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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**Tuesday, February 26, 2019****Members Present**

Hon. Glen Abernethy, Mr. Beaulieu, Mr. Blake, Hon. Caroline Cochrane, Ms. Green, 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 1:31 p.m.

Prayer

---Prayer

DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr. Simpson): Welcome back, everyone. Item 2, Ministers' statements. Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment.

Ministers' Statements

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 154-18(3):
CONTINUED INVESTMENT IN TOURISM

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Mr. Speaker, our world-class tourism industry offers the greatest opportunity we have to grow and diversify our economy.

As we approach April 1st, the budget proposed for the next year fiscal year reflects this. It contains nearly \$6.3 million in contributions and program funding to support our tourism industry, an increase of \$800,000 from 2018-2019. It's a sign that this government recognizes the integral role tourism is playing in diversifying and modernizing our economy, and that we recognize our responsibility to move this sector to the next level.

Today I would like to share with Members some of the investments the Government of the Northwest Territories, led by the Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment, has planned for the tourism sector. We will invest in training products which will build the skills of our tourism operators to better deliver the unforgettable visitor experiences that they offer. We will continue to invest in the development of new tourism products; community-level tourism infrastructure; and NWT Tourism, our destination marketer, whose mandate is to promote our spectacular territory across the country and around the globe.

These investments will build on the \$1.55 million that was invested in tourism-related businesses and initiatives this year. They will build on the investments we have made in Indigenous tourism alongside CanNor and the Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada. They will complement the ongoing work of regional tourism development

officers who deliver our programs and provide support to operators, communities, and Indigenous governments.

Last month I was pleased to announce the fifth consecutive year of increases in overnight visitors at our territorial parks. In spite of a wet and cloudy summer, our world-class parks and campgrounds continue to shine as attractions for visitors and residents.

Mr. Speaker, I have recognized in this Legislative Assembly that the tourism growth that we are nurturing is going to come with growing pains. We are taking steps through this transition to ensure that, above everything else, our tourism sector is operating with a focus on safety.

Up-to-date safety plans are a prerequisite for tourism operator licenses. In the North Slave, we are piloting initiatives aimed at getting aurora tours off the main highway, and are working with our industry partners to increase visitor awareness to the potential risks of cold weather, un-frozen lakes, and interacting with wildlife.

We have also introduced a vehicle identification program in the North Slave for all tourism operators delivering vehicle tours. It is a pilot project that we hope will help us identify which operators are working within our licensing process and those who are not.

It should be noted that the Tourism 2020 Strategy is expiring, and we must build on its success with a new strategy. Our new Tourism 2025 Strategy will guide tourism investment by the Government of the Northwest Territories from fiscal years 2021-2022 to 2025-2026. Its creation will begin this fall, with a multi-platform consultation process that includes industry and a wide range of tourism stakeholders.

Mr. Speaker, we know that our economy will gain strength as it grows more diverse. As we continue to move forward, we can see that our strategies and approaches are working, and that our investments are paying off. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Members, I would like to draw your attention to the gallery. I would like to welcome Mr. Jim Antoine, former Premier, former Minister, and the current chair of the Northwest

Territories Health and Social Services Leadership Council.

---Applause

Ministers' statements. Minister of Health and Social Services.

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 155-18(3):
CULTURAL SAFETY ACTION PLAN

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Mr. Speaker, the government is committed to addressing health inequities experienced by our residents. In October of last year I provided information on the Department of Health and Social Services' plans to move forward with our cultural safety and relationship-based care approach, and today I am pleased to advise that the 2018-2020 Caring for Our People: Cultural Safety Action Plan will be tabled later today.

Research shows that Indigenous peoples experience a disproportionate amount of negative health and social outcomes in comparison to non-Indigenous people. It is our responsibility as a government to address this inequity head-on, especially given the fact that over 50 percent of the NWT's population is Indigenous. This is why it is critical that we develop a two-year action plan that will see immediate steps taken to address the health outcome gaps to promote healthy living and communities in the NWT.

Mr. Speaker, this action plan advances foundational work that began with the release of "Building a Culturally Respectful Health and Social Services System" in 2016.

Since the fall of 2017, the Department of Health and Social Services has held over 30 knowledge-sharing meetings with Indigenous and northern people to hear directly from them about their experiences, concerns, and aspirations for the NWT health and social services system. What we heard was that we need to transform our system so that it is rooted in relationships that are trusting, caring, and ongoing. The underlying theme in these meetings was the importance of cultural safety: an outcome where Indigenous peoples feel safe and respected, and free of racism and discrimination, when accessing health and social services.

Our action plan incorporates what we heard and provides direction on transforming the health and social services system through four objectives: creating an organizational culture of cultural safety; strengthening staff capacity for cultural safety; honouring traditional knowledge and healing approaches in care; and improving client and community experience.

Mr. Speaker, creating a health and social services system where cultural safety and relationship-based care is at the heart of everything we do requires a profound shift in how we operate and think about healthcare. It means that our health system will make it a priority to put the needs of our clients and their families first so that they feel safe and respected when accessing health and social programs and services. By making this shift, we hope to see improved access, patient experience, and health outcomes for all residents.

To ensure that we successfully implement our cultural safety action plan, we will be engaging with clients to identify whether their care has been culturally respectful; we will provide training to our staff so that they have the skills, knowledge, and behaviours to provide culturally safe care; and we will make sure that cultural safety is embedded throughout the NWT health and social services system, from policies to practice, and is supported by leadership throughout our organization.

