the Start Framework. Ages zero to five are the most critical time in a child's development, and the work that the Departments of Health and Social Services and Education, Culture and Employment have been doing in partnership have been helping all of the children in the Northwest Territories.

Over the past year, we have made some significant improvements to the programs and services we offer and support in early childhood development.

Mr. Speaker, strengthening licensed early childhood programs through the improvement of resource materials and through increased training for early childhood workers is one of our specific mandate commitments related to Right from the Start.

Mr. Speaker, many of our children have the benefit of attending these early learning programs, and we recognize there are challenges in delivering programs in different communities. To account for these differences, we have reconfigured our model so operators can focus on developing quality programs for the children in their care rather than focusing on administrative paperwork. To ensure children with special needs have appropriate support, we have streamlined the Healthy Children

Initiative into the Early Childhood Intervention Program. These program changes will be phased in over five years and will help our licensed early childhood programs better plan and meet the scope of the children's needs.

Since 2015, the Early Childhood Staff Grant Program has provided a wage top-up to early childhood workers in licensed daycare facilities to upgrade their skills and education. Over the 2015-16 fiscal year, Education, Culture and Employment provided grants to approximately 240 full- and part-time early childhood workers.

As well, in 2016-17, we awarded five \$1,000 scholarships to 13 post-secondary students enrolled in full-time early childhood development diploma or degree programs.

We also continue to work with our early childhood operators across the North, through symposiums, video conferencing, and ongoing discussions. They are often the first caregivers outside the child's family, and we need to ensure they are supported.

Another one of our mandate commitments, Mr. Speaker, was to revise the funding support model for licensed early childhood programs. I am pleased to advise Members that Education, Culture and Employment has fulfilled this commitment.

A daily subsidy for each child attending programs will continue to be provided to operators. The previous Early Childhood Program Operating Subsidy had 10 zones. We have reduced this to two zones; Zone A for all southern communities with road access, and Zone B for communities in the Sahtu and Beaufort Delta and those communities without road access.

In light of full territorial implementation of junior kindergarten beginning in the 2017-18 school year, we have significantly increased the infant rate for operators across the territory. Operators in a Zone A community like Yellowknife can now expect to get \$20 more, while operators in a Zone B community like Aklavik will get over \$26 more.

In response to our mandate commitment to work with stakeholders and communities to explore options for free play-based care for four-year-olds, the government will be rolling out junior kindergarten to all NWT communities in the next

school year, up from the 20 communities where it is currently available.

During both the review of junior kindergarten and subsequent engagements, we talked extensively with invested stakeholders across the NWT, including Aboriginal governments, ECE Service Centre regional superintendents, early childhood consultants, Aboriginal Head Start staff, the Northwest Territories Teachers' Association, Superintendents of Education, parents, teachers, and school principals and have received generally positive feedback on our approach and content.

We accepted all of the recommendations of the review and have enacted a revised funding model, enhanced the curriculum and teacher guide, increased training for teachers, developed a detailed communications plan, and engaged across the North to garner feedback for territorial implementation.

For five years now, we have been using the Early Development Instrument, which provides a snapshot of children's school readiness at age five. The Early Development Instrument measures a child's developmental health when they enter the school system. The preliminary Early Development Instrument results, after the initial rollout of junior kindergarten, is showing improvement among our five year olds. The promise of junior kindergarten as a way of ensuring our children are ready when they enter the formal school system at five seems to hold true. The results are preliminary, but very encouraging.

Mr. Speaker, healthy early childhood development is a priority for this Legislative Assembly. I believe it is also a priority for all of the communities and families across the North, and we are working to ensure we have the most responsive programs, services, and opportunities available for families and children, right from the start. Mahsi cho, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Ministers' statements. Item 3, Members' statements. Member for Nahendeh.

Members' Statements

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON ENBRIDGE PIPELINE EROSION CONTROL MEASURES

MR. THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This past summer a number of people noticed that there was erosion of the river bank and the ground slumping upstream at the Enbridge pipeline.

After hearing about this issue, the chief and council of the Liidlii Kue First Nations contacted Enbridge to inform them of the potential hazard.

Mr. Speaker, Enbridge is well prepared for these issues. It is my understanding that each September the company holds its annual emergency training exercise with local companies, Nogha Enterprises, Rowe's Construction and Great Slave Helicopters, and the local fire department, RCMP, and Department of Lands personnel to prepare them for these types of situations.

Luckily, this situation did not involve a spill or a break in the line. Fortunately, the company had and followed their erosion control measure plan. What does this involve, you might ask? Well, it is about how the company monitors, assesses, and remediates the situation. As well, the company has a good preventable maintenance and a monitoring program that alerts them of changing condition to the stability of the ground.

Mr. Speaker, this past November the company felt it needed to address the sloping issue in the pipeline, which led them to shut it down. The rationale was because of the sloping stability concerns.

Once this decision was made, the company informed the bands that were affected, Deh Cho First Nation and the village, of the shutdown. For the communities outside Fort Simpson, the company brought them into Fort Simpson to hear the message directly, then they followed up with a letter.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to say Enbridge is working with Liidlii Kue First Nations to utilize the traditional knowledge to help address this sloping stability issue. As well, the local companies have taken the necessary safety training offered by Enbridge so that they can work on the project.

In speaking with the Enbridge regional contact, the company, including personnel from down south, was very impressed with the community and the region's ability to get the necessary workers and equipment to work on the remediation part of the project.

Mr. Speaker, as of December 31st, Enbridge expenditure was at \$5.7 million, just for Fort Simpson.

Mr. Speaker, it is my understanding crews will continue installation and begin the borehole program the week of January 9 and it is expected to run until the end of February. Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to finish my statement. Thank you.

---Unanimous consent granted

MR. THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll try to take the marbles out now.

---Laughter

There will be approximately 40 people involved, excluding local contractors. Labourers and services will be contracted from Nogha Enterprises and Rowe's Construction as required.

All accommodations will be sourced from Fort Simpson businesses, and services such as water, fuel, and equipment will be sourced from Fort Simpson.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank Enbridge for being so forthcoming with the information about this situation and using local companies to work on this remediation. Mahsi cho, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Members' statements. Member for Yellowknife North.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON SUPPORT FOR TERRAX MINERALS INC.

MR. VANTHUYNE: Mr. Speaker, earlier this week I made a statement about the need to invest in the biggest asset of the Northwest Territories -- our people -- and I stand by that statement.

Mr. Speaker, when world economies are soft, commodity prices are down, and markets are pessimistic, the time is right for new growth and opportunity. Some of our new areas of economic growth are very bright; one only has to look out at the streets of Yellowknife, filled with tourists from Asia, to see this.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday I was reminded that there is room to be optimistic in our established economies as well. Members of this House were privileged to get an update from TerraX Minerals. This is a company that is poised to spend roughly \$40 million in exploration over the next few years; an investment that will benefit the entire territory.

TerraX plans to invest this money "on spec," meaning it has no guarantees of finding anything. It is investing in the area right around Yellowknife, one of the most explored areas of the North. Mr. Speaker, TerraX is using new technologies and theories, opening the possibility of creating opportunities that weren't available just a few years ago.

This is the kind of investment that we badly need and we must welcome it with open arms, Mr. Speaker. In my statement earlier this week I mentioned the "gloomy" outlook for the resource sector and, to be frank, between a forecasted drop in exploration spending of almost half, the loss of corporate head offices to Alberta, and Imperial Oil leaving Norman Wells, the outlook isn't rosy.

This makes it even more important that we create a welcoming climate for exploration investments like TerraX. This kind of investment has a multiplying effect, Mr. Speaker. While the principals of TerraX have no guarantees of finding a workable deposit, its investments will create jobs and activity for local businesses. While they take the risk, helicopter companies, diamond drillers, airlines, hotels, and other local businesses will reap the benefits. Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Unanimous consent granted

MR. VANTHUYNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, colleagues. It's not only dollars, Mr. Speaker. TerraX is also investing socially in the territory. As we saw in their presentation yesterday, the company is taking steps to reach to NWT communities, the public, and Aboriginal governments. They are continually consulting to make sure that stakeholders are aware of its activities. Although TerraX has contributed to the NWT Ski Loppet on an annual basis, this year they announced that they will be the main sponsor for the Loppet.

So, Mr. Speaker, as I stated earlier this week, I believe we must seek new opportunities to grow and diversify our economy, but that does not mean that we should turn our backs on new investments in the mining sector. TerraX's exploration efforts will create growth and opportunity in the NWT economy, Mr. Speaker, and the company has demonstrated that it is a good citizen. We should do everything we can as a government to welcome and encourage it. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Members' statements. Member for Frame Lake.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON IMPROVING CONSUMER PROTECTION

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. I want to speak today about protecting NWT consumers from false advertising and ensuring the integrity of our tourism products and branding for our visitors.

Most people remember the high-profile case of pickerel offered at a local restaurant which was actually a fish from Kazakhstan called Zander. The real news turned out to be the lack of protection for our consumers through no penalties under our NWT Consumer Protection Act. There does not appear to be any power to lay charges or seek fines. Municipal and Community Affairs, which administers the legislation, has set up a complaint system. The department acts as a mediator between complainants and businesses. At the time of the fish story, the deputy minister is quoted as

saying that, after a complaint was filed, "We hope that they can work it out themselves." He said public awareness plays a role by putting pressure on businesses not to mislead consumers.

Mr. Speaker, I don't think that's good enough. We should actually expect a lot more from our government. In Alaska, a media report indicated a restaurant was fined \$50,000 for selling New Zealand elk as Alaska reindeer. In Quebec, misleading customers on the composition of food will get you a \$500 to \$9,000 fine.

There are two issues here. One is to provide a mechanism ensuring consumers who have been intentionally misled can get redress with legislative requirements that forces retailers to give a refund and make things right. The other issue is one of deterrence, to actively discourage misrepresentation. A tourist on a five-day trip from overseas is not likely to file an English-language complaint, even with the potential for a refund. We need a stronger consumer protection system with powers to investigate complaints and lay charges on behalf of the public and fines robust enough that retailers make sure products are as they are described. As more and more livelihoods are based upon the world-class quality of our tourism destination, we want to actively discourage bad players from hurting our reputation. This does not happen often, but we must be vigilant.

I don't want to give the impression we are uniquely behind. Our Yukon neighbour is not much further ahead in this regard, but with our growing tourism sector we need to begin thinking about protecting our resident consumers, our Northern products, and reputation. I'll be asking questions later today of the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Members' statement. Member for Hay River North.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON HAY RIVER RENTAL ACCOMMODATION CHALLENGES

MR. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this government loves to subsidize housing. The Housing Corporation provides social housing; ECE pays individuals' rents through the Income Assistance Program; and even the Department of Justice provides subsidized housing by forcing private landlords to house delinquent tenants for months on end.

Let me explain. Say a tenant falls into arrears for the month of January and an application to evict is filed with the rental office in February; there likely won't be a hearing for two or three months. If the tenant continues to skip out on rent during this time,

there's nothing the landlord can do except sit idly by as potentially unrecoverable arrears grow and a revenue stream worth thousands runs dry.

Mr. Speaker, I understand we have to protect tenants' rights, but there are tenants who are aware of this and who work the system.

In the NWT, there is one company that controls around 85 per cent of the rental market. I'm not concerned about that company; it can absorb the costs. My concerns are for all the other landlords in the territory who contribute to their local economies, are trying to make a living or earn some extra income, or who count on a few rental properties for their retirement income.

In Hay River, it's tough to find a place to rent, and when you do, it's not cheap. A big part of the reason for that is it's hard to convince individuals or businesses to invest in constructing new apartments or rental units because everyone knows the hassles that landlords have to go through in the territory. The system doesn't just hurt landlords; it hinders growth of our economy. The lack of rental housing makes it extremely difficult to attract and retain employees that we need to address our labour gap and help grow the economy. It could also make all the difference for a family considering leaving town.

There are tweaks to the Residential Tenancies Act that can help remedy some of the problems, but the immediate issue is the understaffing of the rental office.

Two years ago, the office hired a deputy rental officer. That brought the total of officers up to two. Unfortunately, half the staff recently retired, and now we're back down to one. Nowadays, nearly half of all applications take over two months to be heard. Mr. Speaker, the rental office doesn't just deal with private landlords; it is also used by the Housing Corporation to collect arrears, and aggressive attempts by the corporation at collecting arrears have further disadvantaged small landlords.

I know the Minister is aware of this issue; I've discussed it with him before. I was assured that the rental office was taking steps to tackle its workload problem, and hopefully that means hiring another officer. I'll have questions for the Minister of Justice at the appropriate time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Members' statements. Member for Sahtu.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
BENEFITS OF PUBLIC SERVICE GROWTH IN
THE SAHTU REGION

MR. MCNEELY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Our NWT economy is based on a number of factors, and involves a number of players as well. In the global economy price sector, downturn places governments in taking a lead role in diversification. However, targets of balanced budgeting is a measurement for sound consumer confidence.

Economic indicators such as gross domestic product, net-to-debt ratios. Other factors on stability can be seen by monthly reports from the Bureau of Statistics. Benchmarking our physical progress to other Canadian jurisdictions provides evidence of maintaining sustainability, as set out in our budgetary deliverance.

Mr. Speaker, core social programs through five departments are supported by 63 per cent of this budget. Being mindful of the economic players and resource development, confidence remains consistent with the Assembly's mandate. Attracting industry will see benefits that we have seen by contributions to the local school in Tulita in the amount of \$30,000 for the breakfast program. Similar contributions were made by TerraX as mentioned by my colleague earlier. Physical responsibility compliance are other factors on management's prudent progression.

Mr. Speaker, from this budget the Sahtu region will see 25 career positions, jobs that weren't there before, long-term jobs that will help and support families to place their footing within the community as well as contributing to the local economy and TFF income. From this budget, my region will see true independence and have the ability to make decisions on their own for the destiny that they wish to choose. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Members' statements. Member for Kam Lake.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
YELLOWKNIFE RENTAL ACCOMMODATION
COSTS

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, if I asked you where you think the highest average rent in Canada is, I assume you would say a major Canadian city like Toronto or Vancouver. Mr. Speaker, you would be wrong. If you were wondering what the answer is, you need look no further than out the windows of this building.

Mr. Speaker, according to a 2016 report from the Canada Mortgage and Housing Commission, the average rent for a two-bedroom unit in Yellowknife is \$1,636 per month, while in Vancouver a similar

unit costs \$1,450 and in Toronto the rent would be \$1,327. That means Yellowknifers on average pay \$200 more per rent than tenants in the two largest cities in Canada.

To be fair, Mr. Speaker, there has been a 2.2 per cent drop in the rent from 2015, but that is due to roughly 206 people who have left the territory, prompting local landlords to offer rent reductions in order to fill that vacancy rate. This trend can also be attributed to new purchases and the construction of condos, but also because some people have just given up on renting. Mr. Speaker, there is a large community of young Northerners who are becoming permanent house-sitters or even moving back in with their parents, effectively putting aspects of their social mobility on hold.

Being that there is no CMHC data on other similar communities' rental prices, we would likely see higher rental prices in communities such as Inuvik, Hay River, and Fort Smith.

Mr. Speaker, in our mandate document, we are committed to addressing the high cost of living. Although not explicitly mentioned, easing the burden from renters is something we need to focus on. Renting is usually the first step before buying your first home as an important aspect of the middle class experience. That element is being taken away from young people, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, when young people come here, they are looking for opportunity, they are looking for mobility, and they are looking to make a future in the Northwest Territories. If they can't even afford a home while they build that future, we are in trouble. Mr. Speaker, I will have questions for the Minister on what she plans to do with the new rent subsidy program she mentioned yesterday in the House, and we will see exactly where we are taking affordable rent for the future of the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Members' statements. Member for Mackenzie Delta.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
RESIDENT MENTAL HEALTH WORKER FOR
TSIIGEHTCHIC

MR. BLAKE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we know that mental health is a critical issue in our communities. The Department of Health and Social Services has set out a five-year plan, called Mind and Spirit, promoting mental health and addictions recovery in the Northwest Territories.

Within Mind and Spirit, the department plans to focus on children and youth, mental health, and addictions recovery, all areas where communities

badly need support. Mr. Speaker, to get this work done, we will need trained experts on the ground, people who are committed to our communities in the long term.

Residents of Tsiigehtchic recently had the benefit of a local mental health worker, someone who could provide counselling services, help with case management and suicide prevention, promoting mental health, and coordinating medication and monitoring for Northern people where they live.

Unfortunately, that worker was needed somewhere else and now works out of Inuvik. That means the worker was in Tsiigehtchic just long enough for people to start getting used to them, to become comfortable with them, and now they are gone. Even if another mental health worker comes to town, residents will feel like they are starting from scratch.

Working in mental health is a position of great trust, Mr. Speaker. When communities are used to people coming and going, it can be hard enough to welcome someone new, much less to open up to them about their most personal questions and challenges.

Moves like this are disruptive, Mr. Speaker, and the anxiety and uncertainty they cause run counter to our goals of supporting good mental health.

Of course, we can't control how individuals feel if it is time to move on to try different work or even life in a different communities. Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement. Thank you.

---Unanimous consent granted

MR. BLAKE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, colleagues. Of course, we can't control when individuals feel that it is time to move on to try different work or life in a different community. When our health authorities assign work or move positions, they need to consider the impacts of those decisions on the people who they serve.

To deliver reasonable services and adequate support, we need to build a mental health system committed to encouraging long-term presence in our small communities. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Members' statements. Member for Yellowknife Centre.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON SUGAR TAX BEST PRACTICES

MS. GREEN: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in recent years the idea of a sugar tax levied on sugary drinks like pop and juice has generated debate about outcomes. I would like to share my

findings from a review of existing programs and best practices.

Sugar taxes typically focus on naturally or artificially sweetened beverages and are calculated based on volume, and might also include syrups or artificial sweeteners. They are usually implemented at the federal level, as in the countries of Hungary and Mexico. Here in Canada, the federal government has said only that it will continue to monitor emerging evidence on the effectiveness of such measures.

Media coverage often boils down to one of two narratives. Supporters argue for a sugar tax to take action on an obesity crisis. Detractors argue that a tax would increase taxes and interfere with consumers' free choice.

What is more, because sugar tax programs are still young, we don't have conclusive evidence of their results. Some promising results from Mexico suggest that their sugar tax has led to decreased soft drink sales in the order of 7.5 per cent over two years, but they are unable to calculate the effect of this drop on health.

It seems to me that this conversation speaks to the desire for policy that empowers consumers to both choose and access healthy food, a critical issue here in the NWT. I want to offer the finance Minister a couple of best practices for his budget commitment to explore a sugary drink tax.

First, the department must have clarity of purpose. While the budget address linked sugar taxes to health, a 2016 revenue options paper had dismissed the idea, arguing, as have other jurisdictions, that the expense would likely outstrip the income. I was also troubled by the same paper's suggestion that seeing low-income people paying a larger share would not be an issue. That sounds less proactive and more punitive.

Second, I point to the recommendations of both the Senate Committee and the Canadian Diabetes Association. Both suggest that a sugar tax is not a stand-alone magic bullet for better health. Instead, government needs to develop clear plans for dedicated use of levied funds and revise existing practices respecting healthy food affordability and regulation, labelling, and marketing of sugary beverages. Here, the GNWT may have a head start. For more than 10 years, Health and Social Services has encouraged students, families, and schools to "drop the pop."

I will have questions for the Minister. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Members' statements. Member for Nunakput.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
MODERN TREATY IMPLEMENTATION

MR. NAKIMAYAK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, modern treaties, land claims, and self-government agreements are a key component of governance in the North.

Mr. Speaker, the federal government has released a statement of principles on its approach to modern treaty implementation. These principles must be upheld in all our negotiations with Indigenous groups.

Modern treaties promote strong, sustainable Indigenous communities that create enduring intergovernmental relationships between treaty partners and certainly around the lands and resource ownership and management. They support a stable climate for investment and promote broader economic and policy objectives to the benefit of all Canadians.

Many modern treaties set out Indigenous groups' lawmaking powers and equip them to develop programs and services that are tailored to the unique needs of their communities.

Mr. Speaker, modern treaties are reconciliation in action. Treaty rights are recognized and affirmed by section 35 of the Constitution Act. Treaties establish a mutually agreed-on and enduring framework for reconciliation and ongoing relationships between the Crown and Indigenous people.

Mr. Speaker, modern treaty implementation is an ongoing process and must reflect the agreements entered into. Modern treaties must be implemented in a manner that upholds the honour of the Crown, recognizing that Indigenous groups and treaty rights are constitutionally protected.

Mr. Speaker, through the implementation of modern treaties, Canada shares a set of broad objectives with its Indigenous treaty partners, including the promotion of social, economic, and cultural well-being of Indigenous peoples and contribution to the development of prosperous and sustainable Indigenous communities in Canada.

Mr. Speaker, modern treaty implementation requires a whole-of-government approach and effective intergovernmental relationships to be successful. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased that Canada has articulated these principles, and that the Government of the Northwest Territories' approach to land claim and self-government agreements also reflects these values. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Members' statements. Item 4, returns to oral questions. Item 5, recognition of

visitors in the gallery. Member for Yellowknife North.

Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery

MR. VANTHUYNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize David Connelly. David Connelly is the community liaison for TerraX Minerals, also a Yellowknife North resident. I also want to take this opportunity to recognize and welcome Deneen Everett, the executive director of the Yellowknife Chamber of Commerce. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member for Kam Lake.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would also like to recognize Ms. Deneen Everett, the executive director for the Yellowknife Chamber of Commerce. She does incredible work for that organization, and I always appreciate the strong partnership she works to develop between many levels of government and the business community here, in Yellowknife. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member for Yellowknife South.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to recognize three Pages from Yellowknife South, Aidan Allan, Jade Leathem, Sarah Chapman, and I also recognize all of the pages and all of the good work they do here. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member for Yellowknife Centre.

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize Mya Grossetete, who was sitting right there until just now, who is a Page joining us from St. Patrick School and a resident of Yellowknife Centre. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member for Nunakput.

MR. NAKIMAYAK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I realize that my relative, Patrick Joss, and constituent from Ulukhaktok has been here all week. Welcome, Patrick. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. If we have missed anyone in the gallery, welcome to our proceedings. It is always great to have an audience. Masi. Item 6, acknowledgements. Item 7, oral questions. Member for Nahendeh.