Work is already under way for staff training, with three pilot training sessions held recently. The first and second pilot focused on bias and building relationships in the workforce, and the third focused on cultural competence. Feedback from participants will help us develop a cultural competency training package tailored to the cultural safety needs of NWT residents. The goal of the training package is to equip staff with the tools needed to identify and resolve hidden biases that they may have when interacting with their clients who are accessing services, programs, and support. We hope that this training, along with other actions we will take, will see attitudinal behaviours changes that can lead towards improved relationship-based care.

Throughout this process of firmly entrenching cultural safety in our health and social services system, we are committed to ensuring that the voices of Indigenous peoples are acknowledged, heard, and respected. To do this, we will increase awareness of client rights and responsibilities and develop mechanisms for feedback and complaints to support them on their care journey. We are already mapping out a system-wide client feedback process and quality assurance processes.

Mr. Speaker, another key component to embracing cultural safety is having a workforce that reflects the population that it serves. To further encourage our Indigenous residents to be practising members of our health and social services team, and to promote wellness throughout the territory, the department will be working with the Department of Finance, human resources section, as well as with Indigenous governments to encourage youth and individuals considering a different profession to get into the health and social services field.

To ensure that we are moving in the right direction, we will be monitoring progress. We are integrating data collection on cultural safety into existing monitoring plans, such as the patient experience questionnaire and community counselling program, to see how we are doing. This approach further reflects our approach to make cultural safety part of how we deliver programs and services throughout our system.

Mr. Speaker, taking action to improve the way that Indigenous residents access health and social services and creating a relationship-based care approach for all Northerners responds to multiple mandate commitments. More importantly, it is the right thing to do and helps us address our past, promotes reconciliation, and helps to build healthy, strong communities. By implementing what we heard, we can achieve our vision for a territory where Indigenous peoples, families, and communities enjoy physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual health and wellness. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Ministers' statements. Minister responsible for the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation.

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 156-18(3):
SENIORS' PLANNING STUDY

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Government of the Northwest Territories is committed to taking action so that seniors can age in place. We want to ensure that all seniors living within the Northwest Territories have the support and programs that they need to continue living in their own homes, if possible, and participate as full members in their community.

The number of seniors in our territory is growing at an extraordinary pace. While the population of the Northwest Territories has grown by one percent since 2004, the population of persons 60 years of age and older has grown by 53 percent. This trend is expected to continue well into the foreseeable future, compelling us to plan for how these changes will impact all of our systems.

Some housing efforts taken by this government to support seniors with their desire to age in place include the construction of seniors' independent eight-plex housing units in five communities: Aklavik, Fort Liard, Whati, Fort McPherson, and Fort Good Hope. A Seniors Aging-in-Place Retrofit Program was introduced, which helps make seniors' homes more durable and energy-efficient. The Northwest Territories Housing Corporation will soon introduce new multi-generational homeownership units in communities that will have a main-floor-accessible bedroom designed

specifically for families that will be supporting an elder in their home.

These innovative initiatives are already making a difference. The Seniors Aging-in-Place Retrofit Program is now one of the most accessed programs that the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation offers. The magnitude of the issue, however, means that we need to continually explore and examine other solutions.

Mr. Speaker, to further inform our government, as well as other governments, private industry, non-governmental organizations, and other stakeholders and decision-makers, I requested that the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation commission the Seniors' Planning Study to examine options related to independent housing for seniors.

This Seniors' Planning Study is an assessment of seniors' housing in all of the communities in the Northwest Territories, including current and future needs. The report provides a detailed review of the current context of the senior population, households, and the housing market.

Mr. Speaker, this study is divided into two distinct phases. Phase One of the study focused on reviewing and identifying existing conditions and trends for seniors' housing in the two locations that show the greatest demand: the city of Yellowknife and the town of Hay River. Part of the methodology for these two communities was to conduct focus group discussions with key stakeholders. We have included the interim report for those two communities in the final Seniors' Planning Study document.

Phase Two of the study was conducted as a tabletop exercise focused on analyzing available statistics for seniors' population growth and household formation for all communities in the Northwest Territories. The analysis is at a regional and community scale and reviews opportunities and challenges around seniors' housing in our more remote and isolated areas.

The Seniors' Planning Study is broken down into five chapters. The first chapter on Regional Community Overview provides a breakdown of the seniors' profile in each region. Housing preferences, indicators, and affordability targets were developed based on existing statistical data. The second chapter on Future Projections looks at future population growth for seniors in the Northwest Territories. The third chapter on Community Engagement examines the engagement that was conducted with the City of Yellowknife and the Town of Hay River. The fourth chapter provides a cross-jurisdictional analysis on best practices and case studies around the growth of the senior population in regard to housing

design, configuration, and senior support programs. The last elements of the Seniors' Planning Study are conclusions from the study, along with a list of options around the increasing demand for seniors' housing.

Key findings from this report indicate that the majority of the seniors aged 55 years or older own their home. However, there are communities across the Northwest Territories where a higher proportion of seniors are in rented homes. One of the key findings of the study was that we can now plan around an increase of approximately 165 senior households annually. The needs of this population are varied and will have to be addressed. Thankfully, we now have this study to help us plan for seniors' needs in each community.

This information will be factored into the work around the development of 33 community housing plans. Decision-makers at all levels will be able to use this information, as well as the broader context of a community housing plan, to inform their infrastructure and planning decisions, especially those communities that are taking a more active role in housing.