Oral Questions

QUESTION 636-18(2): EMERGENCY SITUATION COMMUNICATION PROTOCOLS

MR. THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I spoke about Enbridge and the communication process, and so I am asking some questions of the Premier. Does the government have a protocol or a policy in place to communicate with Regular MLAs when it comes to challenges such as the pipeline shutdown and that? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Honourable Premier.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to report that we do have a process convention on communications between Cabinet Ministers, standing committees, and Regular Members. This was approved by caucus, and it sets out the obligations and requirement around information sharing on all Members of this House. While there are provisions for sharing information on emergencies that the Government of the Northwest Territories is responding to, it is silent on the subject of sharing information about non-emergency situations or information about the activities of a body other than the Government of the Northwest Territories, like a private business.

Having said that, with respect to the example that the Member used, on the pipeline shutdown, the senior vice president of Imperial Oil did phone me to advise that there would be a temporary shutdown of the Imperial Oil operations in Norman Wells because of issues with the pipeline going across the Mackenzie River. I asked him if I could share this information with the MLAs, and he said there would be no problem with that. He asked for a slight delay until he contacted other communities and Aboriginal governments. So within a couple of hours, all of the MLAs were advised of it.

We also have other reporting. We have the NWT-Nunavut oil spill response line. I believe MLAs can be put on that line, but that is something I will have to concern. Also, I believe the RCMP has some arrangements with Aboriginal governments to advise them of incidents. That is another thing that we could look into. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. THOMPSON: I thank the Premier for his answer. That is very helpful as we move forward. I guess the next part I am looking for is: is there a specific department that is responsible for that, or is it each department has a protocol to get that information out there?

HON. BOB MCLEOD: The process convention provides that MLAs representing communities or

regions affected by an emergency will receive summary operational reports on emergencies that the Government of the Northwest Territories is responding to. It further provides that reports will be provided by the responsible Minister for situations involving one department, and by the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs for situations involving multiple departments.

I also received information from Enbridge, and they stated that their protocol is to inform the government immediately and maintain regular contact with communities, government, and regulators and regular contact during any incident. I can assure the Member that we make MLAs aware as soon as we are made aware.

MR. THOMPSON: I thank the Premier for the answer. It kind of answers my third question, but is there a timeline out there that they are able to communicate to the Regular MLAs?

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Under the process convention, the government has committed to providing it to MLAs as it becomes available. As soon as we get the indication that is public information or that we are free to share it with the MLAs, whether they have any restrictions on the information but generally we share right away.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Oral questions. Member for Nahendeh.

MR. THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the Premier for that answer. I guess there is, again, a little bit of delay in getting the information out there, and I appreciate the Premier explaining the process here today in the House. Has the government looked at how information gets out there and how we can improve this information to get to the people of our regions? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. BOB MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The process convention that we have may be amended at any time at the agreement of caucus, the executive council, and the Standing Committee on Priorities and Planning. We would be happy to consider recommendations for amendments at the appropriate time, and as the Member knows the "Moccasin Telegraph," I guess, as some people refer to it, is a lot faster than any convention, so we will try to take that into consideration. Also, we are prepared to check to see if any reporting -- like for example the oil spill lines, I do not see why MLAs cannot be added to the list and you know eliminate bottleneck so that they are advised at the same time as we are. So we are prepared to be able to look to see if there are lists like that that can be changed to accommodate in the interests of having everybody know on a timely basis.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Oral questions. Member for Yellowknife North.

QUESTION 637-18(2):
YELLOWKNIFE AND PERIPHERAL AREA LAND
USE MANAGEMENT PLAN

MR. VANTHUYNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Minister of Lands. Earlier as I mentioned in my Member's statement, TerraX Minerals intends to spend nearly \$40 million in the next few years in exploration in around the Yellowknife area, and so, Mr. Speaker, the Yellowknife Peripheral Area Land Use Management Plan describes how lands around the city will be occupied by various users. Can the Minister commit that he will work with his Cabinet colleagues and department staff to make sure the development of this plan will be transparent and include exploration permits? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Minister of Lands.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can advise that the department has done a number of studies to gather information on the Yellowknife Peripheral area, and I can advise also that they had a public telephone survey. So they have sought input from various groups including industry and they will be considering, as the plan is developed, current and future land uses and values, they will identify high-quality public sites, culturally significant sites, ecologically sensitive sites, and future economic opportunity sites. So hopefully we will be able to develop a plan that will satisfy, if not everybody completely, at least take into account all those variants' interest. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. VANTHUYNE: Thank you to the Minister for his reply. Also, Mr. Speaker, TerraX has shown its interest in collaborating with other land users and lease holds in and around the Ingraham Trail area. Can the Minister provide assurances that the GNWT will refrain from awarding additional leases in these areas where mineral exploration permits have already been awarded?

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: No, I cannot give that guarantee; however, it is important to remember that all leases contain clauses that explicitly note that the lessee does not have rights to the subsurface. That would apply to all leases.

MR. VANTHUYNE: Thank you to the Minister for providing that clarification. Mr. Speaker, part of the Yellowknife Peripheral Area Land Use Management Plan involves developing GIS maps of the area. Can the Minister commit that he will support the inclusion of the NWT Mineral 10-year Data Sets which are publically available online from the GNWT in the plan?

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: I can advise that we are looking at all sorts of areas and information, including the submissions made by various parties including industry. We would be prepared to look at the NWT Mineral 10-year Data Sets referred to by the Member opposite. As to whether they will be including in the plan, that is to be determined.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Oral questions. Member for Yellowknife North.

MR. VANTHUYNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, maybe the Minister can answer this last question. It correlates with my line of questioning, but it is relevant to power. The development of a potential or future mine requires significant power, of course, and over the long term development of enough hydro power to support multiple mines could also lower the power rates for both industry as well as residents. Will the Minister commit to working with his colleagues to support the development of safe, reliable, sustainable energy on a scale that will make industrial development economically feasible in the area? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government and the Power Corporation are always interested in development of safe, reliable, sustainable green energy. As to whether for a specific project we would have the resources to have a project on the scale that might be necessary, it would have to be determined by the parties, and I understand that the Power Corporation has been in touch with several industrial groups to discuss that very issue.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Oral questions. Member for Sahtu.

QUESTION 638-18(2):
GNWT LAND USE MONITORING CAPACITY

MR. MCNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As my colleague before mentioned on the incident there related to the Enbridge line 21 referred to, one element of land management is responding to infrastructure. In this case, line 21, several months ago our government first learned of this incident. My question to the Minister of Lands is: what monitoring systems are in place currently after learning from the incident? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Minister of Lands.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Yes, Mr. Speaker, the difficulties with the line included were rather in an area that is the jurisdiction of the National Energy Board, so that would be the primary party that is responsible for issues arising from difficulties with the pipeline. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. MCNEELY: It is common knowledge there from the mirrored legislation and Devolution transfers and terms of the agreement that it is within the NEB jurisdiction on line 21; however, we shall move on because outside the parameters of the right-of-way it is our land, so I think we should take precautionary measures and at least have some method of communication. Therefore, my next question is: are there land inspectors out in that area, in the Fort Simpson area, where the situation is crossing the Mackenzie?

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Yes, of course some of the areas adjacent to the pipeline and the right-of-way would be the responsibility of OROGO, and I understand that they do have a procedure under which if there are difficulties those incidents are reported to them. As to the second part of the question, as to whether there are inspectors out there right now, I would have to get back to the Member opposite.

MR. MCNEELY: We could answer it now or we can answer it later on as the budget deliberations go. There are resources that need to be approved for the hiring of inspectors. However, a potential catastrophe of this nature would only need the attention that it deserves and the resources to support that. I would encourage the Minister to be forthcoming on the question. Do we have people on the ground looking after our better interest and the health of the environment and the health of the people, knowing the fact that this particular infrastructure is across from the Mackenzie River, and there are a lot of affected communities downstream that could be affected? My question is, I would encourage the Minister to keep us abreast of the learnings of the situation and to please share that with us.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: I will keep the Member's office apprised of any developments that are under our jurisdiction. I understand also that the oil company or the transmission company, Enbridge, does as a courtesy advise us of difficulties or issues that they are facing. There has not been a cutback in the number of inspectors that Lands has. I realize of course that this is a serious issue, and I can advise that the department will be monitoring it carefully.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Oral questions. Member for Sault. Member for Yellowknife Centre.

QUESTION 639-18(2):
SUGAR TAX BEST PRACTICES

MS. GREEN: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in my statement today I talked about the Finance Minister's budget commitment to explore a tax on sugary drinks. The government's revenue option paper from last year rejected a sugar tax as

uneconomic in terms of administration because the expense of implementing it would be greater than the income earned. I was surprised to hear about it in the budget. What has changed the Minister's views in the last year? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Minister of Finance.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I don't have to state the obvious when we talk about diabetes and obesity amongst the Northwest Territories. It is one of the reasons that we have decided to explore this option. The second one is the constant harping from the Minister of Health and Social Services. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. GREEN: That is good news, that health is the focus of bringing the tax into consideration. Is that the primary purpose that the Minister sees the Northwest Territories sugar tax serving? That is, will it be a revenue-neutral tax where the savings are reinvested in health measures?

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: I am sure the Minister of Health and Social Services would like that. One of the reasons that we have decided that we want to do it, we actually already have a letter of support from the Dieticians of Canada with their 6,000 members across the country. I think they have 15 in Northwest Territories. They have provided us with some excellent starting points for our discussions on a sugar tax. We don't know yet about the revenue. These are details we have to work out. As we go into the process, I would be more than pleased to sit down with committee and get their input. Then we will work to put together a good product for the people of the Northwest Territories.

MS. GREEN: Does the Minister have any preliminary ideas about how he will engage members of the public during the exploration of imposing this tax?

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: As I said before, we are early in the process, but an issue such as this, this is something that we would need to get a lot of input from committee and the public. As we go through the LPs and introduce an introduction of bills, the opportunity is going to be there for committee to take the bill on the road. We will ensure that we have a lot of good feedback and a good-quality product that we are able to present before the Legislative Assembly.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Oral questions. Member for Yellowknife Centre.

MS. GREEN: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask my new favourite Minister when we can expect him to report back to us about the next steps, such as the introduction of the LP. Thank you.

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to my honourable friend from Yellowknife Centre. We are early in the process. We are just starting to put our plan together. As I said, we have already received some fantastic information from the Dieticians of Canada. I am sure we will be getting a lot more information. We will process a lot of this information. We will put a timeline together, and then we will work with committee on seeking their input on our timeline as we go forward.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Oral questions. Member for Frame Lake.

QUESTION 640-18(2):
IMPROVING CONSUMER PROTECTION

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. I would like to go back to my own favourite Minister, the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs. The situation for consumer protection that I described earlier today, I think, is one that requires some improvement. I would like to think there is more to a complaints process than hoping customers can work it out with retailers. Can the Minister tell me what specific actions her department is taking to protect our consumers, tourists, and the reputation of our northern products? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Actions that we are currently taking to address the needs of consumers within the Northwest Territories, basically I want to state that we don't get a lot of complaints. First of all, we have only gotten 18 complaints in the last three years. Changes to the act are usually made based on the number of complaints that we receive. We are wondering if that is maybe a communication problem.

In this fiscal year, we have developed a plain-language guide on the current consumer affairs programming and what we do. Within that guide we have where we explain the government's role in consumer protection, we are explaining consumer's rights and their responsibilities, we are explaining the consumer's protections available for the residents of the Northwest Territories in the areas that we currently regulate, and we are providing a simple method by which residents can lodge consumer complaints. This document will be spread widely this coming spring, and we will be looking at a broader campaign to improve consumer awareness. Basically, what we are doing right now is trying to put in awareness that we are there and just letting the consumers know where they can go

to for assistance on consumer issues. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks to the Minister for her response. It is good to hear that there is a campaign that is going to get under way, and I look forward to getting a copy of the booklet.

We have a lot of tourists who come through the Northwest Territories, and they really do rely on making sure that our advertising is accurate and fair. I know our government does license tourism operators, although it might be a different Minister. What kind of collaboration is there between MACA, consumer affairs staff, and ITI tourism licensing staff to ensure tourists and the reputation of our Northern products are protected?

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: The Department of Municipal and Community Affairs regularly works with ITI on consumer-related tourism issues. However, most of them are related to public safety, such as fire protection, etc. Again, we haven't had a lot of complaints. We tend to work when we have complaints in the area. Any time there is an issue, we work cross-departmentally to define those. We also work federally as well, because the federal government also has a role in consumer complaints. When the issues are federal, we will work with them as well to address the issues.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks again to the Minister for that response. Once we promote consumer protection a little bit better, maybe there is going to be a need for better collaboration there too. I am just wondering if the Minister can tell me when the last comprehensive review of the consumer protection act was undertaken?

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: The last review to the Consumer Protection Act was last updated in 2011. However, it was only looked at in relation to the cost-of-credit disclosure, so that was the last time that the act was actually reviewed.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Oral questions. Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. It is good to know that the last time it was looked at was 2011, and I understand that the Minister has a lot on her plate in terms of legislation. We have got 911; City, Towns, and Villages Act; Fire Prevention Act, and so on. It seems to be a long legislative slumber in the department going on. I am not making it a demand for immediate action on this issue of improving consumer protection, but can the Minister commit to placing the need for improved consumer protection into the departmental business planning and report to the standing committee this fall with when we can expect some further

improvements in the Consumer Protection Act? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In an effort to try to keep as many of the Regular MLAs saying that I am their favourite Minister, what I will do is I will add these changes to the list of acts and regulations that we will be bringing to the five communities to review it on their priority list so that the communities actually can delegate which are the priorities, which ones we should be dealing with first. Then I can bring that back to the MLAs.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Oral questions. Member for Hay River North.

QUESTION 641-18(2):
RENTAL OFFICE WORKLOAD CHALLENGES

MR. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, earlier I spoke of the understaffing at the rental office and the negative effects that it has on landlords, who are essentially small-business owners. I am sure the Minister of Justice, in his former life as a small-town lawyer, has fielded questions from landlords on how they can evict a delinquent tenant or how they can collect on arrears, so I am sure he is very familiar with this issue. I would like to ask the Minister: what steps will the Department of Justice take to reduce the wait times and restore landlords' confidence in the rental office? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Minister of Justice.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Mr. Speaker, the average time between the filing of an application and the actual hearing in the Northwest Territories is two to three months, and that is consistent or about the same as you would find in other jurisdictions. We have been trying to make the system more efficient by, for example, using three-way teleconferencing and scheduling face-to-face hearings outside Yellowknife. I know, in 2015-16, 61 per cent of the applications were heard within 60 days and, the prior year to that, only 55 per cent were heard within 60 days. If the load continues to increase, certainly, I think an option we could consider is the appointment of a second rental officer. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SIMPSON: The Minister mentioned that it is consistent with other jurisdictions. It seems like it is convenient to be uniquely Northern and have a unique situation in the North when it benefits us, but it is okay to be consistent with other jurisdictions when it benefits the government, as well.

There have been significant efforts across departments to collect arrears tied to public housing, and these hearings have been partially

responsible for the long wait times to the rental office. It is private landlords who really bolster the availability of rental housing in the communities and really add to the economy, and they have just as much right to be paid by tenants as the Housing Corporation, so is the department going to take any steps to support private landlords in collecting arrears instead of focusing their efforts on the government itself?

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: All applicants are treated equally, whether landlord or tenant, and there is no special preference given to the government in its applications before the rental officer.

MR. SIMPSON: I suppose when the biggest client is the government, it seems like that is a little unfair when it is a government office and the biggest client is the government. It is not the public, really, being served.

I think that, if the department formally assessed the business case for increasing the complement at the rental office to at least two permanent, full-time rental officers, it would see that this is a net benefit for the territory. Those thousands of dollars of revenue that landlords miss out on when tenants can't be evicted in a timely manner and the lowering of rates when there are more rental units available, I think it would pay dividends to have another rental officer there. Will the department formally assess the business case for adding another rental officer to the rental office?

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Yes.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. I am not sure what other kinds of questions there will be. Oral questions. Member for Hay River North.

MR. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That might be the first commitment from the Minister this Assembly. Thank you. Thank you to the Minister.

I am sure the Minister is aware of this. There are problems collecting costs for damages. A tenant might leave, causing more damages than the damage deposit covers, and it is very difficult for the small landlords to collect on these. Is the department doing anything to help out small landlords collect on these damages? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Mr. Speaker, the issue raised by the Member opposite is a problem generated with civil judgments that collection is always difficult, whether it is a judgment for arrears or on a contract. I don't think the problems are any greater in this situation as they are in any other civil cases, so I don't think we are contemplating change of legislation.

The whole point of the Residential Tenancies Act was to establish a balance between landlord and tenant. I do appreciate that that balance, when it comes to residences as opposed to commercial tenancies, is somewhat weighted in favour of the tenant, but the legislation is consistent with other jurisdictions.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Oral questions. Member for Kam Lake.

QUESTION 642-18(2):
RENTAL ACCOMMODATION SUBSIDIES

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, earlier today I spoke about the need to take action on very high rents in the City of Yellowknife. The Minister yesterday committed to developing a new rent supplement program by the end of six months. Can the Minister provide a bit more detail about the development of that program and what the scope of it is going to entail? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Minister responsible for the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would love to be able to stand here and say that we have all of the answers figured out. The honest truth is that we don't. However, I do know that the data shows that one in six households in Yellowknife are in core need due to affordability. That tells me that we have a serious problem with people being able to afford the rental accommodations in the Yellowknife area and, therefore, a rent subsidy program makes sense. It actually makes more sense than building more public housing when you do it on a cost-analysis basis. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. TESTART: Thank you to the Minister. I appreciate that she is well aware of this problem. It seems like this new program will not build houses. How is it going to save money or subsidize the cost of living for renters? It does not sound like we have much of a program, just an idea of one, but we do have that six-month commitment, so I am trying to tease out a few pieces of this so we can understand where we are going to be in six months.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: It probably won't be a big leap to actually develop this program. It would be a program on its own. Public housing is still a need, and we will still be looking at that. However, we do currently provide a transitional rent supplement program that is ineffective because it ends after two years and, in my opinion, people don't often have the skills that they need or the income to be able to be left without that support. So instead of having a transitional rent support program, it's merely transferring it over and actually

having more of a long term. Like I said, it is more cost effective to provide subsidies to people to deal with affordability than try to build new buildings. The longer-term plan would be to have buildings, but the shorter-term intervention is to provide subsidies.

MR. TESTART: Does the Minister have an idea about the range of these subsidies? Is it going to be targeted at lower-income earners or is it going to be a broader range that will capture the middle class as well, people with good-paying jobs but who are still facing a very high cost of living burden? So what's the range, the income range?

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Due to the high needs of residents within the whole Northwest Territories and our current wait list to access public housing support, we will not be, probably, at this point extending our income threshold. So it would be for people who are at moderate to low income. I don't know the exact rate for Yellowknife, but I believe it's under \$100,000 a year.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Oral questions. Member for Kam Lake.

MR. TESTART: Mr. Speaker, it would be nice if the Minister did have that information because I know from personal experience that the current rent supplement program doesn't capture middle class earners and it does not do a lot to support that bracket, and that's a very important bracket. When we want to attract new labour, when we want to encourage young people to stay in the North, we've got to do more than just offer SFA, student financial assistance, and municipal loans; we need to offer real opportunities in the North, and that starts with a place to live.

So again, will the Minister commit to developing a program that supports renters and specifically that supports middle-class renters, expands that income bracket so we can support more people who are struggling to make ends meet in the City of Yellowknife? Thank you.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: As I stated earlier, we have a huge number of people in need within the Northwest Territories as a whole. We have over 600 families with children that do fall within our current income assessment. At this point, I am not willing to expand the income thresholds as they currently are. If we ever get to the place where we can address all of the low-income people within the Northwest Territories, then I would look at expanding that, but at this current point we cannot.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Oral questions. Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

QUESTION 643-18(2):
LAND LEASE ASSESSMENTS

MR. BEAULIEU: Marci cho, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have questions for the Minister of Lands on the leases and taxes and rent or whatever the term is for land tenure. I'd like to ask the Minister if he would look at lowering the cost of land lease or rentals at least in the communities I represent. I don't know what the situations are in others. So I'd like to ask that question first. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Minister of Lands.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Mr. Speaker, the department is attempting to rationalize the leasing procedures so that the amounts of lease payments on both Commissioner's lands and territorial lands will be the same. I don't think we could make specific exceptions for any communities.

MR. BEAULIEU: I just didn't want to speak for other communities, but that's generally what I'm looking for. So if they're making them the same, I'm assuming that the Minister is now talking about going with a more reasonable amount? On the leases, previously we were getting leases in small communities for about \$600 a year, and for the value and if you compared to other communities that's very much in line, but now we have new leases on old houses that could be as high as \$4,000, which is kind of comparable to paying taxes on a house that's worth \$750,000 to \$1 million in the City of Yellowknife.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Yes, we are contemplating an increase of the current minimums. There hasn't been a change for many years. Again, the lease payments are based on the assessed value of the property.

MR. BEAULIEU: The assessed value being applied to any piece of property when you're developing a tax, you use a mill rate; currently, the department is using 10 per cent as a mill rate. So effectively it's not really a mill rate; it's a rent, but they're essentially using 10 per cent of the value.

So you have a piece of property there that's appraised in accordance with the land policy at roughly \$40,000, which is pretty standard across the small communities; the taxes or the rent or the lease on that property is \$4,000. That's totally unreasonable. I don't want to talk about the increase to the minimums; that's another matter altogether. We're increasing either from \$250 up or \$600 up, but to go to \$4,000 is very unreasonable. Will the Minister look at that?

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: The Member opposite has referenced the 10 per cent on which the land

rentals or leases are based; that's a long-standing procedure, and I would submit that it is reasonable.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Oral questions. Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

MR. BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I didn't hear if the Minister said it wasn't reasonable or it is reasonable, but if he said it is reasonable, of course I have to disagree. We have elders in the community and, fortunately, they get the seniors relief, tax relief, so in this particular situation or this type of situation it's 50 per cent. So an elder whose income is Old Age Security, which is approximately \$1,000 a month, is asked to pay \$2,000 after their tax relief is applied, \$2,000, so that's two months' worth of income for that elder. So is the Minister telling me that it's reasonable for people everywhere to pay two months of their salary to land taxes for one year? Thank you.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I simply said that the tax rate was and is reasonable. It's based on a fair assessment of the property. The property is assessed and the leasing costs are then applied. As the Member opposite has noted, those who are seniors do get a discount.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Oral questions. Member for Mackenzie Delta.