Mr. Speaker, seniors are one of our greatest cultural resources. They hold our histories, sustain our traditional languages and customs, and they have given so much to so many. We are committed to ensuring the health and well-being of our elders, and a crucial part of that is housing. With this study, we can improve on the good work already being done to ensure that seniors can remain well-housed in their communities and with their families and friends. Later today, at the appropriate time, I will table the Seniors' Planning Study. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Members, I would like to welcome a visitor in the gallery. A member of the NWT Honours Advisory Council and a fellow Hay Riverite, Ms. Sabrina Broadhead. Ministers' statements. Item 3, Members' statements. The Member for Tu Nedhe-Willideh.

Members' Statements

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON TEACHING AND LEARNING INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES

MR. BEAULIEU: [Translation] Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This month is Deline language month. That is why I am going to make my statement in the Aboriginal language. Back in the old days, I am from Fort Resolution, people who lived around Fort Resolution, Little Buffalo River, Rocher River, the Slave River, Stony Point, people were living all over the place, and, when you are going from one camp

to the other, everybody spoke Chippewan. Only Fort Resolution spoke English. Back in the days, when people were picked to go to school, we were living in Fort Resolution. I didn't speak English when I started school. I only spoke Chippewan. A lot of people were like that. Yes, we only spoke Chippewan language, and that is the way it was.

After we all went to school, we were taught the English language. We only spoke the Deline language, though. What I think now, the way we spoke our language, that is where we learned our language, at our home. Nowadays, they are teaching the kids in the school system, They are not really teaching the kids quite properly. What I think, if you want a really strong language, you've got to learn it at home. The ones who spoke the language, the Slavey, the Dogrib people, they learned at home. They taught the kids at home. That is the way the kids learned, and that is the proper way to do it.

I spoke Chipewyan. When I was going to speak English when I was in school, they had to give me somebody who spoke English so they could, kind of an interpreter. It was pretty hard for me when I first started school. That is the way it was in the old days.

So, when the kids are learning their language at home, everybody who is learning, they're writing to each other in their language now. Thank you. [Translation ends.]

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Members' statements. Member for Deh Cho.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON LEARNING THE DENE ZHATIE LANGUAGE

MR. NADLI: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. [No translation provided.] Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Members' statements. Member for Yellowknife North.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON PROTECTING INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES

MR. VANTHUYNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our territory is unique in the world in many ways. I am proud that we work in such a unique system of government. I am proud that we have developed the consensus system that reflects our originality. I am proud to sit in this Chamber with colleagues from a wide variety of heritages. I am proud that we live and work in a jurisdiction that recognizes 11 official languages. We are fortunate to have a number of healthy languages in our territory and to be able to hear them on the radio every day.

On many days, you can hear, like today, those languages in this very Chamber, Mr. Speaker. I really appreciate that this Assembly has emphasized the importance of using Indigenous languages in our proceedings, especially in the past few sessions.

However, I wonder how much longer this can continue, Mr. Speaker. Years ago, I remember that there was a strong effort to recruit and train Indigenous-language interpreters to provide translation of public discussion and debates. In this Chamber and at conferences and assemblies across the NWT, language systems and simultaneous translation were staples of public discourse.

Today, that level of commitment to language services seems to have diminished. Interpreters are fewer and fewer and harder to find. The strong emphasis on training for language expertise and simultaneous translation seems to be missing. It makes me wonder what is the future of our languages? More importantly, what will be the outcome for the children who are coming up now?

Strong work on language preservation is going on in some places. In particular, the Tlicho language is actively used among all ages. There is even a Tlicho dictionary online. This is the kind of commitment that's needed to maintain our languages for the next generations. Historically, there were hundreds of Indigenous languages spoken across what is now Canada, Mr. Speaker. Sadly, many of them have disappeared entirely and/or are now nearly extinct. It is sad that, if a language dies, a whole way of life may go with it.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud that in the Northwest Territories so many different languages remain active and healthy. I think it's important that we continue to emphasize the learning, use, and health of all of the languages of the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Members' statements. Member for Kam Lake.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES MONTH

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is Indigenous Languages Month. It is now the time to celebrate the NWT's Indigenous languages and encourage people to learn about and use them. Here in the NWT, we are very fortunate that we live on lands rich with languages and cultures. We have 11 official languages, nine of those are Indigenous. For Indigenous languages to thrive and survive, it is important to promote their everyday use at home, in the community, and at work. The importance of Indigenous languages has been elevated by the

United Nations, who have declared 2019 the International Year of Indigenous Languages.

Here in the NWT, we are the trailblazers, and our efforts to share and pass on Indigenous languages are clear for all, especially those who listen to our proceedings every day. You just have to open up the app store on your phone, and see that we have eight official Government of the Northwest Territories language apps. This is a great step to help in preserving linguistic heritage, stories, and culture, all while ensuring that this information is available to young and future generations. I hope that the NWT will continue with this story of success, revitalizing language and continuing to set an example for the rest of the country to follow.

I believe I can speak for many of my colleagues when I say that we shall continue to take measures to ensure that these languages and the rights of the people who speak them will continue to be protected. It is of the utmost importance if we are to ever achieve meaningful reconciliation, that future generations know their histories, languages, oral traditions, philosophies, writing systems, and literature, while communities, places, and persons can live and thrive in a system which does not inhibit their right to be named and recognized in their mother tongue. I am proud to play my small part in recognizing Indigenous Languages Month.