QUESTION 644-18(2):
RESIDENTIAL MENTAL HEALTH WORKER FOR
TSIIGEHTCHIC

MR. BLAKE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, follow-up to my Member's statement. I have a couple of questions for the Minister of Health and Social Services. I'd like to ask the Minister: what policies are in place to guide health authorities and communities through these kinds of abrupt transitions like moving a resident mental health worker? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Minister of Health and Social Services.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I appreciated the Member's statement today. I thought it was quite good and I think it hit a number of the points. I think one of the key points there is that, ultimately, our staff do have the ability to leave positions as they might to pursue other jobs.

As far as transition, the more time we have the more transition we can provide to ensure that services aren't impacted. The particular case the Member is referring to, I don't have the details so I don't know exactly what happened in the community with respect to that position.

MR. BLAKE: How will the department act to improve regularity and consistency in mental health services provided to our small communities like those in the Mackenzie Delta?

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: I've had an opportunity to travel around the Northwest Territories and meet leaders from across the territories, and when I meet them I do talk to them about how we can work better together to recruit and retain local people in jobs. I'm a big fan of local people for local work.

Having said that, a number of the healthcare professions, we certainly have a challenge finding individuals with the appropriate skills, which means we have to explore things in new creative ways. With respect to providing mental health services, we are working with the community of Deline to develop a pilot where we can train and prepare local people to provide these types of counselling supports for the local people. I apologize. We have been delayed on that project. Deline has been quite busy since they moved forward with their self-government. We are still eager and still trying to find a way to move forward on that. That is the type of thing we think we can do better in communities across the Northwest Territories, to train local people to help with local issues.

MR. BLAKE: The Minister answered a part of my next question, but I will ask it anyway. The department is working on the mental health action plan focused on children and youth. How will the department's planning account for the need for regular and consistent services in our small communities?

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: There is a significant amount of work being done on this, and there is a framework that is being developed that sort of outlines the parameters of what the youth mental health and addictions action plan will look like. I don't want to presuppose the outcomes, but the types of things the Member is talking about are the types of things we are attempting to incorporate within the plan, to bring services close to the people throughout the Northwest Territories and make sure that they have access. I can't say exactly what the model is going to look like at this point because we haven't finalized that work, but as we finish that work, I am prepared to come to committee to have further discussions on exactly these types of issues.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Oral questions. Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

QUESTION 645-18(2):
SOCIAL HOUSING POLICY ADJUSTMENTS

MR. BEAULIEU: Marci, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Minister responsible for the

NWT Housing Corporation if the policy of the Housing Corporation is to house as many people as possible with their social housing inventory? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Minister responsible for Northwest Territories Housing Corporation.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. No, the policy is not to simply house as many people as possible. The reality is that we need to house people adequately and appropriately and consider their safety. I am not going to cram people into buildings without considering all of the safety needs. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. BEAULIEU: What I am asking the Minister is, all things being equal, there is a unit available and it can house the people on the waiting list. Let's say there was an incident where there is one individual who is looking for houses on the list, and then there is a family that is on the list. Let's say a single parent with three kids. If that was the case, is the Housing Corporation's policy to try to take care of the individual that has the larger family?

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: The deciding of the wait list is a little bit more complicated than deciding if you have children or not. There are a lot of factors that go into that, such as what is your current living situation, are you in harm's way at this point. Number of children do count in that, but there are a lot of other factors besides just whether you have children or not.

MR. BEAULIEU: Would the Minister agree that if an individual family was homeless and that the only thing preventing the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation from allocating a unit to that homeless family was a policy that could easily be adjusted, would the Minister adjust that policy?

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: It is well known within the Legislative Assembly that I am in the process of reviewing every single policy and program with the Housing Corporation. There are many that I think inhibit people from obtaining, maintaining, retaining their homes. I will be restructuring all policies with that goal in mind to house people.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Oral questions. Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

MR. BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, if the homeless people are only waiting for a policy adjustment, I would like to ask the Minister: how long will these people remain homeless while the Minister is working on adjusting the policy? Thank you.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is really hard to determine how long

somebody will remain homeless. At the same time, while we are looking at the policy and the program review, we are trying to address homelessness through a variety of ways. We have put money into the Housing First project in Yellowknife. We are building semi-independent rooms within the current shelters. We are building units within the communities. We are working on homelessness at the same time there is the policy review.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Oral questions. Item 8, written questions. Member for Yellowknife Centre.

Written Questions

WRITTEN QUESTION 21-18(2):
COMPLAINTS OF SEXUAL ASSAULT
CLASSIFIED BY RCMP AS UNFOUNDED

MS. GREEN: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Minister of Justice. Last week, the Minister told this House that the RCMP are increasing their training efforts with staff to improve their response to sexual assault complaints. Can the Minister provide more detail on the training offered to the RCMP, including whether the training was provided by in-house instructors, and:

1. Reveal how many police officers have been trained on responses to sexual assault complaints in the last year and how often this training takes place;
2. Provide an overview of the topics covered and guidance given on interviewing victims who say they have been sexually assaulted;
3. Provide analysis of the review of unfounded cases 2010 to 2016 now being undertaken; and
4. Estimate the costs of establishing a sexual assault unit within the RCMP.

Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Written questions. Item 9, returns to written questions. Item 10, replies to Commissioner's opening address. Item 11, petitions. Item 12, reports of standing and special committees. Item 13, reports of committees on the review of bills. Item 14, tabling of documents. Minister responsible for the Public Utilities Board.

Tabling of Documents

TABLED DOCUMENT 301-18(2):
2016 ANNUAL REPORT - PUBLIC UTILITIES
BOARD OF THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

TABLED DOCUMENT 302-18(2):
WORKERS' SAFETY AND COMPENSATION
COMMISSION 2015-2017 STRATEGIC PLAN

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following two documents entitled "2016 Annual Report - Public Utilities Board of the Northwest Territories," as well as "Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission 2015-2017 Strategic Plan." Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Tabling of documents. Item 15, notices of motion. Item 16, notices of motion for first reading of bills. Item 17, motions. Member for Yellowknife Centre.

Motions

MOTION 31-18(2):
EXTENDED ADJOURNMENT OF THE HOUSE TO
FEBRUARY 28, 2017,
CARRIED

MS. GREEN: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. I MOVE, seconded by the honourable Member for Great Slave that, notwithstanding rule 4, when this House adjourns on February 23, 2017, it shall be adjourned until Tuesday, February 28, 2017. Further, that at any time prior to February 28, 2017, if the Speaker is satisfied after consultation with the executive council and Members of the Legislative Assembly that the public interest requires that the House should meet at an earlier time during the adjournment, the Speaker may give notice and thereupon the House shall meet at the time stated in such notice and shall transact its business as it has been duly adjourned until that time. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Motion is on the floor. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. All those in favour. All those opposed.

---Carried

Item 18, first reading of bills. Item 19, second reading of bills. Item 20, consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters: Bill 7, An Act to Amend the Revolving Funds Act; Bill 13, Marriage Act; Committee Report 6-18(2), Report on the Review of Bill 7: An Act to Amend the

Revolving Funds Act; Tabled Document 261-18(2), Northwest Territories Main Estimates 2017-2018.

By the authority given to me as Speaker, by Motion 18-18(2) I hereby authorize the House to sit beyond the daily hour of adjournment to consider the business before the House with Member for Hay River North in the chair.

Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matter

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): I will now call Committee of the Whole to order. What is the wish of committee? Mr. Beaulieu.

MR. BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, committee wishes to consider Tabled Document 261-18(2), Northwest Territories Main Estimates, 2017-2018, with the Departments of Land and Justice. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, committee. We will have a short recess and continue with the document after said recess.

---SHORT RECESS

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): I will call Committee of the Whole back to order. Committee, we have agreed to consider Tabled Document 261-18(2), Main Estimates 2017-2018, beginning with the Department of Lands, which begins on page 285. I will turn to the Minister responsible, Minister Sebert. Do you have any opening comments?

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Yes, I do, thank you, Mr. Chair. I am pleased to present the 2017-2018 Main Estimates for the Department of Lands. Overall, the department's estimates propose a decrease of \$1,962,000 from the 2016-2017 Main Estimates, which is a decrease of 7 per cent. These estimates continue to support the GNWT's objective of ensuring a strong and sustainable future for the government and its programs by managing expenditures due to limited revenue growth.

Consistent with the GNWT's fiscal strategy, the department is managing the growth to its operations expenditures in 2017-18. The main estimates do include \$130,000 for one unmanned aircraft systems coordinator. This investment will help GNWT departments expand their environmental and infrastructure monitoring capabilities at a reduced cost. More accurate and comprehensive information can be used to improve

decision-making and knowledge-sharing. This investment will permit the GNWT to realize its goal to become a leading jurisdiction in Canada in the use of drones.

We are further responding to the government's fiscal pressures and fiscal strategy through reductions to the operating budget totaling \$2,029,000, including the reduction of six positions.

The department's proposed spending in 2017-18 continues to support the priorities of the 18th Legislative Assembly by working cooperatively with other departments to help them fulfill their mandates and coordinating GNWT input and decision-making into our integrated resource management regime.

Specific activities in support of these priorities include land use planning in a collaborative process where strong relationships exist between communities and government. We are engaging the public on planning activities, and we are providing contribution funding to Aboriginal governments to build capacity and prepare for planning activities in their regions.

In collaboration with territorial planning partners, the department has developed regional land use planning guidelines for the GNWT. The GNWT actively participates on the Deh Cho Land Use Planning Committee. We are working collaboratively with the Tlicho Government and other planning partners to develop a terms of reference to move forward with planning for public lands in the Wek'eezhii management area. In areas to the northeast and southeast of Great Slave Lake, we are engaging with other departments and with Aboriginal governments and organizations to understand their interests in planning for these areas and we will be hosting our 3rd Annual Land Use Planning Forum, this March.

The Land Use and Sustainability Framework is the GNWT's vision of a balanced approach to land and resource management across the Northwest Territories. The department is working with other departments to ensure that GNWT decisions support the implementation of this vision.

The department's work on the Recreational Leasing Management Framework is nearing completion, and it will guide the government's approach for the management and administration of recreational leasing opportunities, for which there is a strong and growing demand. The framework reflects Northerners' desire to have diverse opportunities to experience and enjoy northern land and waters. The department is leading the development of a recreation management plan for the Yellowknife periphery area, where there is high demand.

To support the evolution of our legislative and policy framework, a review of the Northwest Territories Lands Act and Commissioner's Land Act is under way to propose technical and administrative amendments. This initiative will require engagement and consultation at different stages in the process and result in a more streamlined and administratively efficient system.

Our inspection, compliance, and enforcement program works to protect human health, property, and the environment by ensuring users of land comply with legislation and the terms of their leases, licenses, and permits. We promote voluntary compliance through education as the most desirable way of upholding land authorizations. We continue to pursue the removal of unauthorized occupants on public land, and a renewed Compliance and Enforcement Policy is under development. We work with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources through the cross-appointment of inspectors and on a coordinated response to spills. We collaborate with ENR and other departments to protect the government from public liabilities through a sound financial security system.

The department is coordinating GNWT input on further regulatory work by Canada affecting lands and resources in the NWT. The department will continue to work with partner departments and resource management boards to deliver outreach and knowledge-sharing events to support public participation in regulatory processes.

This concludes my opening remarks. I look forward to Members' comments and questions. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Do you have witnesses you would like to bring into the Chamber?

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Yes, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you. Sergeant-at-Arms, please escort the witnesses into the Chamber. Minister, would you please introduce your witnesses to committee.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Thank you, Mr. Chair. To my right is Willard Hagen, the deputy minister and, to my left, Brenda Hilderman, director of finance and administration. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Welcome to the witnesses. As always, we will begin with general comments. First, I have Mr. Vanthuyne.

MR. VANTHUYNE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just want to start by recognizing that the Department of Lands is now entering into its fourth year of operation, and my colleagues and I are certainly

appreciative that Lands is obviously a complex department and it has a lot to deal with, especially with the merging of the two systems, the federal and the territorial system, after devolution.

However, we also recognize that, four years in, the department is seemingly having some troubles to try to hit its stride, and so I think that, during the business plan reviews, committee outlined a number of the aspects that they want to see Lands improve and focus on. One of the things is that we recognize land administration is not well understood by many people across the Northwest Territories, so for sure communication is key in that. The unauthorized occupancy is a major issue, as are tenure issues in parts of the Northwest Territories with unsettled land claims. As many of my colleagues have expressed in this House, it is unacceptable for people to find themselves in property tax arrears since devolution, when their homes are on Commissioner's land in areas with unsettled claims. They essentially keep paying for the value of their property many times over, but the land will never be theirs.

Lands has a crucial responsibility, of course, in managing active industrial sites, waste sites, and other areas that are entering the remediation phase. It is a focus we have got to keep on. Lands also has an important supporting role in the implementation of the agricultural strategy and as residents try to identify and secure lands for agricultural use in the areas with surrounding communities; this will be an important aspect in food security and reducing the cost of living going forward.

The committee has identified public communication, as I mentioned earlier, as an area for development within the department, especially as it relates to recreational leasing. I am pleased, however, to see that the Department of Lands, their commitment in working with MACA to help residents understand land tenure issues and get answers to their questions. So for sure my colleagues and I look forward to seeing that initiative roll out.

As it relates to matters that the Regular Members have presented to the Minister and the department with regard to the budget directly, we find ourselves in opposition to the increases of the lease revenue that is being proposed in the budget. There has been a request to implement a more phased-in approach to this aspect. We would still like the department to consider that.

There are proposed reductions to positions within the budget, of course, that we are opposed to. I will not go into the details of those positions specifically. I will let Members speak to them as we move through the budget. Those are my general comments for now, Mr. Chair. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Vanthuyne. Mr. Thompson.

MR. THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I would like to thank my colleague from Yellowknife North for opening up with his comments and addressing some of the stuff there. For me, I am not going to talk about the increases because I think my colleague talked about it well and addressed our concerns. For me, my two concerns besides the increases of land; one is the elimination of the Finance and Administration Clerk position. I have seen this department take the senior lands position, and they move it to Yellowknife and do some training, but what seems to be forgotten is that this is a front-level entry position that is well suited for our community, but that position is very heavily relied on in the department.

It helped allow the other staff to do their jobs and focus on their jobs, and this position has been able to provide good support, and unfortunately we are not giving due justice here, which is very sad because we see these entry-level positions being cut, which is having a huge impact in the community and the region as well. If we have to rely on the people in the offices to continue to take up this position's slack, then we are not going to be able to get them out doing the work in the field. I have to give credit to the department. This team and my riding is very well suited. They work well together, the unit, including right from the administration to the superintendent. They work as a team, and I have to give credit to them. They work well. Unfortunately, this government and this department is taking one of the cogs out of the wheel, and if you continue to do that we are going to see this new Lands department fall apart at some point in time. So that saddens me.

My other concern is I am still looking for information on the exemptions like Cassidy Point. How many other ones are out there? I continue to hear this from my community, from the people in my riding, and I was respectful, I was waiting for today, and I hope when we can get some further information that was promised in committee that will show us that there are these exemptions out there so people can understand what is going on. It saddens me that we still have not got it, and if we continue we will have to ask more questions on the floor to get justice for the people, the residents of the Northwest Territories, so they can actually live in their homes on the land that they have utilized. So at this point in time I would thank the Chair for allowing me to open comments and I will finish there. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Thompson. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. I will start with some general remarks, if I can, following on my colleague from Yellowknife North. This department actually is going to take some of the biggest cuts in this budget of any of the government agencies, over \$2 million out of its operating budget; six positions are going to be lost; the operating budget is going to be cut by 7.4 per cent.

There are a number of issues with some of these cuts, as well, but we still do not have a plan and a schedule to bring together the lands that are administered by this department under the Commissioner's Lands Act and the Northwest Territories Lands Act, and that is something that committee has asked for and we have not seen a plan yet.

One of the things that I have continually raised in this House is the issue of making sure that, as a new landowner manager, we have to get our financial securities and liabilities legislation up to speed to make sure that we do not inherit any further liabilities which are going to cost the taxpayers money. We have had people working on this issue now for at least three years, but there has not been one piece of policy, not one legislative change that has come out of this department to make sure that we protect our taxpayers and the environment from assuming new liabilities.

Just to go into a little bit more detail about this, and I am going to raise some of this as we go through as well, but we acquired the Mactung deposit through creditor protection, proceeding where we did not actually have financial security for the surface lease at Cantung, but in acquiring the new property we do not know what kind of liabilities we have taken on. I have asked the Minister this, and I will pursue it again, and how that information is going to be disclosed to potential buyers. Lots of questions there.

I know that Cantung has generally been taken over by the federal government after it went into receivership, but we still have a surface lease there, and I want to know the status of that surface lease and whether we have given that back to the federal government to reduce any exposure that we have.

Another property, Prairie Creek, we do not have full financial security for the assets and the buildings and so on that are at the site. We are exposed and we have not done anything to change that. In fact, the company is now in an over-hold tenancy position, so we have the ability to change that surface lease and correct that problem now. Do not wait for the property to go into production. Do it now.

There are some things in the budget for this department, the Northern Canadian Centre of

Excellence for Remote Sensing. I am not quite sure exactly what that is and how it ties into the Mackenzie Valley fibre link optic cable and completion of that. There was a Northwest Territories Centre for Geomatics. That seems to have been put on the back burner because of the fiscal strategy of this government. So I am not sure how well that is going to come together, and I will have some questions around that.

I will also have some questions around land use planning. I understand that there is some work that is being done to look at Crown lands within the Wekweeti Management Area, some kind of terms of reference are being worked on.

I want to know what the legislative basis is going to be for creating land use plans for those Crown lands. Just having it done by some sort of an agreement, even if it is the Tlicho Agreement, there needs to be a legally binding land use plan, and it needs to be established in legislation.

One of the cuts, though, that has not been discussed so far is the reduction in travel for our inspectors. There is going to be a 33 per cent cut in the travel budget for our inspectors. We promised to do better than the federal government, and we are not going to live up to that promise if you go ahead with these cuts. We already have the funding through devolution. It was part of the A-Base funding to carry out our management responsibilities. We already have that money, so I don't know why we are cutting money out of inspections to fund the fiscal strategy and fund infrastructure projects. That is just wrong, so I will have lots of questions around that.

The last thing I guess I would like to raise in my opening comments is the increase in lease fees. These are long overdue. Some of those fees have not been touched in decades. I am in favour of increasing the fees, but it needs to be done in a graduated way to avoid sticker shock, and that is not what is being proposed in the departmental budget. You have a recommendation from us as Regular MLAs to phase that in, and that is something I think the department should look at more seriously. I think that is all I have, Mr. Chair, as my opening comments, but you can see I am going to be pursuing a number of these matters as we go through the departmental budget. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Mr. McNeely.

MR. MCNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Like the other colleagues have said, this is a relatively new department, and we have negotiated terms of an agreement from the previous Assembly to this one and many outstanding concerns addressed on post-devolution issues. I look forward to going

through this department and also knowing a little bit about the upcoming year's budget and action plans for reviews of mirrored legislation.

I also look forward to working through this review with the new deputy minister and, knowing the experience he brings to this new department, I have faith in his abilities, knowing that he also just started with the department last year. Given that, I look forward to going through this budget and some of the concerns we have for the upcoming 12 months. Later, I will have questions on some of the activities. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. McNeely. I will give the Minister 10 minutes to respond, keeping in mind that many of the specifics in the general comments will be addressed as we move through these activities. Minister Sebert.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The department did carefully examine all of the areas of our mandate. We were, of course, directed by the Cabinet to look for places where we could make sensible and sustainable reductions.

This department has actually only been in existence less than three years in total. We thought that perhaps, as the former federal area of jurisdiction and our area of jurisdiction came together, there might be areas where we could rationalize our operations, so that is how the whole of our budget was looked at.

There have been concerns raised, and I have heard them before, about reducing the travel for inspectors. That specifically was done as there simply, because of the slowdown in the economy, was not enough work out there. The number of inspectors has not been reduced, and, certainly, if there was to be a great increase in the amount of work, we could increase the number of inspections that we would need to do. In fact, that would probably be good because that would be an indication of an improving economy.

With those words, we do look forward to entertaining your questions. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister Sebert. The Department of Lands begins, in the main estimates, on page 285. As always, we will defer consideration of the departmental total until we go through the activities. The first activity is corporate management. It begins on page 292, continuing to page 294. Does committee have comments or questions on the activity, corporate management? I will give committee a moment. Mr. Vanthuyne.

MR. VANTHUYNE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I wonder if this is an ideal question for this area. I have wondered: why is Water and Lands really not

together? You know, you would think, as it relates to economies of scale, efficiency, and for inspection purposes that we could find a way to streamline this if we had Water and Lands together. Since we have had devolution, I have found it odd that we have a Department of Lands and then Water is off in another department in a division of its own. I wonder if we could get some thoughts from the department or the Minister on that? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Vanthuyne. Minister.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Thank you. I think we have wondered that ourselves at times. Of course, as has been mentioned, this is a new department. The government generally is rationalizing some of its other departments, and perhaps in the future it could be looked at because that certainly is a logical combination. I don't know if my deputy minister would like to add anything.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister Sebert. Mr. Hagen.

MR. HAGEN: Yes, that is a good question, Mr. Chair. Before devolution, of course, INAC was in control, and they did have lands and water inspectors cross-appointed and in one department. Of course, the regulatory boards are land and water boards. They handle land and waters for their permits and water licences, so, going forward, I think that would be obvious. As long as Lands gets inspectors, I think it is a very good idea. That would make a lot of sense.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Hagen. I will also remind all the witnesses and all the Members to just finish off a statement with "thank you" or something to let the tech team know to change the microphones. Mr. Vanthuyne.

MR. VANTHUYNE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Well, this is good to hear, that there is maybe some possible future consideration to bringing those two in line. I wonder: are there any challenges right now with the Department of Lands trying to achieve some of its work, especially as it relates to inspections, with water and Lands being separate? Are there any current challenges that the department is hindered by in that regard? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Vanthuyne. Minister.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Yes, Mr. Chair. Perhaps I could have Mr. Hagen answer that operational question. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Mr. Hagen.

MR. HAGEN: Yes, thank you, Mr. Chair. Lands and ENR work very well together, so, as a result of that, we really don't come across any problems with how we do inspections. If you are looking at being cost-effective, there is probably a better way of doing it for budgeting purposes, but we do not encounter any problems working with ENR in Lands. We collaborate well. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Hagen. Mr. Vanthuyne.

MR. VANTHUYNE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Can the department describe, then, some of the challenges that those outside government might be having with regard to those two being separated?

When it comes to permitting or, again, inspections, is this creating some degree of redundancy and double effort and potentially even double expense for those who are applying for land use permits and those who are applying for access to water? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Vanthuyne. Minister.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I can't really speak to that, because I haven't heard that concern from private industry to this point. Perhaps Mr. Hagen might have something to add to that, but I've not heard any submissions on that specific item. I mean, there are always concerns by those in the corporate or industrial world about the complexity of oversight and the regulatory system in the Northwest Territories, but I haven't heard that specific concern. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Mr. Hagen.

MR. HAGEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Like I stated before, operationally the two departments work well together. It doesn't create a conflict or an overkill on inspections. You referred to land use permits or water licence. Of course, we don't issue those; those are issued, I'm sure you know, through the Mackenzie Valley Land and Water Board or the Tlicho Land and Water Board or the Wek'eezhii Land and Water Board. Sorry, the Sahtu and the Gwich'in. So we don't handle the ISR in the regulatory boards, but our inspectors do not complicate them applying for a permit or a water licence. When they get one, they have terms and conditions that are put into the land use permit, for example, and our inspectors then go out and inspect the terms and conditions laid out by the land and water boards. We do the lands part. The ENR water inspectors do the water part of that permit.

I mean, perhaps it could cause confusion by a proponent thinking why it's Lands and Department

of ENR, you know, both coming in on one permit; they may question that, but they don't lose anything by having two departments coming in. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you. Mr. Vanthuyne.

MR. VANTHUYNE: Thank you, Mr. Chair, nothing further. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Vanthuyne. Mr. McNeely.

MR. MCNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Like my colleague had mentioned on why there's not a proposition in place here to hold lands and waters underneath the same department here, as the Minister's statement mentioned earlier on cross-appointment of inspectors between Lands and ENR. So picking that up here, I'm just wondering about the word "efficiencies" and less confusion to developers: are there any intentions for this fiscal year to see a transfer of the water inspector to the Lands department? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. McNeely. Minister.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Perhaps Mr. Hagen could answer that question. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Mr. Hagen.

MR. HAGEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you, Mr. McNeely, for suggesting if it happens it comes to Lands; I appreciate that.

There is no confusion in the way it's structured today. Whether they should be transferred to Lands or to ENR, of course, it's the Cabinet's decision and not ours. I have views on it operationally, but it works the way it is so there's nothing to say that it can't go forward the same way it is. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Hagen, Minister. Mr. McNeely.

MR. MCNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes, the word I used in my previous comment as well is "efficiencies," and I guess this is what we're trying to do is utilize efficiencies and apply them where it's applicable for a more streamlined administration system.

So I look forward to any further discussions on our recommendations, if there is willingness. Sure it might be working but can it work better I guess is my personal statement, but if there is, with the powers that be, to entertain the idea of transferring the water inspectors to the Lands, okay, we'll leave it at that as a suggestion.

My next question on the Lands Act -- no, I'll leave that for later, Mr. Chair. I'll go to the operational budget as set out in 293. I noticed 2015-16 versus 2017-18; 2015-16 we see a transfer of devolution authorities and related transfer budget allowances there from the agreement that was negotiated, and it has dropped ever since. My understanding is that devolution has seen some transitional funding that was supposed to come within the next three years or the next five years of operations. Why has the head office administration funding budget been on a slide or decreasing since takeover of devolution? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. McNeely. Minister.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Perhaps Mr. Hagen might respond.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Mr. Hagen.

MR. HAGEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I suppose the short answer to why the decreases is that when Lands came into being a little over two and a half years ago it was a brand new department. They didn't exactly know how it was going to function, never having a Lands department before. I can give you an example of the administrative people who Mr. Thompson was talking about, that some of them have been let go is that before devolution INAC had four administrative people in the field, including the finance people. When Lands came into being, they put 10 in the same regions, 10 altogether,

So as the operation goes along you realize that there have been some good decisions and there have also been some decisions that had to be revisited, and that reduction in the budget is the sign of the revisiting them and realizing that it was overkill in a lot of the areas.

I think you mentioned the head office; the decrease to the head office was, again, operational; it wasn't required. Lands is a small department; there's a budget of \$26 million and 148 people compared to other operations. So now, like it was mentioned by a Member there that we're not four years into it, we're almost three years, yes, we're coming out to a spot where Lands is functioning and it's running very efficiently and cost effective. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Hagen. Minister, you'd like to add something?

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Yes, Mr. Chair, I would like to add something. I think that when we see amalgamations, whether they're governmental or corporate, there is almost always a rationalization of positions. Hopefully, this is not on a fact-based

basis and we believe that to have been the case here. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Mr. McNeely.

MR. MCNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I have nothing further on this chapter. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. McNeely. Seeing nothing further I will call the department. Mr. Thompson.

MR. THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would like to come back to efficiencies and working with it. Now, I am not totally familiar with this world, so bear with me. My understanding is that the water and land boards are together and so they deal with lands and they deal with water together, so why is this government having Lands over here and water in ENR? Why is it separated? We don't have the efficiency. The boards seem to be efficient, and we, as government, seem to be less efficient, so can the Minister explain that, the rationale for this? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Thompson. Minister.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am not certain of all of the consideration that went into the manner in which the two functions were divided, but I am very pleased to hear that Members are interested in us having the department act more efficiently. As I say, it certainly could be a matter for consideration in the future, that these two functions be combined. Further to that, I have really nothing to add except, as I say, I am very glad to see the Members are interested in efficiencies. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Mr. Thompson.

MR. THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I thank the Minister for his answer. Yes, I really support efficiencies. However, I am sitting here looking at Lands and Water, which are two separate things. It is great that we are looking at the future. Will the Minister make a commitment to work with the Minister of ENR and the Premier to actually make this more efficient within this fiscal year, the year that we are looking at, 2017-18, so that, when we come to the 2018-19 budget, we will actually see more efficiencies in making it work better? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Thompson. Minister.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Mr. Chair, I think I can speak for this government in saying that we are always attempting to make our operations more

efficient. As everyone is well aware, we are combining other departments to make them more efficient. That, in itself, is a large change in the manner in which we do business. I don't know whether we could consider within the next year whether we should combine these functions of water and lands, but, certainly, it probably should be considered in the future. I think, frankly, for this year, as far as amalgamating departments, we already have enough on our plate. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Mr. Thompson.

MR. THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I thank the Minister for his answer. You, the government, have come to us with amalgamations. You guys are the ones who put this stuff on the plate, and you are talking about efficiencies. What I am saying is I am not asking you to do it this fiscal year because you've already got the amalgamations going, but I am talking about next fiscal year. That gives you a year to work on this. Will you work with the Minister of ENR, the Premier, and the Finance Minister to look at this and come back to committee to make a decision? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Thompson. Minister.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Mr. Chair, I think all of us realize the potential wisdom of making the government, our department, more efficient, and I think that I am prepared to discuss this matter with other Ministers, what has been suggested today and does seem to be make sense. As I say, we are always interested in making the government more efficient. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Would the Minister of ENR like to comment?

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Well, the light is on. I may as well. I get five minutes. I think the Minister of Lands pointed out before, we will have the discussion. We have heard the Member's concern, and we will have that discussion amongst our Cabinet colleagues to see if there is merit in that, first of all, if it will streamline things and make it more efficient. I mean, we will have to have that discussion, but we take the Member's point.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister McLeod. Mr. Thompson.

MR. THOMPSON: Thank you. I thank both Ministers. I appreciate that answer. I guess my next thing is: when you talk about it, can it be evidence-based? It has to be zero-based budgeting and evidence-based. Just don't throw things together, but do it as evidence-based. I would hope

that the departments would look at that as evidence-based and bring forward a good solution. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Thompson. Would the Minister like to comment?

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would like to think that all of our decisions are evidence-based. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Anything further? Mr. Thompson.

MR. THOMPSON: No, I am good. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. I guess I will wade into this. Be careful what you ask for because we saw with some of the other departmental amalgamations that have been put forward that, in my humble opinion, they were not evidence-based and they are not zero-based budgeting. In any event, I think we have to be very careful.

You have separate pieces of legislation that deal with land and water, and I think that that is just a historical artifact of the last manager, which was the federal government, so you have to be very careful thinking about how you are going to merge those two responsibilities. Not to say that it can't be coordinated better, and I think we have already got some examples in terms of the cross-appointment of inspectors, and those guys work very hard at their job. We want to make sure that they are properly supported.

I do want to talk just briefly about what my colleague, the MLA for Sahtu, touched on, the declining corporate management dollars in the budget for Lands. We got \$26 million up front to look at transition costs of us taking over these responsibilities. That is almost the entire annual budget of the Department of Lands. Then we got another \$65 million a year to administer land and waters. Look, there are lots of start-up costs. We are learning and trying to feel our way. That is great.

Has the Minister or his department or our government ever looked at the money that we got from devolution and whether we are actually using and spending it all on resource management? Or are we diverting it for other purposes? Is that what we are starting to see happen here now? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Minister.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'd like to think that the government has been a good steward of the monies we have received. As I mentioned at the outset and has been repeated several times, this is a very new department and, as we move forward, inevitably there were costs in combining two corporate cultures that existed previously. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. Yes, I sort of expected to hear that. I guess, even before I became an MLA, this was a concern that I raised with devolution, that there needed to be a time, you know, maybe after five years or even three years or something, to start to look at the implementation of devolution and how it has actually worked out.

This Department of Lands is a creature of devolution, quite frankly. A piece was taken from MACA and a few other little bits thrown together, but I think we need to start to think about evaluating how devolution has actually gone. Certainly, it was a concern that I raised even before I was an MLA, about making sure that the money that we actually got under devolution was actually spent on resource management and not diverted for other purposes.

I have even suggested to the Auditor General's staff that this is something that they should consider looking at, that these are new responsibilities we have inherited; are we doing the best that we possibly can? I am going to leave it at that, though, for now, Mr. Chair, because I will have some other questions when we get into some other parts of the budget. I am not convinced that we are doing as well as we could or should and as our residents deserve. Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Minister.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: I don't think, Mr. Chair, I really have anything to add. I think we are making efficient use of the resources we did receive, but we are several years in. I know in other portions of devolution and things will be looked at after five years. It may be wise to see if we have properly transitioned from what we had before to what we have now. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Nothing further. I will call this activity on page 293. Lands, corporate management, operations expenditure summary, total activity, \$2,908,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, committee. We will move on to informatics shared service centre; it includes the activity description on page 295 and information item on page 297. The expenditure summary is on page 296. Do we have comments or questions? Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. I guess I would like to ask for a plain-language answer as to what is happening with the NWT Centre for Geomatics, how that relates to the Mackenzie Valley Fibre Optic Project and then this Northern Canadian Centre of Excellence for Remote Sensing. What is the relationship between these three initiatives, and are we making wise investments with the money that is in the Lands budget for any of this work? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Minister.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: That is a multipronged question that has been asked, Mr. Chair. I am going to ask Mr. Hagen to attempt to respond.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Mr. Hagen.

MR. HAGEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The Western Arctic Centre for Geomatics was put into the budget. During a time of reductions, it was felt that we shouldn't be starting a new initiative. It didn't go ahead. We have one employee in Inuvik that is there until the end of March and the money will be let go in next year's budget. We intend to make a submission in 2021 to bring back the Western Arctic Centre for Geomatics. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Hagen. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. I appreciate and thank the deputy minister for his response. I didn't really hear what the relationship is between the Centre for Geomatics, the Mackenzie Valley Fibre Link, and then this Northern Canadian Centre for Excellence for Remote Sensing.

I recall seeing the business case for the NWT Centre for Geomatics. It looked very compelling. I thought it was a good business case where we could start to generate some revenues as well and sell some technology and so on. If we have the Mackenzie Valley Fibre Link being finished this year, hopefully, and offering high speed access to the Mackenzie Delta and data highway and all those sorts of if things, why are we not going ahead with this Centre for Geomatics at the same time? What is this Northern Canadian Centre for Excellence for Remote Sensing? What is the relationship between all these initiatives? Thanks, Mr. Chair. Sorry. If they don't have the answer now, I am happy to get it in writing within a reasonable

period of time, but this is all rather murky, and I am trying to understand this. Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Minister.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Mr. Speaker, this hydra-like question has many heads and I am going to ask the deputy minister to attempt to respond. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Mr. Hagen.

MR. HAGEN: The establishment of the WACG in Inuvik, it was suspended as a start-off, to start at the beginning of your request, as a result of departmental phase 2 reduction of proposals. However, the Northwest Territories Centre for Geomatics and Aurora Research Institute are still committed to strengthening the investment in the Inuvik satellite facility and the Mackenzie Valley Fibre Link to enhance geomatics and remote sensing services to support strategic planning and decision making. There is still a link like he mentioned to the WACG; there is still that link in the other Centre for Geomatics and Aurora Research Institute. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Hagen. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. I think I am getting a little bit more information. We will spend \$85 million on this fibre link and it is going to end in Inuvik and that is it? We are not going to take advantage of having the fibre link? We are not going to have this NWT Centre for Geomatics? We have one guy now who is going to fly a drone around, that is great, but I just don't sense there is any urgency. I think we are going to miss an opportunity if we have to wait until 2021 for an investment to pull together these initiatives. Can't we do this any quicker or sooner? This is clearly an area that we should be investing in to help diversify our economy. Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Minister.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Of course, Mr. Chair. I am sorry. This is an important area. I take that comment of Mr. O'Reilly under consideration. I don't think we are missing the boat on this yet. Financial restraint, perhaps, has caused us to not move ahead as fast on certain projects as we would have wished, but that is where we are. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. I think I almost heard a commitment from the Minister that he is going to get back and provide something in writing to help clear up this murky water between the NWT Centre for Geomatics, Mackenzie Valley Fibre Link, and the Northern Canadian Centre for Excellence for Remote Sensing. Am I correct that he is going to get back to me in writing within a reasonable period of time? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Minister.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Yes, I think we could do that. I am wondering if Mr. O'Reilly might be able to put the question in writing. It might make it easier to respond to it, to make sure that we properly and fully answer the question because it somewhat complex. I am simply asking that he put it in writing to us. That being done, I think we could undertake to respond in writing. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, minister. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. I can do that, but I don't think it is going to be any more complicated than something like, "Please explain what the relationship is between the Northwest Territories Centre for Geomatics, the Mackenzie Valley Fibre Optic Link, and the Northern Canadian Centre of Excellence for Remote Sensing and the timing of those initiatives." Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Mr. O'Reilly said he would put that in writing for the Minister, or you could check Hansard tomorrow. Does that suffice, Minister?

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: I am sorry. Could you repeat that, Mr. Chair, so that I am certain what undertaking I might be making?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Will you provide an answer in writing to Mr. O'Reilly's question, Minister?

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Yes. I only ask that he put his question in writing to us so that we could fully respond. I want to make sure that we do make a response to him that answers fully his question. We have heard his oral question. We will attempt to make a response. However, it might be in all of our best interest to have him write to us a detailed question. That is my simple submission on this, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you. Mr. O'Reilly, will you put the question in writing for the Minister?

MR. O'REILLY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes. I will do a cut and paste from Hansard.

---Laughter

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. We have gotten to the bottom of that. Anything further with your last minute 20? Nothing further from Mr. O'Reilly. I see no further comments or questions. I will call this section on page 296, Lands, Informatics Shared Service Centre, operations expenditure summary, \$7,076,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, committee. We will now move on to the activity operations on page 299. Activity description on page 298 with accompanying information item on page 300. Comments or questions about Lands operations, pages 298 to 300? I'll give committee a moment. Mr. Testart.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I notice that this section of the department covers inspections. Actually, I'll just get the Minister to confirm if this includes the inspections? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Testart. Minister.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes, this is the section that deals with inspections. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Mr. Testart.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just want to make sure we're all on the same page. So the amount of total funding for inspections has been decreased in this budget. I'm wondering if the Minister can explain the rationale clearly so we can understand why an important function like ensuring that our liabilities are intact and well understood are being cut? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Testart. Minister.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Mr. Chair, as I mentioned at the outset, the number of inspectors is not being cut; the money allocated for travel for inspections is being reduced. It's simply a function of the fact that there is less activity out on the land. Certainly, if that changed radically we would have to look at an increase, but we're not anticipating any drastic increase in this upcoming year, therefore we've made this projection that the money we set aside for inspections is sufficient. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Mr. Testart.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I think perhaps that speaks to the state of our economy

right now, which is regrettable, but I think we need to ensure we have robust inspections even at a time of economic decline so we can maintain a high level of public certainty that we are ensuring our environment is protected and the people who use that environment are equally protected.

Snap Lake went to care and maintenance before this cut, so is that part of the reason the budget has been decreased, because one of our diamond mines has ceased full operations? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Testart. Minister.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Inform Members that inspectors use a risk management program to determine the frequency of inspections required each year on projects, so it's not as though this reduction was arrived at willy-nilly. As always, it was evidence-based. Perhaps Mr. Hagen would like to add something to that answer. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Mr. Hagen.

MR. HAGEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Our inspection targets have been met each year since devolution. Based on the planned inspections for the remainder of this fiscal year, it's anticipated that we will also meet the target this year. We carried out 791 inspections in 2015-16; 678 inspections out of a target of 766 this fiscal year. So it went over the target. We have a very busy winter inspection ahead of us yet, and so we have absolutely no reason not to believe we wouldn't make our target for this year also.

The funding that we have with the reduction, we had one position that hadn't been filled for two years, which was a diamond inspector. One of the reasons it wasn't filled before Snap Lake went into care and maintenance was it was not required. It was a position that was never filled and when Snap Lake did go into care and maintenance; we gave up that position that was never filled as a reduction.

We looked hard at the operations over the past two years, plus years of operating history, and we made careful choices about where reductions could be reasonably made without impacting services of the inspections program and we feel -- I feel also -- strongly that the funding that we have in place is adequate to carry out any and all inspections. For example, we didn't budget for Enbridge shutting their pipeline down and having the problems, but yet we had enough resources to cover that incident that was a surprise to everybody. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. Hagen. Mr. Testart.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. So just to be clear, I appreciate the information. I do wonder if we still need to maintain a high level of awareness of what's happening at Snap Lake. Even though it's not in full operation, it still has a significant impact on our environment and represents a significant liability in ensuring that the company is maintaining its obligations throughout the care and maintenance period. Hopefully, we can get it back online but at this point I would hope that our current budget can accommodate that. I think I heard that from the deputy minister.

I want clarity on this. The Minister is telling us that this is an evidence-based decision to reduce this and that inspectors have a risk matrix and they've determined that there will be few requirements so this is a natural kind of progression. The deputy minister is saying they were asked to make cuts; they looked at their available programs, found the ones that would be least impacted where they could make those cuts. So which is it? Was this program cut -- was this funding cut because it will not impact services but they needed to make the cut anyway or was it cut because it would have been cut anyway due to the risk matrix. Is it evidence-based or is it reduction driven? Still unclear on that. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Testart. Minister.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: The decision to make this reduction was, of course, evidence-based, as are all our decisions. Again, we look at the matrix to ensure that we will give the coverage that residents of the Northwest Territories expect and we simply felt that this was an area that could be reduced still meeting all of our obligations. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Minister Sebert. Mr. Testart.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So I'll just put it a bit more plainly. If there was no reduction exercise asked of the department, would this funding have been cut? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. Testart. Minister Sebert.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Mr. Chair, some of this funding might have been lapsed had there been no reduction exercise, but again, the amount of money allocated for this very important function was based on a risk matrix and not based on concerns about the overall budget. So it's not as though we're not living up to the expectations of the people of the Northwest Territories; again, this is based on a risk matrix. There's less activity out there; therefore, less money was required for travel.

MR. HAGEN: Could I add to that?

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: I wonder if Mr. Hagen could be allowed to expand on that. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Minister Sebert. Deputy Minister Hagen.

MR. HAGEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just want to clarify. In my remarks, I never suggested that we were told to make any cuts. I said that we looked at our operations over the past two years, operating history, and we made careful choices where reductions could be reasonably made.

For your question on Snap Lake, before the mine was flooded there was more activity because there was more work for them to do to keep the water levels up to where they should be, and so we had inspections every two weeks. Once the mine was flooded, we reduced the inspections to once a month because of the slowdown in activity. So, as we speak right now, we're going into the mine once a month. If there are any problems that the inspector might see in his monthly visit, we would probably go in again back to every two weeks. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Deputy Minister Hagen. Mr. Testart.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Chair. If increased activity requires a greater inspection budget, how will the department meet that demand in the wake of this cut if it goes forward? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. Testart. Minister Sebert.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I believe we would have sufficient funds within. I suppose, if there was a very, very drastic increase of activity, we would have to seek supplementary funds. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Minister Sebert. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So, I just want to get this straight. We had the Minister first say that these cuts were being made because there was reduced activity. Then it transitions now into explanation that they re-jigged the risk matrix so that there is less work to do and that is why the cuts are being made. That does not really quite flow the way I had expected an evidence-based decision to come out of that.

Let's start with facts here. First, when we got devolution, we promised that we were going to do better than the federal government, and that is promise that was made to our residents. Now, the Minister says, at least initially, that part of the reason for doing this a reduced level of activity out there. I don't see any evidence of that. Where is the

evidence that there is a reduced level of activity out there?

If you look at the business plan for the department, and the deputy minister talked a little bit about this, in 2014-15, 669 inspections were carried out; in 2015-16, 791 inspections were carried out. That is on leases, water licences, reservations' land use permits. This year their target is 768. That is a little bit of a dip. That is not a lot. Commissioner's land assessment activities, these are, looking at Commissioner's lands, usually close to built-up communities. In 2014-15, there were 1,650 inspections; 2015-16, 2,818.