We are one land with many voices, and this is among our many strengths. Marsi cho, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Members' statements. Member for Nunakput.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON EULOGY FOR ELLA JEAN ARNAKINA NOGASAK

MR. NAKIMAYAK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to commend the first two speakers who have spoken in their language, and I am going to speak about an elder in Tuktoyaktuk who is very fluent in Inuvialuqtun.

Mr. Speaker, Ella Jean Arnakina was born in the community of Tuktoyaktuk to Sara and Phillip Nogosak on December 12, 1944, the oldest sister to Peter and Charlie.

At a very young age, she was taken to residential school in Aklavik, where she stayed until the age of 12. She remembered having to speak to her father through a glass window as he was in the hospital. After leaving the residential school, she lived at her Ataatang's with her mother as her father did not return home from the hospital after passing from TB.

At the age of 15, Ella Jean had given birth to her only child, Jacqueline. Ella did her best to raise her Bunnik with the help of her mother and her stepfather. Ella also became Akka to Clarence, Sandra, Freda, Robert, and Matilda.

Mr. Speaker, Ella Jean became Nanuk to Denise in 1982, and later to Jared. Denise loved spending time with her Nan, and her Nan loved her adventures with Denise. Akka had also taken her grandson Jared into her home when he was five years old. Raising him on her own was a blessing for them both. He was lucky to have such a caring person to take such good care of him, giving him all of the love he needed, more when his mother was away.

In 2005, she became Great Nan to Jobey Dragon, whom she called "the Great." Then, Mac Mangilaluk was her ataatalung, as she was very proud to have her mother name him, after Mangilaluk. Easton was "Mr. Easton" to her. The love she had for her greats was amazing, from sharing her home-cooked meals to gifting them the little things she'd see and know they would like. All three were her loveable, huggable, squeezable greats.

All through her life, she would volunteer her time during community events, such as the Beluga Jamboree and music festivals. You would see her by the cooking pit, helping in any way she could, and she enjoyed being at any feast as she liked to have others' cooking, too.

Ella Jean was always thinking of others, sharing what she had by giving clothing or baked goods or a memento that reminded her of them. When she was needed by anyone during hard times and good times, no matter the time of day or night, she was there for support in any way.

Mr. Speaker, Ella Jean was diagnosed with cancer on February 4, 2019, and passed on February 20, 2019, so condolences to the Nogosak family in Tuktoyaktuk. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Our condolences to the family. Members' statements. Member for Sahtu.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION TRAINING FOR NURSING STUDENTS

MR. MCNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When the Truth and Reconciliation Commission released its final report, there were 94 calls to action. Federal, provincial, and territorial governments responded to these and pledged to implement them.

This work is ongoing, and during this historic process, we must not forget the experiences of

Canada's First Peoples. It touches on every part of our lives.

Mr. Speaker, today, I want to talk about healthcare, specifically options for nursing education and training in the Northwest Territories, a respected and demanding profession. Nursing is an important area for reconciliation and one where Canadian nurses have shown leadership. For example, two years ago, the Canadian Association of Perinatal and Women's Health Nurses publicly acknowledged the role that nurses had historically played in colonial practices; then they committed to doing better.

When the Truth and Reconciliation Commission released its report, Justice Murray Sinclair talked about the importance of having schools and colleges that include Indigenous history, rights, treaties, and other subjects.

Mr. Speaker, as the GNWT works to make Aurora College better, we must keep that at the top of our mind, especially for the college's flagship program, the nursing program. When I looked at the nursing curriculum, I could see just one course on First Nations Peoples of the Northwest Territories.

There's definitely room to grow. I believe that we can design nursing training and curriculum that will help to address our staffing shortages, increase options for our youth, improve employment outcomes, and recognize the Canadian history.

As Justice Murray Sinclair also said, "We owe it to each other to build a Canada based on our shared future, a future of healing and trust." Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Members' statements. Member for Yellowknife Centre.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON LEARNING INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES DURING CHILDHOOD

MS. GREEN: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to mark Indigenous Languages Month by speaking about the importance and benefits of learning an Indigenous language during childhood.

We all know that the first language we learn has an enormous influence on establishing our bedrock cultural identity. Socially, emotionally, and intellectually, we embark on the world through the perspective of the language we first speak with our families. Children starting out in the world of formal schooling who have a strong grounding in an Indigenous language will also have a leg up to academic achievement. Once they have a strong first language, children can learn to speak another

language easily. In fact, they can learn several languages at once.

Mr. Speaker, let's consider how to help children get this extra boost of language and identity. The NWT Literacy Council provides some tips. First, children need to hear the language. Each language has different sounds, and children need to hear those sounds in order to learn them. Children copy what they hear and see. If they see and hear people talking the language, they'll do the same. They'll do this by playing, and they play and learn at the same time.

Mr. Speaker, it is important to remember that children often have a silent period. That is the time they are listening to the sounds and getting ready to speak. They will speak the language when they feel comfortable, not to worry about the time it takes to get started.

Just like adults, children make mistakes. This is a natural part of learning a language. Sometimes, it is difficult for children to make certain sounds because their mouth, tongue, throat, and lungs are still developing.

Anyone who has read to children knows they often want to hear the same story over and over again. That is because they learn by repeating things. They also love rhymes and songs, which use a different part of the brain than talking. Children often learn the words to songs faster than everyday speech.