So, really, where is the evidence that there is a reduced level of activity out there? Does the Minister actually have statistics on the number of active land use permits, active water licences, active leases that we are required to monitor and carry out inspections on that he can point to about a reduced level of activity? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Minister Sebert.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Well, Mr. Chair, we have not adjusted the risk framework to meet the reduction. The risk matrix still remains the same, so we based our decisions on that as to the number of inspections required. I don't have all of the numbers requested. I can look into that and get back to the Member, should he wish. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Minister Sebert. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. Sure, if the Minister wants to supply that information to support what he said earlier about less activity out there, great. Otherwise, I have a little bit of difficulty. There is no evidence of that, what the Minister has presented.

In any event, let's move on. Let's talk a little bit about Snap Lake and diamond mines. I have been to Snap Lake once. This is a property that is quite high-risk from an environmental perspective and did exceed water licence limits in terms of its discharge into Snap Lake. They had to apply for a water licence amendment, I think maybe once, maybe twice. This is an operation that had promised to do packed backfill of its tailings. Those tailings never were put underground. They are sitting on the surface in a huge pile now, right next to a big lake.

This is a high-risk environmental site out there that, even if it is not operating as a mine, requires us to watch it very carefully. I am glad to hear that we had inspectors out there doing the work. So, we have got a high-risk property, in my opinion, Snap Lake, plus we have actually got another diamond mine that is up and going now, Gahcho Kue, plus

Diavik, plus Ekati. So, even if Snap Lake is in closure, it is still high-risk and requires inspection, so we have got four diamond mines that we are actually watching now.

So I have not really heard any evidence of reduced level of activity, even in the diamond mining sector. In fact, we know that there is going to be an expansion to the Ekati project with Jay going ahead. The company said they were going to go ahead. It is been through an environmental assessment. They are going to get a water licence. So does the Minister actually have any evidence that there is reduced activity in the diamond mining sector that would require us to use less money for travel for inspectors? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Minister Sebert.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Mr. Chair, I do believe there is evidence that growth in the resource economy has slowed. I hope that is just not anecdotal evidence that I have heard. I do believe that there has been far less in the oil and gas industry, down the valley. As to the diamond industry referenced by the Member, there has been continuing robust, some robust activity in that. One mine has closed down, and another one has opened. With respect to Snap Lake specifically, I understand that inspections to this point have raised no concerns. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Minister Sebert. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So, I don't believe the Minister has been able to present any hard evidence, facts, figures to support the earlier statement around reduced level of activity. He is got anecdotal information about perhaps there is less spending on mineral exploration, but the facts are there are still lots of water licences, land use permits, leases out there that do require inspections. There is no evidence that that activity has diminished in any way.

Let's go on a little bit further now into this risk matrix that the Minister has spoken about. Can he just provide a little bit more detail about how that risk matrix was tweaked so that now we don't have to do as many inspections and will therefore spend less money? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Minister Sebert.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am going to ask Mr. Hagen to respond to that. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Minister Sebert. Deputy Minister Hagen.

MR. HAGEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. To go back to a question just before that, Mr. O'Reilly, when you mentioned devolution, the promise that we would be better at inspections than INAC, I was in the Land and Water Board system as chair for 15 years, and we worked with INAC all that time. Their inspections were quite adequate, so I don't know how much we would have to improve on them, although we have probably more frequency of inspections, even today.

The matrix has never been tweaked. It is the matrix that is used throughout Canada, basically the same system of risk management that you used and you based it on the operation, whether the history of the operator and whether they are more risk-prone than, say, a diamond mine. Then you determine your frequency of visits, inspections, based on how their operation is going and also based on an inspection itself. If the inspection turns out that there are no deficiencies, then you may not go in there every two weeks. It is not necessary. You go in there monthly.

So, it is not tweaked to make reductions. We would have lapsed dollars if we had not done a reduction in travel because our budget is adequate for the time being. I mean, if you want examples, I can give them to you in writing, but all you have to do if you want to see a reduced economy is go into the Sahtu, go into the Beaufort Delta.

In the Sahtu, there is no Husky Oil, there is no ConocoPhillips, who were in that fracking dilemma that they had, and Imperial Oil is handled by the federal government, by INAC. The proven field, that is all federal field. In the Beaufort Delta, all we have there is the Inuvik to Tuktoyaktuk Highway where we are doing inspections. So there is a huge reduction in activity, but, you are right, there are water licences and permits out there, but a lot of them are not active. They are reporting, you know, on it but they are not active. So we are looking to target this year 766 inspections, and that is not all on operating facilities. Some of them are like highways; the ice road, for example. So there are a lot of other inspections that we do that are not related to an activity. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Deputy Minister Hagen. In the view of time, we will move on. Mr. Beaulieu.

MR. BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My first question, Mr. Chairman, is for the environmental cleanups that are occurring in and around the area here, the mines, I think one is called Bullmoose, the former mines. There might be seven of them. Is this the responsibility of this department? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. Minister Sebert.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: I understand this is the responsibility of ENR. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Minister Sebert. Mr. Beaulieu.

MR. BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I am going to speak about the lease costs here. Lease cost to the people in the communities. Currently the lease costs are very high. I indicated that in my questions to the Minister earlier about the cost of the lease being two to four months' salary for individuals and that. Of course as a committee, we are opposing the quick implementation of the increases to the land leases, land rent, land taxes, whatever, and what we are proposing is phased-in increases. I am totally against increases because they are too high as it is. I mean some are not that high and the Minister talked a little about the difference between, I think, Crown and Commissioner's land, or whatever status the land has, but one status for sure is 10 per cent of the value.

So I equated that to saying it is kind of like a 10 per cent mill rate. So I would like to ask the Minister if this department could look to re-examine their decision to increase the rates of leases, which is already reasonably high, in my opinion. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. Minister Sebert.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Thank you, Mr. Chair. In examining this issue, we attempted to rationalize the two systems of Commissioner's land and territorial land and they both had different current minimums, and our proposed minimums, as is known, is \$840. Now, my understanding is that these rates had not been changed or altered in any way for 20 or 30 years perhaps, so to some degree we are just catching up with inflation and we feel that this was a rational compromise in many ways because, if you looked at it even from the point of view of inflation, the increase probably would have even been more.

There were some initial discussions that perhaps a larger amount would be more applicable, so after an evaluation, though, of the concerns that I have heard from the Members what we did was that we selected an amount that we felt was reasonable. I do not think the amounts proposed would amount to sticker shock, if I can put it that way. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Minister Sebert. Mr. Beaulieu.

MR. BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I think the Minister and I are talking about two different things. What I am talking about

here is I am trying to get the Minister to see the unfairness in a situation where we have a community that has employment rates in the 40 per cent, most people over the age of 65 living on Old Age Security; very few, if any, people in the small communities I represent actually have a pension that is, for example, a superannuation pension, something that gives them fairly decent income.

We are talking about people who are living on Old Age Security. There has never been employment in these communities, so people have gone from one short-term job to another short-term job to another short-term job until they get to 65 years old and they start to draw Old Age Security. Old Age Security, as an estimate, is about \$1,000. How would any department or any government see it being fair to already charge somebody four months' worth of salary? I will correct myself because of the relief, it turns out to be two months' worth of salary, and that is if the senior knew that they were supposed to go down and apply for the relief.

So how does somebody justify or see that as fair now and even further look at possibly increasing that fairly sharply? We are opposing this because we are saying at least phase in the increases, and I am not talking about the minimums. If the minimum is \$800 for this type of thing, that is probably about what we should charge. I am talking about this unreasonable 10 per cent mill rate, is the only way I could really determine it, and if it is rent it would be like if we rented a house in Yellowknife under the same type of rule. Let us say a three-bedroom trailer for \$400,000. This indicates that \$40,000 would go to rent and that would be the land, that would be just renting the land.

I am asking the Minister take a look at that. I think anybody would agree that is inappropriate and it is not fair. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. Minister Sebert.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Again, we feel that the overall rates suggested are appropriate tied as they are to the NWT Consumer Price Index. The Member has raised a broader issue as to how this might be difficult or perhaps unfair to certain individuals. I would like to remind Members that there is a 50 per cent discount for seniors.

Now, again, he has raised broader issues as to the affordability of housing of leases, but I think that could be dealt with in different ways. I do not think by lowering our minimums, lowering our rates, rather, which I suggest are reasonable, would be a reasoned response to this issue. I think perhaps what this Assembly might look at is providing more assistance in different ways to those need

assistance so that they could afford these reasonable rent or lease payments.

The lease payments, again, are not just pulled out of the air. There is a minimum admittedly and there is 10 per cent of assessed value. For example, if a property was assessed at \$40,000 the rent would be \$4,000. If it was a senior it would be reduced further to \$2,000, which would work out to \$155 a month. Therefore, we do feel that this system overall is fair. We acknowledge that it could create difficulties for certain individuals, but we suggest that perhaps those individuals could look to other sources for income because we feel that the proposed minimums and the manner in which we determine the lease rent is reasonable. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Minister Sebert. Moving on. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. I just want to return briefly to this issue of the reduced inspection budget. Why I am so passionate about this is because of a promise our government made about how we were going to do things better than the federal government. I think with reduced inspections, we are going to have increased risk of some of these sites becoming -- we are pretty good at generating abandoned, contaminated sites here in the Northwest Territories. We have a terrible track record of that under the federal government. We are now responsible for that. If we are carrying out inspections on these sites, we are responsible. We can't go back to the federal government on some of these sites. We don't have the purse that the federal government has in terms of trying to remediate contaminated sites. If we mess up now, it is going to cause us a lot of financial difficulty and prevent us from doing some of the good things we have all agreed to do in our mandate. I think cutting inspections is very short-sighted. Save some money now is going to lead to a greater risk of us inheriting sites and things that we really should be doing a much better job at preventing.

I want to transition from that, Mr. Speaker, into another topic, which is: how do we prevent and make sure that we don't inherit these sort of sites? Inspections are part of the picture. The other part of it is making sure that we have proper financial security in place. We have had at one time a unit; I can't even remember the name of whatever the entity was before. We have had some people working on this issue now. I know they are doing good work and hard work, but we have had this jurisdiction now for almost three years, and there is not one piece of policy, not one legislative change that has come about to make sure that we improve our financial securities and liabilities regime here in the Northwest Territories. When can we actually expect to see something emerge from this

department in terms of it improving financial securities?

I am just going to give a couple of examples. Right now financial security is usually asked for, but it is not mandatory. It is discretionary. It is discretionary under the current legislation. Why can't we make it mandatory as it is now indeed under the Commissioners Lands Act? Because of changes that were made a few years ago because of the lessons learned from Giant Mine. We have had this jurisdiction for three years. When are we going to see some solid policy work, some solid legislative changes come out of this department to prevent us from inheriting more contaminated sites? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Minister Sebert.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I think I certainly agree with the premise in the Member's question as to vigorous inspections. I don't want him to think that, because there has been a reduction in the travel budget, the inspections will be any less vigorous. I know that we have formed a securities project assessment division, which is 80 per cent staffed. They are building a securities tracking system. I am going to let Mr. Hagen perhaps expand on that. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Minister Sebert. Deputy Minister Hagen.

MR. HAGEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. There is legislation coming in this 18th Assembly; we expect to have some rolled out here in 2017-18. We do have the office set up now. Actually, we are staffed up almost 90 per cent in securities. Like you know, the securities on a development is set, not by Lands, but by the land and water boards. It is collected and kept by the Minister of Lands and by the Minister of ENR for water. The land and water boards, I think, Mr. O'Reilly, you are well aware, they set the amounts of security. I haven't heard or seen of any operation or development out there that do not have security on it going forward or even going back. If, you know, go back far enough -- let's say back 20 years. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Deputy Minister Hagen. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. We can compete about who has got a longer memory. Certainly with Giant there was \$400,000. It is going to cost the taxpayers probably over a billion dollars, maybe even closer to two by the time it gets remediated. Even as recently as last year with Norman Wells, there is no financial security, or not enough set aside. Now it is \$180 million. The Minister could accept a promissory note on the

back of a napkin as financial security. That is just not good enough. There is certainly still room for improving and making greater accountability through our legislation. I know the Minister would never accept something on the back of a napkin, but I know that he will be happy to change that legislation to make sure that future Ministers can't do that either. I just want to get into a couple of specifics here. With the Cantung Mine, have we given back this surface lease to the federal government? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Minister Sebert.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: I am told that we haven't yet. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Minister Sebert. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. Is that going to happen sometime soon, or how soon? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Minister Sebert.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: I will let Mr. Hagen respond to that question.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Minister Sebert. Deputy Minister Hagen.

MR. HAGEN: Only on Cantung it is in care and maintenance under the federal government. Inspectors are federal inspectors. Now we are in discussions that have been moving along fairly well. INAC has said in correspondence they are going to take administrative control of the whole site back, which is right now in the process of happening. I would suspect within the next two months, the feds will be totally in control of Cantung.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Deputy Minister Hagen. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. Glad to hear that. I really look forward to getting that lease back to them and reducing our exposure. Let's talk a little bit about Prairie Creek now. This surface lease is in over-hold tenancy. When are we going to put in place full financial security for the assets that are on the ground right now? As any other operator has to have up-front financial security, when are we going to do that for Prairie Creek so that we are not exposed? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Minister Sebert.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Prairie Creek. The government is protected from historic liability at Canadian Zinc Prairie Creek Mine

through the terms of the devolution agreement. I understand that Canadian Zinc, the proponent, has met all security requirements under its permits, licence, and authorization. The Mackenzie Valley Land and Water Board has set a total security amount at \$17,700,000, which the company will be required to post in stages as the project proceeds. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Minister Sebert. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. We could have a great debate here. My concern is the longer our fingerprints are on that through the surface lease the more difficult it is going to be for us to try to make a case to the federal government that they can and should take it back. So we've got the ability to increase the security to cover the existing assets that are on the ground, the existing liabilities; why can't we do something about it now? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Minister Sebert.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Well, Mr. Chair, I understand that the Mackenzie Land and Water Board sets the security and they've determined that the amount should be \$17,070,000.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Minister Sebert. Time has expired. Mr. Thompson.

MR. THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would like to go back to my colleague from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh who was talking about the leases. I guess my first question is: how do they come up with these lease agreement calculations in the small designated authorities? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. Thompson. Minister Sebert.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Yes, the properties are assessed by MACA and on that basis the evaluation of what the rent or lease amount should be, so it's evidence-based.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Minister Sebert, Mr. Thompson.

MR. THOMPSON: I thank the Minister for his answer. Evidence-based? I guess we live in two different worlds but, I mean, I greatly appreciate that.

So I guess my concern is my colleague was sitting here talking about a \$4,000 lease in the community of Fort Resolution. Now, what logical world and evidence-based world would they come up with this kind of a lease and how does the department use

that and work with Housing to get people to pay for the leases? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. Thompson. Minister Sebert.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Well, again, the amount of the lease is based on the appraised amount. So if the appraisal comes in at \$40,000 the amount expected to be paid yearly would therefore, in a normal case, be \$4,000, although as I mentioned earlier there could be exemptions for a senior citizen. So it is based on the appraised value, a percentage of the appraised or assessed value of the property. It's not so different than leases anywhere and it seems to me that a yearly lease or rental of 10 per cent of the appraised or assessed value is not an unusual or extraordinary amount. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Minister Sebert, Mr. Thompson.

MR. THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I thank the Minister for his answer. I guess this lease is an everlasting gift to the Government of the Northwest Territories. It just keeps on giving and giving and giving. So people who have to pay \$4,000 a year -- I know in my community as a tax-based person, I pay \$1,400 for a home. So, man oh man, you need to work with the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs to come up with a more realistic approach to it. Or is this a new industry for this Government of the Northwest Territories? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. Thompson. Minister Sebert.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Mr. Chair, this is not a new industry for the government. Under the prior system I don't think we were even meeting our costs. I don't think a yearly 10 per cent of the appraised value of a property is extraordinary or out of line with normal commercial practice. Perhaps Mr. Hagen would like to add something to this. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Minister Sebert, Mr. Thompson.

MR. THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I guess we should be encouraging the people who live in Fort Resolution and the smaller communities to actually move to Yellowknife because my colleague beside me here only pays \$2,000 for rent. I don't know what Hay River is, but I know in Fort Simpson I should be encouraging them to come to Fort Simpson because they only have to pay \$1,400.

So again, will the Minister work with the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs to address this huge outrageous bill that these community get? You're talking, if it's 10 per cent, man, I would be

paying \$10,000 on my home or \$20,000, depending on the appraisal. So will the Minister work with the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs to come up with a better system that works for the residents of the Northwest Territories who have to deal with leases? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. Thompson. Minister Sebert.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Mr. Chair, I'm pleased to hear that one of the Members from Yellowknife is only paying \$2,000; however, I imagine during the term of his ownership of the property he also had to make mortgage payments and so on. One of the things with a lease is that you generally pay a certain amount based on market, if there is a market, or, as we've done, on appraisal, and I don't think that a yearly rental or lease of 10 per cent of the appraised value is out of line. I think that's roughly what I'm paying for the apartment I live in when I'm in Yellowknife. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Minister Sebert, Mr. Thompson.

MR. THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. We haven't even talked about the issue that I want to talk about. I really would hope the Minister would actually look and understand what the real world is for these small communities, and this is a problem is that, yes, you say it's \$40,000, but some of these people had to pay mortgages, so they continue to pay the mortgage and they do these things.

So will the Minister work with the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs to come up with a system that works better for the residents of the Northwest Territories, in particular the smaller communities? We're not talking Fort Smith, Yellowknife, Hay River, Fort Simpson, Inuvik. I'm talking about the smaller communities. Will he work with the Minister on this to address this issue? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. Thompson. Minister Sebert, to the question.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Mr. Chair, the system proposed by the Member, I suggest, would be a nightmare. We'd have a checkerboard system. It is clear, and everybody understands, that incomes are lower in some of our small communities. That is definitely the case, but that's an issue that can be addressed in other manners. These numbers were arrived at after a good deal of consideration, looking at inflation rates and the need to cover our costs. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Minister Sebert, Mr. Thompson.

MR. THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I thank the Minister for his non-answer again. I love that. I mean, I'm sorry to say we'll have to agree to disagree on this. So it kind of falls in to the next step, is the cuts to these jobs that are community-based. So will the Minister explain how these cuts were identified?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. Thompson. Minister Sebert.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: As we've mentioned previously, the Lands department was only created a couple of years ago, and there was an amalgamation of employees who worked for the territorial government and those that formerly worked for the federal government, and naturally there were overlaps when the systems to incorporate cultures, if I can put it that way, were combined. So when we were looking at the situation, we looked at areas where we thought there could be rational evidence-based reductions, and for that reason we looked at the positions and determined that these positions were ones that could be reduced. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Minister Sebert, Mr. Thompson.

MR. THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So we're talking evidence-based, so there was an input and output, which means that if we're looking at if you remove this job out of the community and then put him on income support, that was part of this evidence-based process, I am assuming, so it was an input and output and we are looking to make decisions. That to me is evidence-based. The Minister talks about these redundancy positions. Well, we started out with eight the previous year, went to seven last year, now we are down to six. So are you saying that regional operations are redundant? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Thompson. Twenty seconds; would the Minister like to respond?

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I mean, whenever there are positions that are affected often there is a process that the government goes through, and often these people find other positions in the government. That is often the case as we all know from the round of reductions that took place last year. Most people found other positions, some retired. Some who were affected unfortunately could not find other positions, that is true, but the government has to live within its means and therefore we have to look at a rationalization. We always hear that the government should be acting more efficiently. Well, unfortunately sometimes that does mean the reduction of positions. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Next I have Mr. Beaulieu, I believe.

MR. BEAULIEU: No.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Comments or questions? Seeing nothing further, I will call this activity. Lands, operations, operations expenditure summary, \$9,995,000. Mr. Vanthuyne.

COMMITTEE MOTION 63-18(2):
TABLED DOCUMENT 261-18(2): MAIN
ESTIMATES 2017-2018, DEPARTMENT OF
LANDS, DEFERRAL OF OPERATIONS ACTIVITY,
CARRIED

MR. VANTHUYNE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I move that this committee defer further consideration of the activity, operations, under the Department of Lands Main Estimates 2017-2018 on page 299 at this time. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Vanthuyne. There is a motion to defer. The motion is on the floor and being distributed. All those in favour? All those opposed?

---Carried

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): We will defer operations. Thank you, committee. On to the next activity, which begins on page 301 and continues on to 304, Lands, planning and coordination. This is our final activity. Do we have comments or questions on Lands, planning and coordination? Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. In general comments and I think even in the Minister's opening remarks he talked about how there is some sort of land use planning process that is being developed for the Crown lands in the Wekweeti Management Area, and he talks about a terms of reference being developed. Can he, number one, answer whether this land use plan is going to be legally binding? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Minister.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Perhaps this question might be best answered by Mr. Hagen.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. In the interest of time you can just gesture towards Mr. Hagen if you would like me to address him. Thank you. Mr. Hagen.

MR. HAGEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. As the Members know, I am sure, that it is the mandate commitment of the 18th Assembly to implement an agreed upon government structure allowing you to

fly into Wekweeti management area on public lands. The Tlicho Government have one already established on private lands. So where we are now is we are collaborating with the Tlicho Government and other planning partners to develop a term of reference to move forward with planning for the public lands. You know, the public lands represent an opportunity to build a relationship through collaboration and it definitely will provide certainty regarding economic development, future prosperity, on and on, and of course some of those public lands in the Wekweeti take in two diamond mines and it also takes in the proposed road to Whati, and also it takes in the Bathurst caribou migration route also.

So it is a very important plan and we have full cooperation of the Tlicho Government to move forward on it. They are very keen to do so. We have had discussions with the Government of Canada. They are a signatory to the Tlicho Land Claim Agreement, so they have supported financially and with people the Gwich'in plan 25 years ago or so, the Sahtu plan, and the current draft of the Deh Cho Land Use Plan.

So far they have not said no, but we have not had a lot of luck getting support from them and moving this initiative forward, and we do not have the budget. We would need approximately \$5 million over four years to complete the plan, but we are doing what we can and we are collaborating, like I say, with the Tlicho Government right now and trying to develop a term of reference.