Most of all and best of it, it just takes time to learn a language, and those are some of the most precious times, when parents and children grow together. Indigenous Languages Month is really a family month with happy times of singing, playing, reading, and loving together with a focus on language. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Members' statements. Member for Nahendeh.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
RECOGNITION OF STEVE NICHOL, 2018
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES
FIRE SERVICE MERIT AWARD RECIPIENT

MR. THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Each year, through the Fire Service Merit Awards, the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs recognizes individual firefighters and fire departments for the important work they do in our communities.

Previously, the community of Fort Simpson has seen this award go to Roger Pilling and Scott Withmore. In true Fort Simpson fashion, it is no

surprise that this award is presented to another Simpsonite.

The 2018 NWT Fire Service Merit Award was awarded to Steve Nichol for his contribution as volunteer firefighter on the Fort Simpson fire department. He continues to express dedication and commitment to the ongoing protection of the residents in Fort Simpson.

Upon his retirement as a teacher at the Thomas Simpson school, Steve joined the fire department. In the past two and a half years, Steve has answered 241 ambulance calls.

In the past two years, Steven has been voted by his peers and colleagues as the Fort Simpson Volunteer Firefighter of the Year.

Many of Steven's accomplishments with the Fort Simpson fire department include countless hours dedicated to organizing, revising, updating, and cleaning the fire hall. Steve also was actively involved in the organization of the entire inventory, creating, and updating check lists for all of the department's equipment.

Steve's work ethic, dedication, and pride in the cleanliness of the fire hall has been appreciated by the department. There is an ongoing joke that Steven can spot a cracker crumb on the floor of the fire hall.

Steve has been instrumental in assisting with the training of new and older colleagues for the safety and security of the residents of Fort Simpson. Steve was able to use his past experience as a teacher to ensure people received professional training effectively and efficiently. Steve's colleagues looked forward to the training sessions.

In August 2018, Steve was promoted to the position of lieutenant of the Fort Simpson fire department. Steve is very proud of his accomplishments and appreciates the recognition he receives with a grateful and humble attitude of servitude.

I would like to take this opportunity to offer my congratulations to Steve Nicol and to the Fort Simpson fire department for doing a job well done. Thank you for your continued selflessness in offering the residents of Fort Simpson safety, security, and well-being. Your efforts are duly noted and appreciated. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Members' statements. Member for Frame Lake.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
NATIONAL ENERGY BOARD AS AN OIL AND
GAS REGULATOR IN THE INUVIALUIT
SETTLEMENT REGION

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. When GNWT negotiated devolution in 2014, there was an interesting arrangement whereby the federal government's National Energy Board remained as the oil and gas regulator in the Inuvialuit Settlement Region onshore areas. In other onshore areas of the NWT, the GNWT had the ability to create its own regulator and has done so through the Office of the Regulator of Oil and Gas Operations.

It is not clear why the federal government of the day and our government, led by the current Premier, would agree to such an arrangement. Why should a regulator established under federal legislation with no northern representation and no significant presence in the NWT be permitted to manage oil and gas exploration and development in the region with the highest potential? What an odd arrangement.

Some might speculate that this arrangement may have been put in place to protect the corporate interests of the Mackenzie Gas Project, which has since folded.

The arrangement with the National Energy Board is to prevail for at least 20 years after devolution unless Canada and GNWT agree otherwise, according to section 12.1(2) of the federal National Energy Board Act and the devolution agreement.

Rather than focus on trying to assume legislative responsibility for the Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act, why not go after this residual outpost of federal colonialism and allow for OROGO to manage oil and gas exploration in the Inuvialuit Settlement Region? Our government will have a very difficult time trying to convince the federal government, let alone the residents of the NWT, that it has demonstrated responsible resource development. We couldn't even get around to something as basic as reviewing the revenues we get from the extractive sector during the five years following devolution.

I will have questions later today for the Minister of Justice, who also serves as the regulator for oil and gas in parts of the NWT not under the jurisdiction of the National Energy Board. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Members' statements. Item 4, reports of standing and special committees. Member for Kam Lake.

Reports of Standing and Special Committees

COMMITTEE REPORT 12-18(3): REPORT ON THE REVIEW OF THE 2018 REPORT OF THE AUDITOR GENERAL OF CANADA ON NORTHWEST TERRITORIES CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, your Standing Committee on Government Operations is pleased to provide its report on the review of the 2018 report of the Auditor General of Canada to the Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly (Child and Family Services) and commends it to the House.

Before we begin, we would like to recognize the contributions of the Auditor General of Canada, Mr. Michael Ferguson, to the completion of this report. Mr. Ferguson, who passed away on February 2, 2019, was a dedicated public servant who will be greatly missed. We offer our condolences to his family, friends, and colleagues.

On October 23, 2018, the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories tabled the 2018 Report of the Auditor General of Canada to the Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly – Child and Family Services. The Standing Committee on Government Operations ("the committee") then convened a public hearing with staff from the Office of the Auditor General (OAG) and with representatives of the Northwest Territories Department of Health and Social Services ("the department") on December 12, 2018.

Like many Northwest Territories residents, Members know and care for those whose lives have been intimately affected by the child and family services (CFS) system. Some have been affected themselves. The CFS system shapes the lives of all children and families involved in it. In doing so, it shapes our territory's future. The importance of this work cannot be overstated.

To address the issues identified by the OAG, the Department of Health and Social Services has committed to achieving major, much-needed change within the next two years. This work is both urgent and challenging, and the stakes are high. Two years is not a long time, unless you are a child in care that is not working.

Roles of the Auditor General of Canada and the Standing Committee on Government Operations

The Auditor General of Canada is an officer of Parliament, with additional auditing responsibility for the territorial governments, including the Government of the Northwest Territories. When delivering financial or performance audits of the

GNWT, the Auditor General reports directly to the Legislative Assembly as one of its statutory officers.