Our Aboriginal organizations that have rights in the region also, so it does get very complicated, so we are not dealing just with the Tlicho here, we are dealing with other Aboriginal governments. We have not moved very far along yet, but we are starting the process. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Hagen. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. That was a very detailed answer and I appreciate the deputy minister's comments. I guess, as I see it, there are two options for making sure this is a legally binding land use plan, and that is what our mandate calls for. One is to bring us under the Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act, and Mr. Hagen mentioned the Gwich'in and the Sahtu Land Use Plans. This would be, I think, an ideal -- that is the accepted and negotiated process in those two areas. Of course the Tlicho Government would have to have some say in this, but it would seem to make some sense to bring this under the MVRMA so that it is legally binding, you have got an agreed-upon process for developing plans, amending them, and all of that sort of thing.

The other option might be the Planning Act, which is a bit antiquated. It is on our side. So I guess I am asking the department to give some thought to what is going to be the legal bases for this land use plan? My recommendation is that you bring it in under the MVRMA, but of course subject to negotiation with the Tlicho Government. Is that on the radar for the department, or what legislation are they thinking about to making sure that this is a legally binding land use plan? Thanks Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Mr. Hagen.

MR. HAGEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The idea would be to bring it in under the MVRMA. I agree totally. I am one of the architecture signatories to the MVRMA, so it is near and dear to my heart, and I believe that the Tlicho Government is looking at it the same way. The territorial government is the lead on this. We have chosen to work collaboratively with the Tlicho Government. They did want to come, at first, to be a full partner but then in their land claim agreement if they wanted to be a full partner they would also have to put up their private lands to be part of the overall land use plan.

So that obviously would be a non-starter, so they are in full support of doing a land use plan on their public lands and we are in discussions now for terms of reference, and I take your remarks into consideration and that is where we are trying to lead the process. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Hagen. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I feel much more confident now about this, and I have known Mr. Hagen for years. I used to work at the Dene-Metis Negotiations Secretariat when I first came up here in 1985. The agreement that came out of that was to set up an integrated resource management system, the MVRMA is the implementation part of that, and I agree fully that that's what we should be pursuing. So I'm much more confident now than I was before I arrived in the Chamber today. Thank you, Mr. Chair. That's all I've got on this section. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. I see no further comments or questions. Mr. Beaulieu.

MR. BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I'd like to ask the Minister how old the Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act is?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. Minister.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: I'm sorry, Mr. Chair, I was reaching for my earphone and I missed part of the question. I wonder if it could be repeated?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Mr. Beaulieu, could you repeat the question?

MR. BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I'd like to ask the Minister how old the Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act is? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. Minister.

MR. O'REILLY: 1996.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Mr. Chair, I don't have the legislation in front of me, but I'm told that it's 1996; therefore, it would be 21 years old. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Mr. Beaulieu.

MR. BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'd like to ask the Minister or the department if the Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act has ever been amended since 1996? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. Minister.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Again, I don't have access to that information in front of me, but I imagine it was amended as all acts generally are. It was probably amended around the time of devolution, I would guess, but again, I can't speak with certainty --

MR. HAGEN: I can answer that.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: -- but someone else apparently can. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Mr. Hagen.

MR. HAGEN: There have been very few amendments under the MVRMA in 21 years. It started off with the Gwich'in land claim agreement, that's where it came out of; it was born out of there, and then the Sahtu, they had to make some amendments to accommodate the Sahtu claim, and then the Tlicho.

If you recall the huge confrontation about bringing all the regional land and water boards into one board, making what people call a super board, we never use that term. The government of the day, the Harper government, did pass some legislation to create one board, and that was challenged. In that process also, the land and water boards put through a wish list of amendments that they were

looking for for years, and that was put forth also at the same time.

Fortunately or unfortunately, however you look at it, the Tlicho government took the federal government to court and it stopped all the amendments and now their territorial government is involved in trying to undo that with the feds, to reinstate the regional boards. When that is accomplished, the Tlicho will drop their court action and those amendments that were put forth that are on hold because of court action will go forward. We're told with hopefully a few more that we'd like to see. The territorial government has taken a big role in that thanks to the Premier in discussion with the Minister of INAC, and the ADM from Lands, Kate Hearn, is the lead for the territorial government on the negotiations going forward. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Hagen. Mr. Beaulieu.

MR. BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I'd like to thank the deputy for that response.

Mr. Chairman, I have a question for the Minister. Can the Minister tell me if the land use plans have to be in place and approved in accordance with the Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act prior to its final settlement with the outstanding land rights groups? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. The Minister has indicated that Mr. Hagen will be answering this.

MR. HAGEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I don't want to say it's a difficult question but it comes with some moving parts. A land use plan has always come out of a land claim agreement; again, the Gwich'in, the Sahtu, the Tlicho, they all settled their claims first and then they went and developed land use with themselves. Of course, the federal government, and the territory, there are three signatories.

The Dehcho process, which is ongoing, decided that they wanted to try to get a land use plan simultaneously or even before their land claim agreement was in place. The land use plan is now in draft form and there are only four major items that are holding it up. It's at the main table. If they got over those four items they would have a land use plan ready to be approved by three bodies before their claim is settled.

The messaging there actually, to me, is great because it then gives a lot of certainty to all land users, in particular developers, a certainty that they know what's open for development and what is not open for development.

So the Wek'eezhii Land Use Plan is the next one. Again, that was done differently. They decided in the other claim areas -- the two claim areas -- they decided they were going to do a land use plan for the whole region, including their private lands. The Tlicho decided they were going to do a land use plan themselves just for their private lands, and now we're going into a land use plan for the Crown lands or territorial lands. So that's why it's a lot of moving parts.

Whether we can now get that into the MVRMA is what's open for discussion, or some other method that Mr. O'Reilly had mentioned. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Hagen. Mr. Beaulieu.

MR. BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thanks again to the deputy. I have another question: I wonder if the Minister can give us the same type of detail that we've just heard on the Akaitcho land use plan? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. Minister.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: No, I can't.

---Laughter

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Mr. Beaulieu.

MR. BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I didn't think it was appropriate for me to ask the deputy. I wonder if the deputy minister can give us the same type of detailed response on the land use plans for the Akaitcho land use plan. Thank you

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. The Minister has indicated that Mr. Hagen will answer this. Mr. Hagen.

MR. HAGEN: I did discuss the Wek'eezhii plan with Mr. O'Reilly's questions and also actually my explanation that you asked for included the Wek'eezhii plan. They have a land use plan; the Tlicho government have it on their private lands. They're the first to do it that way instead of doing it for the whole Tlicho region. We are now in the process of moving forward on a land use plan for territorial lands. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Hagen. Mr. Beaulieu.

MR. BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Chair. With all the laughter, I think the deputy minister didn't hear the question; I was asking about Akaitcho. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. Deputy minister.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: He was talking about the Akaitcho process.

MR. HAGEN: Oh, I apologize. Akaitcho. The Akaitcho region, we have approached them at times and had some dialogue but they have no interest in having a land use plan proceeding until they settle their land claim agreement, as is the Metis, Northwest Territorial Metis, have no desire to have a land use plan starting until they settle their claim. My apologies; I thought you said the Tlicho. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Mr. Beaulieu.

MR. BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, my next question was on -- the deputy had just answered was to talk about the land use plan for the NWT Metis Nation, but I would not ask the question because he already provided me the answer. That is all I have for now, Mr. Chair. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. Seeing no further comments or questions I will call this activity. Page 302, Lands, planning and coordination summary, operations expenditure summary \$6,312,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, committee. We have three information items on pages 304, 305, and 306. My apologies, on pages 305 and 306, just two information items. Lease commitments and work performed on behalf of others. Comments or questions on page 305 or 306? Mr. O'Reilly. Please indicate which page you are referencing.

MR. O'REILLY: Sorry, Mr. Chair, it was 303. We have finished that, so it is okay.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. I see no questions on these information items. We will return to page 289, to the total department. Please note there, there are also information items on pages 290 and 291. Do we have comments or questions on the total department, page 289, or the associated information items? If not, I will call the department. Mr. Beaulieu.

COMMITTEE MOTION 64-18(2):
 TABLED DOCUMENT 261-18(2): MAIN
 ESTIMATES 2017-2018, DEPARTMENT OF
 LANDS, DEFERRAL OF FURTHER
 CONSIDERATION OF THE ESTIMATES FOR
 LANDS,
 CARRIED

MR. BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chair, I move that this committee defer further consideration of the estimates for the Department of Lands at this time. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. There's a motion to defer. The motion is on the floor and is being distributed. The motion is in order and non-debatable. All those in favour? All those opposed?

---Carried

We have deferred the Department of Lands. I want to thank the witnesses for appearing. Sergeant-at-Arms, please escort the witnesses from the Chamber.

I will call committee back to order. Committee, I would like to recognize one of our visitors in the gallery, Patrick Joss. I would like to thank him for attending and paying such close attention to the proceedings of this House. Thank you very much.

I call committee back to order. We have agreed to consider the Department of Justice. I will turn to the Minister for opening comments. Minister Sebert.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: I am pleased to present the 2017-2018 Main Estimates for the Department of Justice. Overall, the department's estimates propose a decrease of just over \$3.6 million or 2.9 per cent less than the 2016-2017 Main Estimates. These estimates continue to support the GNWT's objective of ensuring a strong and sustainable future for the government and its programs. Taking into consideration our limited growth in revenue, these estimates also reflect the need to closely manage our expenditures.

The 2017-2018 Main Estimates include an increase of just over \$1.3 million from the business plan reviewed by standing committee in September. These increases are mainly due to new federal funding for victim services, as well as support to continue the Integrated Case Management Pilot project.

The 2017-2018 Main Estimates include reductions of just over \$2.4 million, much of which results from the second year impact of reductions made in 2016-17. Other reductions were carefully considered to avoid or limit impacts on public services and staff. Sunsets of time-limited funding and other adjustments of just over \$2.7 million

make up the remainder of the budget decrease, which primarily results from the completion of the Inuvik RCMP Detachment.

Forced growth of just over \$1.4 million is also identified for 2017-18. Increases for the RCMP account for just over \$1 million of the forced growth total. This includes the creation of the Child Exploitation Unit, as well as funding for the Emergency Response Team and Protective Technical Services Unit.

The department's proposed spending in 2017-18 continues to support the priorities of the 18th Legislative Assembly. Specific activities in support of these priorities include funding of \$564,000 to continue the Integrated Case Management Pilot project. This project is part of the government's commitment to examine innovative ways to prevent and reduce crime. This funding increase will allow the department to take lessons learned and apply them to continued program delivery in Yellowknife, and facilitate an expansion to other communities in the future.

Participants in this project, often common clients of a number of departments, receive assistance in accessing services related to a variety of needs, such as housing, income support, mental health, substance abuse, unemployment, and legal issues. So far the results are promising; 147 clients have been referred to the project, but we will know more when the evaluation is completed this March.

In addition to the Integrated Case Management Pilot project, the Department of Justice is also making progress on a range of other mandate commitments. We are working on initiatives aimed at reducing crime and family violence, assisting families in crisis, improving access to justice, and improving access to information and privacy protections for our residents. That concludes my opening remarks. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Do you have witnesses you would like to bring into the Chamber?

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: I do.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Sergeant-at-Arms, please escort the witnesses in. Minister, please introduce your witnesses for the record.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Martin Goldney, deputy minister, is to my right. Mandi Bolstad, director of corporate services, to my left. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you. Welcome to the witnesses. We will begin with opening comments. First, I have Mr. Thompson.

MR. THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Going through this business plan, the social development committee and the Standing Committee on Priorities and Planning really appreciate the fact that the men's healing program is funded, but we are really trying to all stress the importance of the recommendation of a regional or modular delivery to extend the program outside of Yellowknife. It is the opportunity to help all residents of the Northwest Territories. I understand that the people who do the men's healing program may or may not get the contract as we move forward, but the biggest challenge is that, if we continue to do it here in Yellowknife, we are going to keep on getting better results here, but not outside the region. Both committees have stressed the importance of increasing this program.

We also talked about the importance of not eliminating the one position, the victim's service position. We feel that that has a huge impact on the individuals who are in the court system and the people who have been victimized. We believe these positions need to be put back into the budget.

On a personal note, I do have to give some credit to the department. I am very happy to see the creation of the Child Exploitation Unit. That is very, very important. I think that, with the way society is going now, this is a huge improvement. I also would like to thank the department for continuing with their Integrated Case Management Pilot project. That is huge. It seemed to work. I think we need to continue it instead of making it a pilot project. I would hope the department, at one point, would actually make it part of the budget completely. That is my closing comments. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Thompson. Mr. Testart.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would like to thank my colleague, the honourable Member for Nahendeh, for summarizing the shared concerns of the Standing Committee on Priorities and Planning. I always appreciate the opportunity to talk about my public service alma mater, the Department of Justice. They do some incredible work. In many ways, the department has a unique role in the integrated case management and other restorative justice programs like that, and community justice-based programs where they can take the work of the other social envelope committees and bring them together. I think the integrated case management is the perfect example of how this government best helps people who have complex needs. It is my hope that we can continue to roll this out beyond justice context, and use the lessons learned here to inform successful response to clients with complex needs across government.

I know some of my constituents, although they have not come into contact with the justice system, or the criminal justice system, they have been referred to the integrated case management. It has been successful in directing them to the right resources.

I think this aspect of the department's work is very important. I am also very pleased that this budget contains a significant amount of new funding for police services, including sheriffs' officers. I know that I have raised this issue before, and the Minister is well aware of that, and the department is now taking steps to evaluate how we can best use our policing services and our police officer services to improve the public safety and efficiency within the department.

I will have more comments to that end when we get into those activities, but apart from the strong desire of the standing committee members to see a greater focus on Victims Services and the Men's Healing Program to take action on the crisis of family violence, most of what Justice is doing is very much appreciated, and is recognized as excellent work. Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Testart. Seeing no further general comments, I will go to the Minister. You have 10 minutes to respond. Oh, I am sorry, we have one more general comment from Mr. Blake. Mr. Blake.

MR. BLAKE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just a couple of brief comments here. As I mentioned in a brief statement last week, services have really improved in Tsiigehtchic, and the residents are very happy with that. It is good to see a better presence in the community. We have one unit there in the community for the RCMP to use whenever they come in, which is good. I like the way they are doing it. There is no scheduled time that they are going to be in the community, which is good because people learn the schedules pretty quickly. It is important that they just come and go as they feel fit. That seems to be working well.

Another thing, we are noticing in the Beaufort Delta region, there are more serious drugs coming in. I know they are doing their best there, but a lot of people want to see stiffer sentences. I know with the one case here in Yellowknife, that was the case. We have got to send a strong message that these powerful drugs that are being sold on the streets, people who are going to try to do that will be sent away for long periods of time.

You see in the south, people down there getting 10 to 15 years. For a lot of the crimes that are done up here, people tend to get two years. Pretty light sentences compared to southern jurisdictions. I know people up in my riding have an issue with that.

Like I said, moving forward, there are better services in the communities. I hope the department continues that. That is all I have right now. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Blake. Mr. Beaulieu.

MR. BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, the thing that interests me with this department is the affirmative action numbers. I don't know what they are. In our business plan, it just indicates, although the Department of Justice indicates the whole GNWT. In the whole GNWT, 30 per cent of the hires or employees are Priority 1 candidates, and only 12 per cent of the public service in the GNWT is Priority 2. Fifty-six per cent of the government is Priority 3. What I hear is that certain sections of this department, Department of Justice, have lower numbers than that. I guess I am hoping, as we go through this, the department will be able to answer questions further active positions, what percentage on each of those categories. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. Further general comments? Seeing none, I will now go to the Minister for a response. Minister, you have 10 minutes.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Certainly. I thank the Members for their comments. We share many of the concerns that have been expressed. Naturally, because of some of the logistics of things, often pilot projects do start off in Yellowknife; however, if they are successful here, they can be expanded. For example, DVTO court has been expanded to Hay River, and hopefully, depending on resources, some of the excellent programs that we do have in the capital, assuming that they are living up to expectations can be expanded to some of the smaller jurisdictions; however, staffing and resources always tends to be an issue.

With respect to Mr. Blake's concerns about sentencing, that is really a matter for the federal government who decides what the provisions are of the Criminal Code. I do know that the judiciary do take these matters very, very seriously, as is evident in some of the press reports of late; however, I do not think the judiciary would appreciate commentary by me as to the appropriate length of sentences.

I thank you all. I look forward to your questions and comments. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister Sebert. The Department of Justice begins on page 249. As always, we will defer consideration of the departmental total until after we consider each activity. The first activity is community justice

and policing. It is on page 257 and includes activity description on page 256, and information items on pages 258 and 259. So, 256 to 259, community justice and policing. Ms. Green.

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, as the Minister knows, we are very interested in this side of the House in the A New Day program. I would like for him to tell us what the plan is going forward for the men's healing program once the contract extension for the current service provider ends in June? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Ms. Green. Minister?

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Yes, thank you. As the Members will know, we extended the current contract so that there would be no gaps in services. Of course, there was the report on the New Day program, and based on that, we will be going forward with a request for proposals, and hopefully, we will be starting up the program again in July. So again, there will be no gaps between the present contract and the next contract. That is our wish and our belief. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Ms. Green.

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I appreciate that response. Can the Minister tell us how the request for proposals for the new service provider will differ from the request for proposals for the previous or the current service provider? What are the major differences that are being contemplated for the next round? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Ms. Green. Minister.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I believe that we were looking for a program that might have more flexibility. There was a fairly significant drop-out rate, and, hopefully, the request for proposals will contain within it provisions that will require the provider of the service to provide a perhaps more flexible program. Perhaps the deputy minister could add something to that. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Mr. Goldney.

MR. GOLDNEY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. That really will be the key difference going forward, is a more flexible and adaptive approach. We can't get into too many of the details until the request for proposal is out. The goal is certainly to take the lessons learned from the pilot project, and what we learned quite clearly was that the program should be adapted to make it more accessible for those who want to take advantage of it. One of the things that we noted, the retention rates for participants

was not as high as we prefer, suggesting that we needed to have more flexibility in the number of sessions offered and greater frequency in the sessions offered. We also expect to make changes to make the administration of the program a little easier for the contractors and the facilitators delivering the curriculum. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Goldney. Ms. Green.

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I appreciate that answer. Some of the issues raised in the evaluation address administration and clinical supervision as areas of weakness in the current program. How will those weaknesses be addressed going forward? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Ms. Green. Minister.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Thank you, Mr. Chair. We do recognize that as an issue. We are looking at ways in the request for proposals so that, administration and clerical functions, we want to be sure that they don't impede the delivery of the program. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Ms. Green.

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I find that answer a bit opaque. I wonder if the Minister could elaborate? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Ms. Green. Minister.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Well, we are still working on the request for proposals. I think that what we wish to do is move some of the administrative and clerical functions away from the party who actually contracts with us. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Ms. Green.

MS. GREEN: Okay. So what are the choices, then, if you are going to move the administration and clerical functions away? Would they then become part of the department, or would there be another service provider who provides the clinical and administrative oversight? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Ms. Green. Minister.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: I think one of the possibilities we are looking at is to make the clerical and organizational functions part of the department, that is delivered by the government. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Ms. Green.

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am interested to hear that. That seems like an expensive remedy to the weakness that was found in the current service provider. Are there any other alternatives for ensuring that this program remains a community-based program? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Ms. Green. Minister.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Mr. Chair, we are not anticipating any increase in costs, and we simply felt that some of the problems with the program in the past, if there were such problems, were at that level, so we thought that we could streamline the program by having those clerical type, organizational type, functions within the government and allow those that were responding to the request for proposals deliver what they do best, that is the actual program, itself. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Ms. Green.

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you for that response. Can you please tell me about the results of your consultation on the idea of changing the administrative and clinical supervision to in-house?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Ms. Green. Minister.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: I think, Mr. Chair, that we found that that may have been a source of problems with the delivery of the program in the past. Often, with smaller organizations, that portion of what is needed to be done, it is difficult for a smaller organization to deliver those, that aspect of the program. Therefore, by bringing it in-house, as I said previously, it allows the bidder on the request for proposals do what is most important, deliver the program, itself. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Ms. Green.

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you to the Minister for that. My question for the Minister is: what kind of consultation has been done with the non-profit sector that works in this area on the idea of bringing the administrative and clerical functions in-house? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Ms. Green. Minister. Mr. Goldney.

MR. GOLDNEY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. We have had some discussions with NGOs and other parties who are interested in this program, so we are quite confident that what we will be proposing will be welcome and appreciated. One of the advantages

of the model to be proposed in the RFP is that it will relieve those organizations from some of the administrative burden, it will allow greater coordination. That might even allow more facilitators and more organizations to participate in the delivery of this program. Eventually, we do see the potential for individuals, even, not necessarily persons employed with NGOs, to participate, as well, and so we do see some positive response to these ideas so far.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Goldney. I just remind the witnesses and all Members to indicate when you have done talking, maybe, "Thank you, Mr. Chair." Ms. Green.

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, given the fact that this program is going to be changed very considerably, will the next iteration also be a pilot project? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Ms. Green. Minister.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: No, we are not contemplating the next iteration to be a pilot project. We can always make adjustments as we proceed in years ahead. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Ms. Green.

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I am puzzled by that. It sounds like another pilot project because it is so different, so I am not clear why the department is not putting this out as a pilot project so that there is some flexibility to discontinue aspects once the pilot period is over? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Ms. Green. Minister.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: No, we are confident, Mr. Chair, that what we have learned from examining the report will guide us on the path ahead. There is no concept that the program going ahead will be considered another pilot project. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Ms. Green.

MS. GREEN: I think I will get back on the list because I think that my next question will take me beyond my allotted time. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Ms. Green. I will call a brief recess. Sergeant-at-Arms, please escort the witnesses from the Chamber.

---SHORT RECESS

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): I call the Committee of the Whole back to order. We were

discussing community justice and policing on pages 256 to 259. Do I have comments or questions? Mr. Thompson. Ms. Green, I put you back on the list. Mr. Thompson.

MR. THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. My first question is regarding the clinical supervisor. Is this actually going to be a funded position by the department, and if it is, where are the funds coming from? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Thompson. Minister.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Mr. Chair, the past contract for the Nahendeh program didn't require a clinical supervisor, as will the one that we are contemplating.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Mr. Thompson.

MR. THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Can the Minister, please, say what was the last little bit of his commentary? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Thompson. Minister, can you please repeat your comments.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Yes. I am sorry. There was a clinical supervisor, which was required under the old pilot project. We expect this to be a contracted position under the new request for proposal. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Mr. Thompson.