The committee, which has oversight responsibility for each of the Assembly's statutory officers, then reviews that report and makes recommendations to the government. This work is part of the committee's core mandate.

Child and Family Services in the Northwest Territories

Under the umbrella of the Department of Health and Social Services, the director of Child and Family Services, assigned by statutory appointment, and the health and social services authorities, including the Northwest Territories and Hay River authorities (NTHSSA and HRSSA) and the Tlicho Community Services Agency (TCSA), work together to deliver services as set out in the Child and Family Services Act and the Child and Family Services Standards and Procedures Manual. Through CFS, the GNWT must fulfill a parent's duties and responsibilities for each child in its care, in addition to providing various other services to children and their families.

As OAG staff told the committee, "The department has a fundamental responsibility for children in care. The department has to figure out how to make that work."

What Did the OAG Look At?

The OAG's report is the latest contribution to a large body of work on CFS, including past OAG audits, standing committee reports, third-party analyses, and internal government documents, such as action plans and annual reports. Much of this prior work is described in detail in Committee Report 16-17(5), issued by our predecessor committee on May 29, 2014. Interested readers may find all committee reports online at the Legislative Assembly's website or through the Legislative Library.

For its 2018 report, the OAG audited the department's and authorities' performance against current laws, policies, and procedures, focusing on whether the department and authorities "met key responsibilities for the protection and well-being of children, youth, and their families, [including] whether [they] had implemented selected recommendations from [the] 2014 audit." Auditors examined 37 child files and 37 foster care files in the Yellowknife, Beaufort-Delta, and Tlicho regions, which together serve as home to 67 percent of children in care in the Northwest Territories, and extended their file review of guardianship agreements and out-of-territory placements across all authorities. The audit also included engagement with child protection workers (CPWs) in all regions.

Overall, the findings are troubling. Service delivery continues to be plagued by "serious deficiencies" and, rather than see improvement, many services have worsened since 2014.

What Did We Look At?

This report is about the OAG's 2018 audit of child and family services. It does not provide a comprehensive review of the CFS system, nor does it examine the Child and Family Services Act or internal CFS policies.

As the standing committee with the responsibility to oversee statutory officers, this committee is concerned with the official findings of the OAG regarding performance and compliance. Our objective is to make recommendations to the GNWT that will result in improved services to children and families and also, as elected officials responsible for the approval of the GNWT's annual budget, to ensure optimal allocation of public resources. Our colleagues on the Standing Committee on Social Development continue to monitor the ongoing delivery of CFS.

It is also important to note that the committee is concerned with overarching management and the direction of departmental business at the senior level, not with the day-to-day performance of front-line and other staff.

The department is developing a quality improvement plan for CFS. This plan should incorporate the recommendations made in this report.

Recommendation 1

The Standing Committee on Government Operations recommends that the Department of Health and Social Services incorporate into its quality improvement plan for child and family services the recommendations made in this report.

General Considerations

Accepting the findings of the Auditor General

The department has previously questioned the OAG's findings regarding CFS. For example, the 2015-2016 annual report of the CFS director states:

"Finally, there is a major limitation in both the Auditor General's findings and the current department audit findings, one that calls into question any conclusions drawn from the findings. Neither the Auditor General nor the Director of Child and Family Services were able to distinguish between 'work not done' and 'work not recorded' using the current methodology."

Similarly, during the public hearing, although departmental staff stated that they respect the

OAG's findings, they also spoke of "debate over methodology" and their preference for internal audit results over the OAG's findings.

The committee requested the OAG's perspective on these matters. We determined that the OAG's findings are fully vetted with each audited department. OAG staff said, "We go through a very active process to vet with departments and give them every opportunity to provide any evidence. We vetted all of our findings, and the department and authorities signed off [on all of them]." The OAG dedicated a combined 7,000 hours to their audit.

The committee urges all audited departments to refrain from questioning the OAG's findings once they are accepted.

Timely Receipt of Materials

In 2016 and 2017, the committee recommended that any GNWT department being audited provide the committee with its action or implementation plan no later than three business days before the public hearing. A process convention is presently in development to clarify procedures for the distribution of such documents.

Recommendation 2

The Standing Committee on Government Operations recommends that any government department, board, or agency being audited produce a draft action or implementation plan in response to the audit, provide the committee with a copy of that plan that is consistent with the appropriate process conventions, and present the plan at the committee's public hearing.

Quality Assurance

Some performance parameters for CFS are immediately clear because they are set out in the Child and Family Services Act. Regarding these, the committee concurs with the OAG that 100 percent compliance is the department's legal obligation and that anything less is insufficient.

After the OAG's 2014 report, our predecessor committee recommended that the department and authorities conduct annual compliance audits, and that these audits, along with any subsequent action plans, be shared with the Standing Committee on Social Programs (now called the Standing Committee on Social Development) and tabled in the Legislative Assembly. At that time, the GNWT agreed to these recommendations and cited Building Stronger Families: An Action Plan to Transform Child and Family Services, which included commitments to a common audit tool and reporting template.

Since that time, however, the internal auditing process has been hindered by several issues. The department has dedicated significant resources to attempting to replicate the OAG's process in its own internal quality assurance work. These attempts have left the department with unusable data, a "broken" audit tool, and inconsistency in reporting across regions.