MR. THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. In contract services, we see an increase of \$249,000. Is this the physicians? Is that where the money is coming from? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Thompson. Minister.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: No. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Mr. Thompson.

MR. THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I thank the Minister for his answer. Can he or the department explain why we see an increase in \$249,000 in contract services in this area? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Thompson. Minister.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: I am sorry, Mr. Chair. That is the wilderness funding amount that was

transferred into this portion of the budget at the request of committee. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Mr. Thompson.

MR. THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The wilderness funding is later on, so I will have to ask the question about that. In regards to the New Day program, will the department be looking at an overlap between the existing contractor and a new contractor should it come out that way? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Thompson. Minister.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Sure. There will be no gap in service, so to that extent there will be an overlap. We want to ensure as we did when extended the contract that nobody will fall in between the cracks. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Mr. Thompson.

MR. THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I guess I should rephrase my question. What I was talking about, should another contractor get the new job, will the department be looking at extended the existing contractor about a month's time so that they are better prepared to do this job? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Thompson. Minister.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Mr. Chair, the current contract will come to an end at the end of June. We are anticipating that the new contractor, if there is a new contractor, will be up and going at that time. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Mr. Thompson.

MR. THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Whether if it is a new contractor or an existing contractor, they are going to start July 1st. Am I correct in understanding that, Mr. Chair?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Thompson. Minister.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Yes, Mr. Chair, that is correct. Again, the whole point of this is to avoid any gap in service. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Nothing further from Mr. Thompson. I have Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. I just wanted to ask the Minister: when is the RFP going to go out

for the Men's Healing program? The reason I'm asking that is I'm getting quite concerned about how late this is getting and whether there's going to be a gap in service. Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Minister.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Thank you, Mr. Chair. We're expecting the RFP will go out in March so that there will not be any gaps in service. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. March has 31 days. Can the Minister just be a little bit more specific? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Minister.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Mr. Chair, early to mid-March. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair, I appreciate that, and the sooner the better because I think there's quite a bit of work that's going to have to be done to evaluate the proposals and get things up and going before the current contract ends. So I urge the department to move forward as quickly as they possibly can with this to make sure that we've got continuity of service. Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. More of a comment. Ms. Green.

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I wonder if the Minister could share with us what the 2017-18 policing priorities are? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Ms. Green. Minister.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: I can advise that, in a general sense, of course, we want to provide the best policing services we can to all 33 communities. Each of the 33 communities does have policing action plans developed between the local RCMP and the community, so those are some of our priorities. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Ms. Green.

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I'm looking at a response from the department to questions asked during the 2017-18 business plan, and I'll read from this. It says:

"The Minister of Justice establishes annual priorities for policing for the NWT. Included in the 2016-17 policing priorities is to promote public trust and confidence in policing services that are culturally inclusive."

So what I'm looking for, Mr. Chair, is an analogous statement that states what the overall priorities are; unless the department doesn't direct priorities any longer, I'm not sure about that. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Ms. Green. Minister.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Thank you, Mr. Chair. No, we are working on the priorities, building on the priorities of past years. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Ms. Green.

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Okay, so we know you're working on the priorities. Can you give us a sense of what they are? Thank you

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Ms. Green. Minister.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: It will be somewhat similar to the ones in the past years. I mean, what we want to do is we make sure that we can provide effective policing to all of the 33 communities of the Northwest Territories. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Ms. Green.

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, if the Minister doesn't yet know what the policing priorities are for the next year I'm happy for him to take my question on notice and to get back to me, but the best policing service possible and similar to last year's are not the level of detail I'm looking for. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Ms. Green. Minister.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Sure, they are in the process of development. Policing priorities tend not to change radically from year to year. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Ms. Green.

MS. GREEN: Thank you. Could the Minister tell us what direction is given to the RCMP and/or the communities when they are developing the individual policing plans, community policing plans? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Ms. Green. Minister.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: I understand the manner in which these agreements are developed is that the RCMP meet with the local community. So it's not a question of us giving direction; this is an RCMP initiative. They meet with the community, develop a policing plan that's suitable for the individual community. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Ms. Green.

MS. GREEN: Thank you. I want to give an example. So we all know that family violence rates, meaning assault and sexual assault in intimate partnerships, are at high levels. So how would a goal like working more closely on prevention work in this kind of a situation, or is that not a level of detail that these plans go into? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Ms. Green. Minister.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Mr. Chairman, if I might have the deputy minister respond?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you. Mr. Goldney.

MR. GOLDNEY: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and just to pick up on the example that the Member used, I think is a good example where we might not necessarily see a large RCMP response to the issue of prevention given that they're there to respond to criminal activities as those needs arise. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Goldney. Ms. Green.

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I recognize that the example I gave was not a very good example, so let's take something like the ODARA Score that is used to assess domestic violence incidents for their intensity, shall we say. Is that the kind of thing that gets factored into these policing plans? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Ms. Green. Minister.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: I'm certain that it would be on that level. I think the ODARA Score, which was developed in Ontario I believe, now is accepted generally by police and courts as a way of evaluating risk in domestic violent situations. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Ms. Green.

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So would a goal like promoting the use of the ODARA Score tool, would that be part of a territory-wide policing priority? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Ms. Green. Minister. I apologize, Mr. Goldney.

MR. GOLDNEY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Certainly it's a tool recognized and would be used in risk assessments, as there might be some police involvement required for those types of assessments. We do see that tool being used perhaps more frequently in other responses to this issue beyond the criminal justice system response, the social response to this issue which involves other aspects and other programs outside of policing. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Goldney. Ms. Green.

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you for that response. So where I'm going with this is: how does the Minister of Justice set up accountability by the police? How are the police accountable for their policing priorities and for the implementation of those priorities to the Department of Justice? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Ms. Green. Minister.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Well, Mr. Chair, I do meet with the commanding officer of the RCMP on occasion or when required, so we can discuss priorities at that time. Of course, the RCMP is independent of the government, so I do not direct them to do certain things. Certainly they consult with us and seek our input. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Ms. Green.

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So to give this idea an example to make it more tangible, what was the process that ended with government support for the Child Exploitation Unit? How does an issue like that get inserted into policing priorities and the relationship between the police and the government? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Ms. Green. Minister.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Thank you. This has been a priority for some time. What happened in the past, though, because this is a very specialized area involving complex warrants, complex evidence and difficult court cases often we had to bring in RCMP from other jurisdictions which is incredibly expensive and inefficient. So what was decided by the RCMP is that they would set up their own unit here to respond to this complex and serious situation. Perhaps I could ask the deputy minister to expand on that. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Mr. Goldney.

MR. GOLDNEY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just further to the Minister's response, we do engage with the RCMP as we administer the contract, and, quite often, the RCMP will identify internal pressures or national trends that require that we look at ways of addressing them in the territories, as well. Those conversations are usually quite useful and do allow that two-way conversation about how RCMP direction of their resources lines up with the needs of the territory. On that example, there was complete alignment, so it was a very easy discussion, where we were able to say we do support that initiative and will seek additional resources to make that happen. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Goldney. Ms. Green.

MS. GREEN: Yes. I will make this my final question. So, if we wanted to see a specialized sexual assault unit established in Yellowknife, what steps would be required to make that a reality? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Ms. Green. Minister.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Ultimately, that would be a decision of the RCMP. However, as I mentioned, we do consult with them. If we thought this was a particularly good idea, which I imagine we might, I could certainly bring it forth to the commanding officer, and then he could respond. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. As there are no further questions or comments, I will call this activity. Page 257, Justice, community justice and policing, operations expenditure summary, total activity, \$5,238,000. Mr. Thompson.

COMMITTEE MOTION 65-18(2):
TABLED DOCUMENT 261-18(2): MAIN
ESTIMATES 2017-2018, DEPARTMENT OF
JUSTICE, DEFERRAL OF COMMUNITY JUSTICE
AND POLICING ACTIVITY,
CARRIED

MR. THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I move that this committee defer further consideration of the activity, community justice and policing, in the Department of Justice, Main Estimates, 2017-18, on page 257, at this time. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Thompson. There is a motion to defer. The motion is on the floor and being distributed. The motion is

in order and non-debatable. All those in favour? All those opposed?

---Carried

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Committee, we have deferred community justice and policing. We will continue on to the next activity, corrections. It can be found starting at page 260, continuing on to page 263. Do we have comments or questions on corrections? If so, please specify the page which you are speaking on. Ms. Green.

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'd like to ask some questions about inmates serving federal time in the Northwest Territories. I will start by asking: can the Minister tell us approximately how many federal inmates are serving time in the Northwest Territories at this point?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Ms. Green. Minister.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Yes, I can. I see the figure as of today is nine. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Ms. Green.

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I'd like the Minister to comment on whether this is an increase, a decrease, or an average, say, over the last five years. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Ms. Green. Minister.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Although the number does go up and down, certainly, I have seen higher ones at other times, but I think this is more or less within the average. There is probably a range of numbers, but I don't think this is anything out of the ordinary, neither extraordinarily high nor extraordinarily low. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Ms. Green.

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I am wondering if the Minister can tell us about the decision to have federal inmates serve their time in the NWT versus sending them south. How does Corrections help make that decision? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Ms. Green. Minister.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Federal inmates are those who receive a sentence more than two years. I understand that Corrections Canada is the ultimate determinant of where they will be placed, although they do consult with the prison authorities here. Judges, for example, can recommend but cannot

actually determine the placement. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Ms. Green.

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So what kinds of issues would Corrections NWT look at in deciding whether we have the appropriate facility for someone who is serving federal time, or is that not a question that gets asked?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Ms. Green. Minister.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: The determination, Mr. Chair, as to where an inmate will serve his time is dependent on a series of factors: obviously, where they are from; the length of their sentence; access, also, to programs. Sometimes there are specialized programs that can only be delivered in the South. Certainly, all those things would be factors in making that determination. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Ms. Green.

MS. GREEN: Thank you. Could the Minister tell us: about how many inmates get sent south because the programming isn't available here in the North? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Ms. Green. Minister.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Often, those ones who are sent south, if it is for the reasons of access to programming, are inmates in need of specialized psychiatric or psychological assistance. Unfortunately, I don't know. I don't think I have the numbers in front of me, and it may be difficult to actually obtain those numbers. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Ms. Green.

MS. GREEN: Thank you. So, probably the question of can the programming be provided in the North or whether qualified staff can be hired, it is going to be difficult to answer without knowing how many inmates this applies to. Is that correct? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Ms. Green. Minister.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Often, the numbers of those in need of these specialized services who are actually serving penitentiary time are not all that numerous, so I don't think we would have the numbers required to set up specialized services here in the Northwest Territories. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Ms. Green.

MS. GREEN: Thank you for that answer, and thank you, Mr. Chair. What kind of programming is offered to people who are on remand in the North Slave Correctional Centre? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Ms. Green. Minister.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: I know that this was a gap that was identified some time ago. We are trying to address that gap. Perhaps I could have the deputy minister expand on that. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Ms. Green.

MS. GREEN: I think the deputy minister is going to address that gap. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): I apologize. I was trying to do two things at once. Mr. Goldney.

MR. GOLDNEY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. That has been an issue and a challenge for correctional facilities, not just in our jurisdiction but all jurisdictions. The challenge quite often is that the length of stay for remanded inmates is largely unknown and depends on court scheduling and other factors, so it becomes very challenging and very difficult to provide programming in every case. We do, however, make effort and have made effort to make programming, where available, to remanded inmates.

The other challenge, of course, is sometimes the security levels for remanded inmates might be higher than our program allows for at any given time, so that does present a challenge, not unlike other jurisdictions in that regard. Where we can provide the programs and make them available to remanded inmates, we make every effort to. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you. Ms. Green.

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I wonder if the Minister could provide a little extra detail such as what percentage of remanded inmates do get any kind of programming and what kind of programming is most commonly offered to them? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Ms. Green. Minister.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I do not have those figures before us, but we believe we could assemble those figures and provide them. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Ms. Green.

MS. GREEN: Thank you very much to the Minister for making that commitment to come back with what percentage of inmates get some kind of programming and what kind of programming they get. I think this is my last question in this section, and that is the financial impact of taking federal inmates. I am assuming that Corrections Canada pays the territorial government for housing federal inmates. What do they pay in this case? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you. Ms. Green. Minister.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Yes, Mr. Chair, I do know that the federal government does in fact pay for inmates who are up here, so it is not as though we suffer any loss from it. In fact, I understand, looking at some figures, that \$1.6 million is anticipated, and the actuals in 2015-16 were for \$1.35 million.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Anything further? Ms. Green.

MS. GREEN: No, that's everything. Thank you very much.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Ms. Green. Next I have Mr. McNeely.

MR. MCNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am looking at page 262 here and it is a carryover from the grants and contributions from the previous page on 261. My question, Mr. Chair, is: who is this grant going to and are we seeing any results, seeing that it is the second year of operation?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. McNeely. Ms. Bolstad.

MS. BOLSTAD: Corrections is currently working on a model for the contribution and funds that you see there. They are anticipating having that done in the next month or so for community organizations to access it. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Ms. Bolstad. Mr. McNeely.

MR. MCNEELY: Yes, if this budget 2017-18 is going towards that, did we have this program and who it went to from last year? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. McNeely. Minister.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I understand that we did not disburse any funds under this category last year. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Mr. McNeely.

MR. MCNEELY: I am sorry, Mr. Chair. Can the Minister repeat that there? I was listening to two voices at the same time.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. McNeely. Minister.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Yes, we did not disburse any funds under this category last year. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Mr. McNeely.

MR. MCNEELY: Yes, I just want to add to the wilderness programming and make a comment. I think some of us addressed it last year as well, the need for wilderness corrections programming, so it will be nice to see something done this year that we can have a showcase on integration corrections rehabilitation or corrections wilderness program done this coming year. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. McNeely. Would the Minister like to respond?

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Yes, we understand what the Member is saying. Wilderness programming has had some challenges in the past in finding the correct providers of the program, if I can put it that way. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Anything further? Mr. McNeely.

MR. MCNEELY: Nothing further, Mr. Chair. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. McNeely. Next Mr. Testart.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just want to talk about something that is very important to my constituents in Kam Lake, namely the security around the North Slave Correctional Centre. So are we on track to make those security improvement to the facility that will prevent future escapes? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. Testart. Minister Sebert.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Yes, Mr. Chair, we did examine the issues surrounding the escapes in the summer and we are very interested in making corrections so that this will not happen again. It is turning out that this is a more complex and expensive matter than we anticipated. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Minister Sebert. Mr. Testart.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am all for brevity, but I was hoping the Minister could give

a bit more detail than just it is increasingly complex. Kam Lakers need better answers than that, so I will turn it back to the Minister, if you do not mind, and get a bit more detail on these complexities. How much are they going to cost, and if the department is in a position to make these necessary improvements to keep my constituents safe? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. Testart. Minister Sebert.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Yes, Mr. Chair. The courtyard, if I can put it that way, from which the escape took place is no longer accessible by the inmates. The issue is what type of fencing may be required, but perhaps I could turn the matter over to the deputy minister to expand on that. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Minister Sebert. Mr. Goldney.

MR. GOLDNEY: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and unfortunately we are a little constrained in talking about the details of the security measures that will be required and will be put in place in a public setting, but what we can say is as far as moving the necessary work forward, the department has done a critical incident report into that that highlighted areas where we could seek some improvements. Some of this did require some specialized and specific engineering studies, and those have been done and have been undertaken. The next step will be to implement that work, so we are looking forward to moving that forward as quickly as we can. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. Goldney. Mr. Testart.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am pleased to hear that the studies have been done, the engineering studies, so we have an idea of what needs to be done. Is this going to be a capital expenditure that comes forward in the capital budget later this year?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. Testart. Minister Sebert.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes, it appears that improvements that are needed will involve perhaps considerable capital costs, but as Robert Frost said "Good fences make good neighbours."

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Back on the other side of the fence there, Mr. Testart.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So again, is this going to be implemented in the fall through the capital budget or is it simply in the capital planning process? I am wondering when, again, my

constituents will have certainty that this problem is solved. There are more houses going in right next to the jail every day, it seems like. It is a growing neighbourhood and I want to make sure that the people of Kam Lake have certainty that the facility that is right next to their families is a secure facility. So can we have certainty that this is moving along in this capital budget or if we are merely saying into the capital planning process at this point? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. Testart. Mr. Goldney.

MR. GOLDNEY: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and certainly our goal is to see some of these needs addressed as quickly as possible, and we are anticipating things happening as soon as this summer. Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I do not want to pre-empt the approval processes that may be required.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. Goldney. Next Mr. Testart.

MR. TESTART: Thank you for that. You have my support, 100 per cent of it. Whatever you need, make it happen. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. Testart. Mr. Beaulieu.

MR. BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, a couple of questions for the Minister. I would like to ask the Minister if the Corrections, that includes the Correction Division out of headquarters, follows the affirmative action policy? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. Minister Sebert.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Yes, Mr. Chair. Like the rest of the government, the department does follow the affirmative action policy. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Minister Sebert. Mr. Beaulieu.

MR. BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, can the Minister commit to providing human resource stats for Corrections pertaining to affirmative action, the three categories, Priority 1, 2, and 3, including senior management positions? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. Minister Sebert.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Yes, Mr. Chair. I do believe we do have those figures, so we can certainly provide them. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Minister Sebert. Mr. Beaulieu.

MR. BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. That is all I have.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. Mr. Simpson.

MR. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I was wondering if committee could get an update as to the status of the warden position at the FMCC. I am aware that it was vacant and it was being staffed by an acting warden. Could I get an update from the Minister? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. Simpson. Mr. Goldney.

MR. GOLDNEY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am happy to report that we have staffed that position with a hire with considerable experience. The plan moving forward is to use this as an opportunity for mentoring and building capacities locally. We do have somebody filling that position right now. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. Goldney. Mr. Simpson.

MR. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Is the position filled permanently right now? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. Simpson. Mr. Goldney.

MR. GOLDNEY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I believe the hire was for a term period, but it is a permanent position filled with the term hire for a certain term.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. Goldney. Mr. Simpson.

MR. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The person who is in that position now is there on a term. Is the plan to make that term indefinite, or is that person there to fill the position temporarily? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. Simpson. Minister Sebert.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: I understand that it is a casual hire. This person is a very experienced warden. I am quite sure he is not intending to spend the rest of his career, or what might be left of it, in the Northwest Territories. It is a question of bringing in someone to mentor people who might be considered for that position. Also, I believe he will be assisting with the Fort Smith jail. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Minister Sebert. Mr. Simpson.

MR. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I guess my concern is that someone, I believe, from out of the province or out of the territory was brought in to fill a position that local people have been acting in with considerable experience themselves. It is kind of demoralizing to a workplace when something like that happens. My concern is that this is a permanent position that we are again bringing in people from the South to fill positions that Northerners can fill themselves. Is this the case, Minister Sebert?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. Simpson. Minister Sebert.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Mr. Chair, it was really a question of bringing in a very experienced warden who had experience, as I understand, it in both the Yukon and in British Columbia with the full understanding that this person would only be there temporarily to assist and mentor staff in both Fort Smith and Hay River. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Minister Sebert. Mr. Simpson.

MR. SIMPSON: Thank you, Minister. That was the answer I was looking for, intention to be there only temporarily to mentor staff. No further questions right now. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. Simpson. Mr. Thompson.

MR. THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. In regards to the wilderness programming, I notice a reduction of \$281,000. Could the Minister explain what that reduction was. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. Thompson. Minister Sebert.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: That was an accounting issue. It was a transfer to community justice. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Minister Sebert. Mr. Thompson.

MR. THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am just trying to figure this out. There was \$281,000 transferred to community justice, but when you look at the community justice page, it is only \$249,000. We are \$32,000 short. Where did that money go? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. Thompson. Minister Sebert.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Thank you. I understand that this is really an issue of accounting. That money was transferred to another location. Perhaps I should have Ms. Bolstad respond, because I think she has a better answer.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Minister Sebert. Ms. Bolstad.

MS. BOLSTAD: In the community justice and policing expenditure category comparison on the expenditure summary page, my apologies, on page 257, you will see a growth in contract services. That transfer is there along with some additional funding received from the victim federal services agreement.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Ms. Bolstad. Mr. Thompson.

MR. THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I thank her for providing the answer. However, I still don't understand this. We have \$281,000 that got transferred over to community justice policing. There was \$249,000, and there is still short \$32,000. Where is that \$32,000? Where did that get transferred to? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. Thompson. Minister Sebert.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I don't really know, but perhaps Ms. Bolstad could.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Mr. Goldney.

MR. GOLDNEY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I think what the Member is seeing in the Corrections budget is the remainder of the fund for wilderness programming. That still stays there. It is a portion of it that was moved out to community justice. They are not numbers that should line up. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. Goldney. Mr. Thompson.

MR. THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I thank Mr. Goldney for his answer. When I take \$562,000 and you take \$281,000, you subtract that you come up with \$281,000. Maybe my math is wrong, but when I am looking at it, only on community justice and policing there was \$249,000. In my math, we are \$32,000 short. Where did that money go? Was it transferred to somewhere else? I am looking at it, and it doesn't jibe with what is in community justice and policing. Can the Minister please advise us, where has this extra \$32,000 gone? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. Thompson. Minister Sebert.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: We are attempting to answer this question. I am wondering if the Member could identify where he is pointing to on the community justice page?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Minister Sebert. We are on Corrections. Pages 260

to 263. Would you make reference within those pages there? Mr. Thompson.

MR. THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair, yes. On page 261, we see a reduction in wilderness programming of \$281,000. I was told that we transferred the money to community justice and policing under contract services on page 256, but it only comes out to \$249,000. We are out \$32,000. I am asking: where is this money? Where did it go? Did it go somewhere, transfer to another area? We are out \$32,000. Unless my math is wrong, I don't know where it is. That is why I am asking the Minister where it went. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. Thompson. Ms. Bolstad.

MS. BOLSTAD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. If you reference the 2016-2017 Main Estimates column and not the revised estimates, the number there is the \$698,000 on the contract services line within community justice. The increase between the 2016-2017 Main Estimates and the 2017-2018 Main Estimates is actually \$357,000. The \$281,000 is within that increase. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Ms. Bolstad. Mr. Thompson.

MR. THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am looking at the main estimates, 2017-2018 and 2016-2017. The money is there. Can I get the Minister to make a commitment to show me exactly where the \$32,000 is? Because it still does not add up. Can I just get that commitment, because we could be here for a while longer? If I could get the commitment for the department to show me where this extra \$32,000 have gone to, I would greatly appreciate that. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. Thompson. Ms. Bolstad, would you provide assistance for clarification to that request?

MS. BOLSTAD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. It is a question of some complexity. We will attempt to provide those figures, and I believe we can. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Minister Sebert.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Going beyond the word "attempt," you will get your clarification.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you. Mr. Thompson.

MR. THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The SFCC in Hay River, is the remand part of the jail fit to house remand inmates? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. Thompson. Minister Sebert.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: It is not currently being used for remand prisoners. I don't know, frankly, whether it would provide adequate security for remands. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Minister Sebert. Mr. Thompson.

MR. THOMPSON: Sorry, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Mr. Simpson.

MR. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. It is currently not being used for remand. It is my understanding that it is fit to be used for remand. Offenders who are held in Yellowknife but whose trials are in the South Slave, I see them almost every time I fly back to Hay River on the plane. An RCMP officer and a remand inmate is being held in Yellowknife, and they fly later on back that day. That is \$2,000 a trip for one inmate for one court appearance. We have a functioning remand facility in Hay River, and I am not quite sure why it is not being utilized. I believe Yellowknife is the only place with remand inmates. Is there a rationale why there is not a remand still in Hay River? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. Simpson. Minister Sebert.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Yes, although we, in the past, did have remand prisoners at South Mackenzie, it is a low-risk institution, and therefore no longer thought adequate to house remands. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Minister Sebert. Mr. Simpson.

MR. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The correction personnel have the same training as they do in Yellowknife, and there is a separate, secure remand area, so I am not quite sure. Can I get a little more explanation as to why it is no longer fit? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. Simpson. Minister Sebert.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: As I say, the South Mackenzie Correctional Centre has been identified as a low-risk facility, and in our view, no longer appropriate for remand prisoners. Whatever the case was in the past, it is now felt that the facility which does house, as I say, low-risk prisoners is not suitable for remands. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Minister Sebert. Mr. Simpson.

MR. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I guess prisoners are just more dangerous nowadays. I did not get much of an explanation there of why it is no longer suitable when its classification has not changed. I am still not clear about that. I guess I will have to follow that up, because I do not think I am going to get an answer.

When someone is sent, where is the determination made where that person will serve their time if it is two years less a day? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. Simpson. Minister Sebert.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Occasionally, suggestions, if I can put it that way, are made by the judiciary at the time of sentencing but, generally, the Corrections staff will make a determination of risk, available treatment programs, and so on, to determine where they should place a prisoner. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Minister Sebert. Mr. Simpson.

MR. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Are those decisions made in Yellowknife? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. Simpson. Minister Sebert.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: I understand, yes, they are made in Yellowknife in consultation with case workers. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Minister Sebert. Mr. Simpson.

MR. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I understand Yellowknife, the correctional facility here is often quite full, quite nicely staffed, whereas the correctional centres elsewhere, the numbers seem to be dwindling. Remands are disappearing. Can the Minister confirm that every single inmate at the correctional centre in Yellowknife is classified as a high risk, I guess?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. Simpson. Minister Sebert.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: No. I mean at North Slave, it is a high risk-facility, but that doesn't mean that other inmates cannot be held there. In fact, there are medium-risk inmates and some low-risk inmates held in the Yellowknife facility. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Minister Sebert. Mr. Simpson.

MR. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Is there a geographical reason for that? Is it because their home communities are closer? Because I know for

a fact that that is not the case. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. Simpson. Minister Sebert.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Yes, I think geography does have some play in determining where an inmate is going to be placed. As I say, sometimes the judiciary makes a comment during sentencing that placing the inmate at a certain location should be considered. There are a variety of factors that enter into where an inmate is placed: risk; availability of programs; geography; close to family; and so on. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Minister Sebert. Mr. Simpson.

MR. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The Minister's statement made sometime this week commented on the availability of programs in all the facilities. It is my understanding there were quite a bit of programming at SMCC that was not available in the North Slave at one time. I guess I will have to continue looking into this, but no further questions. I am good on this topic. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. Simpson. Did you want to comment on that, Minister Sebert?

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: It can be that certain programs are available in institutions outside Yellowknife, so that would, of course, factor in if there was a very specialized program that was available elsewhere, then that would be a consideration on the placement of the inmate. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Minister Sebert. Seeing no further questions, we will go back to page 261, Justice, corrections, operations expenditure summary, total activity, \$36,616,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, committee. We will now proceed to the next activity, court services. The activity description is found on page 264, the activity detail is on page 265, and the active positions information item is found on page 266. Does committee have any questions or comments? Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. I believe this is the section of the Justice budget where the department is trying to reduce court circuit costs, so I am just wondering how those discussions were going with the judiciary? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Minister Sebert.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Mr. Chair, it is not entirely a two-way street. I think the judiciary is aware of our concerns and the desires to keep costs under control, but, of course, their concerns are to make sure that justice is properly delivered and on a timely basis, so we, to some degree, have to defer to their concerns. However, the concern about costs is before them. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Minister Sebert. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. So can we actually anticipate any costs savings then? I think, from what I can recall, you had forecast expending \$200,000, more or less, this year compared to last year, so is that really going to happen? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Minister Sebert.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Yes, Mr. Chair. I mean, the issue is before the judiciary. We are sort of looking at ways that we might make the system more efficient. There is a long tradition, going back to Justice Sissons and Moreau, of going to every community, but we here are wondering whether that is now still the most efficient system. We are optimistic that we can reduce costs. Certainly, the judiciary is aware of our concerns in this area. Obviously, we can't direct them to not go on circuit or anything like that, but they are aware of the concern. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Minister Sebert. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. Good luck with that. I will just move on to the next issue, which, of course, is one of my favourites, the closure of the law library. I did see, I believe at some point, a massive report, whereby people must have spent literally weeks huddled in a room somewhere, figuring out where all of the materials were going to be disposed of and where they were going to end up. Where are we at with this? I think it was supposed to be a research centre. Is it actually open now, in the courthouse? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Minister Sebert.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Mr. Chair, the old library is still open. We are not ordering new texts, I don't believe, and it is not staffed anymore. It is still available to the lawyers and the public at large on request, although I don't think there have actually been any requests. We are hoping to develop a

resource centre that will meet the current needs. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Minister Sebert. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. So do we have an opening date for the resource centre, yet? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Minister Sebert.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: I wish I could give a date. It is contingent on plans for renovations of the courthouse building. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Minister Sebert. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. So is it going to happen in 2017-18? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Minister Sebert.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: That is our hope, Mr. Chair, but no guarantees can be given.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Minister Sebert. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. I am not sure I have a lot of confidence, but maybe I can ask, then: has this been communicated to and how is it going with the Law Society and the Law Foundation? Are they involved in these discussions? Do they know about this resource centre? Are they being asked to contribute? What is going on? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Mr. Goldney.

MR. GOLDNEY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I can report that there have been discussions with the Law Society and the Law Foundation. In fact, the report that the Member referenced was shared with both the Law Society and the Law Foundation with the intent of getting feedback. The report really was meant to not just describe what resources we are disposing of, but it was really meant to inform what resources need to continue to be held in a resource centre and would best serve the needs of the profession.

We do recognize and value the engagement of the Law Society and the Law Foundation in those discussions. We have also, of course, signalled an openness to have contributions from the Law Society and the Law Foundation as they have in the past supported the law library's collection. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. Goldney. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. I am glad. Thank you for the answer from the deputy minister. So, since the massive disposition report, if I can call it that, has been sent to the Law Society and the Law Foundation, has there actually been a face-to-face meeting with these organizations to talk about how to move forward with the disposition of the materials and this new resource centre? So, a face-to-face meeting, has that actually happened? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Mr. Goldney.

MR. GOLDNEY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I can report that I have had a face-to-face meeting with members of the relevant committee of the Law Society, looking at this issue, and have had discussions and was pleased that they were very appreciative and thankful for the work that went into that report to inform decisions of what would be retained. We certainly welcome those discussions, and we have been sharing with them the plans for the resource centre. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. Goldney. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. I am glad to hear that there has been a face-to-face meeting. Can the Minister make a commitment to share that kind of information with the standing committee so that we know what is going on? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Minister Sebert.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Yes, we can make that commitment.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Minister Sebert. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. I am glad to get that cooperative answer from the Minister. I don't have anything further. Thanks.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Mr. Testart.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I notice that contract services has decreased from a high of \$1 million in 2015-16 down to \$365,000. Could the Minister explain that variance? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. Testart. Minister Sebert.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: I am told that this is merely a budgeting change, but perhaps Ms. Bolstad could expand on that not-terribly-helpful answer.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Minister Sebert. Ms. Bolstad.

MS. BOLSTAD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. We have had some accounting adjustments to more accurately reflect our expenditures, which the budget line item may not as accurately reflect.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Ms. Bolstad. Mr. Testart.

MR. TESTART: Thank you. I will chalk that up to an accounting practice, Mr. Chairman. Under court reporters, there has been a slight decrease. My understanding of this program is that the court reporters' function heavily relies on contract services with court reporters from Alberta, I believe, is where they are based, from Edmonton. Does this budget line item reflect the cost of hiring the contract services for those reporters, or is it in-house staff? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. Testart. Minister Sebert.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: There is a contract with a provider in Edmonton. Our delivery of this service really is dependent both on staff and the contractors from Edmonton.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Minister Sebert. Mr. Testart.

MR. TESTART: How much of the \$726,000 under the line item court reporters is used for contracts and how much is used for our own staff? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. Testart. Minister Sebert.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I understand that about \$400,000 of that goes to the contractor.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Minister Sebert. Mr. Testart.

MR. TESTART: Is it the department's opinion that using the contract service is a more efficient use of resources than having our own in-house reporters? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. Testart. Minister Sebert.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Due to the demands and requirements of the position, we wouldn't have the staff to provide court reporters who are often needed in the outlying communities. I think there

has been a reliance on court reporters as long as I have been here. We do not have sufficient staff in-house, and therefore are relying on providers from, I think they are from Alberta. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Minister Sebert. Mr. Testart.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I guess what I am getting at is I think what I see from these numbers and my own knowledge of this service is that the contract services are a more efficient way to deliver the program for less. In the wake of reductions across the board to find efficiencies, why have we not considered axing this staff component part of this in favour of a more efficient way to deliver the service?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. Testart. Minister Sebert.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Yes, of course, we are always looking at ways to make the system more efficient. One of the advantages of using the contractors from Edmonton, it is as-and-when-needed. They have a large pool of people, I think, who work for them so that they can provide court reporters on a timely basis when required. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Minister Sebert. Mr. Testart.

MR. TESTART: I am going to move off this, Mr. Chair. That is a suggestion I will make for future reductions if we are looking at finding efficiencies. Cabinet colleagues, there you go. There is an idea.

I would like to ask about Wellness Court now. Are we still providing the same level of Wellness Court service as we were in 2017? Going forward, I notice a small reduction. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. Testart. Mr. Goldney.

MR. GOLDNEY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. We are providing the same level of service with the Wellness Court. We are very happy with how that program has been operating. I should be clear that that small reduction only relates to work that was required to develop an evaluation framework for the program. Now that that evaluation framework has been done, you see that slight reduction there. The ongoing operation of the Wellness Court isn't compromised in any way. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. Goldney. Mr. Testart.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate that response. I think it is a great program, and I encourage the department to continue to support it

and find ways to expand upon the program. On to sheriff services. I welcome the increase and the new staff positions and also the Minister's response to oral questions I previously have had in this House. That indicated the department was favourable towards expanding the role of sheriffs to fully cover court security and prisoner escort. Where are we at with that? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. Testart. Mr. Goldney.

MR. GOLDNEY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. That is something that the department continues to look at and is looking forward to reflecting changes as we move forward. Right now, we are still discussing how some of that could work. We look forward to future changes, Mr. Chair. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. Goldney. Mr. Testart.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Has the department spoken to Nunavut and seen how they have accommodated the shift in their court services function? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. Testart. Mr. Goldney.

MR. GOLDNEY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Nunavut has seen some changes, in particular is the role of RCMP and prisoner escorts, but that has been limited to Iqaluit for now. We certainly have been and continue to have discussions with colleagues in our sister territory. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. Goldney. Mr. Testart.

MR. TESTART: The two new sheriff positions, are they located in Yellowknife? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. Testart. Minister Sebert.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Yes, they are in Yellowknife, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Minister Sebert. Mr. Testart.

MR. TESTART: Nothing further. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. Testart. Mr. Simpson.

MR. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just one question. There was controversy with the law library because there was a sign-in form that apparently people signed, people didn't sign. You had the numbers of the department, the numbers, they were not the same. Is there going to be some sort

of way to track how many people actually use whatever this new iteration of the law library is, so next time we have budget cuts there will be no confusion as to the number of users? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. Simpson. Minister Sebert.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Clearly, the resource centre will be a far smaller operation, therefore far less expensive than the current library. There won't be a librarian there, so I think it will be rather difficult to monitor numbers. In view of the costs, I don't think it is a particular concern. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Minister Sebert. Mr. Simpson.

MR. SIMPSON: Nothing further. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you Mr. Simpson. Seeing no further questions or comments from committee, please turn to page 265. Justice, court services, operations expenditure summary, total activity, \$13,655,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, committee.

We will now proceed to the next activity, legal services. The activity description is found on page 267. The activity details is on 268. Active positions information item is found on page 269. I will remind committee to specify the page on which your items can be found when asking questions. Does committee have any questions or comments? Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. I believe this is the section where we would find the closure of the Beaufort Delta Legal Aid Clinic. Is that correct? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Minister Sebert.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Yes, I believe that's correct. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Minister Sebert. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. In an effort to increase access to justice here, I think this would result in a reduction of \$102,000. Is that correct, Mr. Chair? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Minister Sebert.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Yes, that's correct as to the amount. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Minister Sebert. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. So I thought the Minister was actually going to agree to the first part of my question there as well. So maybe he can just tell us a little bit more about why we have to close the Legal Aid clinic in the Beaufort Delta and how that contributes towards improving access to justice? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Minister.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Yes, Mr. Chair, there had been a clinic for some time up in Inuvik and initially there were several lawyers up there, at one point as many as three, I believe. However, it was a different circumstance because there was a resident judge in the community, the Crown attorneys had an office in the community, and there was the Legal Aid office.

As time went by, it became increasingly difficult, in fact near impossible, to staff the office, in particular with criminal lawyers, which was the greatest need. There have not been criminal lawyers up there for I think at least 10 years. So there was a family law lawyer up there whose position was transferred to Yellowknife. So yes, it probably would be better to have clinics in the communities, but the younger lawyers seem to like the bright lights of Yellowknife. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. So if someone needs Legal Aid service and they're in Inuvik or Tuktoyaktuk, how do they actually get it, then? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Minister.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Well, with respect to the criminal law cases, the courts, of course, go on circuit and at least in some of the communities I believe the lawyers go in a day or so early. Obviously, it's not ideal, but it is the system we've been using for many, many years. The courts do visit virtually every community, so certainly there couldn't have been community clinics in every community. At least when I was involved, we used to go up to Inuvik a day or so before court started so we could interview people. As I say, not the ideal circumstance, but we simply could not staff the clinic in Inuvik properly. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. I appreciate that response. So how do we actually improve access to justice for these people? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Minister.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: I'd like to point out that we do now have an outreach program, which has been developed over the last month or years so that this is somebody who is often going out to the community not at the same time as the court. She tends to deal with many non-criminal matters but that is a way in which we are bringing justice to the communities. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Nothing further from Mr. O'Reilly. Further to this section, this activity? Mr. Testart.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Does the department maintain court workers in every region? Sorry, let me clarify. In every regional centre where court circuits are held? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Testart. Minister.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: I'm just trying to remember now. There is a resident court worker in Fort Smith. There is a resident court worker in Hay River. There is a resident court worker in Fort Simpson. I think the position has just recently been filled. There are resident court workers in Yellowknife; a resident court worker in Inuvik. There may be one other that I've overlooked. So there are not court workers in every community, but there's certainly at least one court worker, I believe, in every region. Sorry, I was thinking there was one in Norman Wells, but I believe actually there's a court worker in Fort McPherson. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Mr. Testart.

MR. TESTART: Does the Minister believe that there is a sufficient number of court workers to handle the Legal Aid client caseloads that are currently facing the Commission? Thank you

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Testart. Minister.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Yes, I can mainly somewhat speak from my own experience, that when I travelled around the communities the court workers were invaluable to me, and their caseload was heavy but not incredibly heavy. I imagine the greatest pressure might be in Yellowknife, where there is weekly court going on and there would be a

heavy load for local court workers to carry. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Mr. Testart.

MR. TESTART: Nothing further, thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Testart. I see nothing further, but I'll give committee a moment. Legal Aid Services. Seeing none, I'll call the page. Justice. To page 268: Justice, Legal Aid Services, operations expenditure summary, total activity, \$5,941,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, committee. Moving on. Next activity: Office of the Regulator of Oil and Gas Operations. It can be found on pages 270 to 272. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. I'm just wondering if the Minister might like to have a conversation with himself about switching this over to the Lands department.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Minister.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: It would be a conversation with myself. I can't really see any particular advantage to that. I mean, it would still be reporting to a Minister of Cabinet. Of course it was previously in ITI, and I think there were some concerns about that because of the promotional aspect of ITI; now it's in Justice. That would seem to me reasonable. I wouldn't see much difference in it being in Lands. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. It's just a very odd fit that OROGO comes under the Social Development Committee. In any event, maybe the Minister can just refresh my memory about the independence of OROGO when it comes to them developing their own budget. Were they asked to meet certain fiscal reduction targets that Cabinet had set? What sort of financial independence does this organization really have? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Minister.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: I really don't -- I don't think there were any significant changes in the budget that were in any way requested by Cabinet because we do see them as independent. I'm not certain how the process works as to when they are submitting their need for funds. Certainly there was no attempt to cut them back.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. Thank you for that very helpful answer. Can the Minister get back to me in writing then with some kind of response about what the financial independence is of OROGO? Do they submit a budget to a Minister or to Cabinet, and who approves it? Can the Minister get back to the Regular MLAs with a written response? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Minister.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Of course the funds allocated to them have to be approved here. I understand they submit their own budget. Perhaps Mr. Goldney would like to expand on that a bit. I am not absolutely sure of the process.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: I am not Mr. Goldney.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): My apologies. I will use my ear piece from now on. Mr. Goldney.

MR. GOLDNEY: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and yes, OROGO, just like any other division, does have influence on its budgets and as responsible managers will identify their needs and pressures, and we do see those reflected in the budgets that they put forward, but they are tested in the same way any other division or departments would be to make sure that what is being put forward is reasonable and appropriate. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Goldney. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. That is helpful, but I guess I want to know at the end of the day who decides what goes into the mains. Presumably it is the Finance Minister, or FMB, and is the OROGO budget then submitted to FMB for approval to go into the mains or is it completely independent, they get to submit whatever budget they want? Who makes the final decision on the OROGO -- ultimately it comes here, but before who decides what is going to go into the mains for OROGO? Is that an FMB decision? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Minister.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: It is still a FMB decision, so it would come to FMB. Of course, ultimately it has to be approved here.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. So you know this is very murky again. So what kind of oversight or accountability then is there to the Minister of Justice when it comes to the OROGO budget? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Minister.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Well, I suppose, like any other department, there is some financial oversight, but I do not want to give anybody the idea that they are not independent in their operations, because that is the whole point. I mean I do not know how it is done in other jurisdictions, but I can assure the Members that OROGO is properly funded and they are independent. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. Yes, earlier I had asked if the Minister could just maybe put some of this in writing so we can get some clarity around how the budget for OROGO is put together, who reviews it and approves it at the end of the day, whether it is the Minister of Justice. I have heard it might be the Minister of Justice, it might be FMB. If he wants to take this away and come back in writing, I think that would be more helpful. Can I get a commitment from him to do that? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Minister.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Yes, I would be prepared to do that. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Mr. O'Reilly, anything further?

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks. Yes, I appreciate the Minister making that commitment and I look forward to the information. Thanks.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. I see nothing further on this section. I will call the activity, page 271, Justice, office of the regulator of oil and gas operations, operations expenditure summary, \$1,869,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, committee. Moving on. Mr. Beaulieu.

MR. BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I move that the Chair rise and report progress.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. There is a motion on the floor to report

progress. The motion is in order and non-debateable. All those in favour? All those opposed?

---Carried

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): I want to thank the witnesses for appearing here so late. Sergeant-at-Arms, please escort the witnesses from the Chamber. I want to thank the pages for sticking with us until well after they signed on for.

---Applause

I want to thank our audience, as well. I will now rise and report progress.

MR. SPEAKER: May I have the report, Member for Hay River North.

Report of Committee of the Whole

MR. SIMPSON: Mr. Speaker, your committee has been considering Tabled Document 261-18(2): Northwest Territories Main Estimates 2017-2018 and would like to report progress with three motions adopted. Mr. Speaker, I move that the report of the Committee of the Whole be concurred with.

MR. SPEAKER: Do we have a seconder? Member for Deh Cho.

---Carried

Item 23, third reading of bills. Madam Clerk, orders of the day.

Orders of the Day

COMMITTEE CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Ms. Thomas): Orders of the day for Tuesday, February 28, 2017, at 1:30 p.m.:

1. Prayer
2. Ministers' Statements
3. Members' Statements
4. Reports of Standing and Special Committees
5. Returns to Oral Questions
6. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery
7. Acknowledgements
8. Oral Questions
9. Written Questions
10. Returns to Written Questions
11. Replies to Commissioner's Opening Address
12. Petitions

13. Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills

14. Tabling of Documents

15. Notices of Motion

16. Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills

17. Motions

18. First Reading of Bills

19. Second Reading of Bills

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

- Bill 7, An Act to Amend the Revolving Funds Act

- Bill 13, Marriage Act

- Committee Report 6-18(2), Report on the Review of Bill 7: An Act to Amend the Revolving Funds Act

- Tabled Document 261-18(2), Northwest Territories Main Estimates, 2017-2018

21. Report of Committee of the Whole

22. Third Reading of Bills

23. Orders of the Day

MR. SPEAKER: Good job.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Masi, Madam Clerk. This House stands adjourned until Tuesday, February 28, 2017, at 1:30 p.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