Considering this, the committee is reminded of advice from the OAG's staff: "If you're going to do the quality assurance work, you have to make sure you have the resources." This will be discussed further under the heading "Assessment of required financial and human resources."

The committee also wishes to raise two additional points.

First, it is important to understand that the department's internal audit process and the work of the OAG are entirely distinct. These differences mean that findings cannot be compared in an "apples-to-apples" way.

The OAG's performance audit covered the period between April 1, 2014, and September 12, 2018. The department's most recent internal audit covered only the period between April 1, 2016, and March 31, 2017.

The OAG examined 37 child files and 37 foster care files and engaged with CFS staff in all regions. The department examined "a sample of 711 child protection and prevention events," including all foster care files within the audit period, and offered an online anonymous survey to staff employed in the authorities.

Second, since becoming aware of the OAG's findings, the department appears to have initiated comprehensive system-wide quality assurance, but failed to address immediate service gaps identified by the OAG. For example, at the public hearing, three months after the OAG's audit was concluded, departmental staff were unable to identify whether unscreened guardians and foster homes had since been screened, and referred instead to plans for system-wide quality assurance.

Departmental staff framed this as a "dilemma," or a choice between "perfect" performance and a "quality improvement approach." But the OAG's report has shown that the department's present "quality improvement approach" resulted in worsened services over time. "Perfection" may be difficult to achieve, but regardless, 100 percent compliance is required by law. The committee echoes its predecessors and urges the department to "begin immediately and in earnest to correct deficiencies in child and family services," even

while it continues to develop its medium- and long-term plans.

Recommendation 3

The Standing Committee on Government Operations recommends that the Department of Health and Social Services act immediately to ensure that all gaps in screenings and reviews identified by the Office of the Auditor General, including screening for guardianship agreements and foster homes, are addressed, and that it advise the committee when this is completed.

Recommendation 4

The Standing Committee on Government Operations recommends that the Department of Health and Social Services appear before the appropriate standing committee twice yearly to report on its compliance with the Child and Family Services Act and its progress on its quality improvement plan.

Performance Evaluation Through Measurable Outcomes

However, compliance alone does not ensure that children and families are adequately supported, nor do individual measures, lacking context, provide a complete portrait of performance.

For example, the department has identified increasing rates of children receiving services in the home and increasing rates of voluntary services agreements (VSAs) as demonstrating improved services. Yet the OAG found that monitoring of children at risk under parental care at home had worsened since 2014, and that VSAs require no interaction with child protection workers (CPWs) and may be ended by the parent at any time. To quote directly from the OAG's report:

"In most cases, we found that plan-of-care agreements were not monitored as required, and that the monitoring that did take place focused mostly on parents instead of on the children these plans were intended to protect. For example, we found that, in most cases, HSSAs had some contact with parents, but did not interview children as often as the plans required to make sure they were safe and to assess their health and well-being. We found that this occurred even in some high-risk cases.

We also found that authorities allowed some children to remain under a plan-of-care agreement even when it was clear the conditions were not being met, and sometimes extended these same agreements. Further, in a few cases we examined, authorities allowed a parent to terminate the plan-of-care agreement early without being assured that the child was no longer at risk. These findings are

significant because these agreements are often an alternative to removing a child from the home, and the termination of the agreement by the parents may not be in the best interests of a child."

Simply put, more children may have been assigned to receive services at home, but the services received, if any, were subpar and staff often failed to follow up.

To deliver effective services, the department must assess performance over time through both compliance rates and contextualized, client-centred performance measures. These should include desirable long-term outcomes intended to assess whether children engaged with the Child and Family Services system are flourishing over time. These might include social inclusion, for example extracurricular activities or the desire and ability to set and pursue educational or career goals, and other health indicators, for example, educational performance or mental health, as well as quality assurance practices focused on assessing children's satisfaction as "clients" of the system.

The department has accepted the OAG's recommendation that it "identify specific indicators to measure whether the system is achieving the desired results and is better supporting children." This work will be a critical component of the department's work over the next two years.

Recommendation 5

The Standing Committee on Government Operations recommends that the Department of Health and Social Services publicly identify performance indicators, including client-centered outcomes, that it will use to assess improvements in child and family services over time;

And that reporting on these measures be incorporated into the department's annual business plan and the annual report of the director of child and family services.

Mr. Speaker, at this time I'd like to turn the reading of the report over to the honourable Member for Deh Cho. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Members. I am pleased to draw your attention to the presence of Mr. Shigenobu Kobayashi, Consul General of Japan, on the occasion of his first official visit to the Northwest Territories. Accompanying the Consul General are his wife, Ms. Keiko Kobayashi; Ms. Noriko Ikeyama, consul; and Mr. Paul Pryce, political and economic advisor; and, of course, Ms. Carmen Moore, GNWT Chief of Protocol. Members, please join me in welcoming them to the House this afternoon. Member for Deh Cho.

MR. NADLI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Cultural Safety

It is well known that Indigenous children and families are over-represented within CFS. Further, while the number of non-Indigenous children in care has declined over the past 10 years, the proportion of Indigenous children has remained roughly the same, approximately 95 percent. The committee is also aware that many residents have observed or experienced parallels between involvement with CFS and the residential school system, particularly the very real fear of having one's children removed from their home and community by government officials.

During the public hearing, when Members questioned the department about engagement with Indigenous communities, staff advised that they had been "focused internally" and that they "haven't done that fulsome kind of outreach," but were "confident that grassroots staff were working with communities." The department must show leadership and ensure that senior staff connects with front-line staff, and that both regularly engage with Indigenous and community governments. Notably, this was also recommended by our predecessor committee.

If the department wishes to make meaningful, permanent change in CFS, Indigenous people must be engaged as part of the solution. The department and authorities must maintain children's access to their culture and traditions, and ensure staff is regularly engaged in community immersion and cultural safety training.

Recommendation 6

The Standing Committee on Government Operations recommends that the Department of Health and Social Services incorporate into its quality improvement plan on child and family services a commitment to strengthen working relationships with Indigenous and community governments; and

That the department regularly report on its progress as set out in Recommendation 5.

Community Engagement

The department must also regularly collaborate with other community partners, including the Foster Family Coalition of the Northwest Territories and the extended families of children in care. Foster parents are eager and willing partners, waiting to be engaged, and families of children in care want to know that they are being heard and that the children they love are being given the opportunity to thrive. As our predecessor committee noted, improvements are still needed in supports for kinship care, that is, children being cared for by

grandparents and other relatives in lieu of being cared for by their parents.

When the OAG examined supports for foster parents, it found that one audited authority offered "specialized training to some foster parents," while the other two offered "very little or no such training." The committee would like to see these supports distributed equitably across the entire territory and designed to recognize foster parents' prior experience, abilities, and unique needs, for example, particularly in kinship care, and to help foster parents navigate the CFS system and the challenges it poses to those involved.

Recommendation 7

The Standing Committee on Government Operations recommends that the Department of Health and Social Services incorporate into its quality improvement plan on child and family services a commitment to strengthen working relationships with community stakeholders in child and family services, including the Foster Family Coalition of the Northwest Territories and the extended families of children in care; and

That the department regularly report on its progress as set out in Recommendation 5.

Recommendation 8

The Standing Committee on Government Operations recommends that the Department of Health and Social Services develop and implement training for foster parents.

Recommendation 9

The Standing Committee on Government Operations recommends that the Department of Health and Social Services establish an information-sharing agreement with the Foster Family Coalition of the Northwest Territories to ensure that all foster parents may be connected with that organization's resources.

Mr. Speaker, I now pass the reading of this section to my colleague, the honourable Member for Sahtu, Daniel McNeely.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Sahtu.

MR. MCNEELY:

Engagement with Front-line Staff

The OAG's engagement with CPWs also showed that front-line staff continue to face significant pressures, particularly in their workloads, which in turn negatively impacts children in care, whether through high staff turnover, duties "falling through the cracks," or in administrative burdens demanding CPWs' limited time. The committee heard of one

employee assigned to complete, by themselves, quality assurance reviews of roughly 3,000 child protection decisions. This is not sustainable.

The department has used various methods to reach out to staff, including teleconferences, meetings, and surveys. Over the next two years and into the future, all staff must have the opportunity to provide free and honest feedback, whether positive or negative. An open, ongoing process with guaranteed anonymity is one way to achieve this.

Recommendation 10

The Standing Committee on Government Operations recommends that the Department of Health and Social Services develop and implement mechanisms to enable staff to provide free and honest feedback anonymously.

Specific Observations

Services for Children in Parental Care

Structured Decision Making

Structured Decision Making (SDM) is a proprietary tool intended to aid CPWs in making decisions about child safety and to ensure consistency in decision-making. It is relatively new to the Northwest Territories. Although it is in use, it is not yet fully implemented.

The OAG found that in about eight of every 10 case reviews, CPWs did not use the SDM tool to assess longer-term risk for children in parental care, even though this was mandatory and risk assessment was an outstanding performance issue. The OAG also found insufficient staff training and significant lag in internal quality assurance. As discussed earlier, in one case a single employee was tasked with reviewing 3,000 decisions in addition to their regular job duties.

Further, a review commissioned by the department and undertaken by the National Council on Crime and Delinquency Children's Research Center, who created SDM, found a 50 percent error rate. This means that the tool's creators, experts in their field, disagreed with one in every two decisions made by a territorial CPW on a child's safety using SDM. This is not an acceptable standard of reliability.

Plan-of-Care Agreements

Plan-of-care agreements (POCAs) are used where CPWs have established that a child is in an unsafe situation, but may remain in parental care under conditions tailored to address that situation. POCAs set out these conditions and "the support needed to help parents meet [them]."

As discussed, the OAG found that compliance rates for the management and monitoring of POCAs had

declined since 2014. Children rarely received the services due to them, and some POCAs were continued even where parents failed to meet conditions. In some instances, CPWs "allowed a parent to terminate the [POCA] early without being assured that the child was no longer at risk."

The committee is concerned that, whether intentionally or not, as our predecessor committee warned, reductions in the number of child apprehensions may have been "achieved by cutting back on child protection services." The committee supports the general objective of limiting the number of apprehensions, but this cannot be achieved at the expense of children's right to a safe living environment or the department's compliance with its legal responsibilities.

Now I pass on the reading to the Member for Nunakput.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Nunakput.

MR. NAKIMAYAK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Services for Children in Temporary and Permanent Care

Transferring Guardianship of Children in the Care of the Director

The OAG found that in 22 cases CPWs, without the knowledge of senior staff in the authorities or the department, "worked with [children's] biological parents to transfer guardianship... to a family member or other person, who then were given full parental rights and responsibility." Significantly, when a guardianship agreement is completed, CFS cedes its right to act on behalf of (or for) the child in question.

At the time of the OAG's review, there was no related legislation or formal policies, standards, rules, or advice to guide CPWs in the matter of guardianship. Further, in the 22 cases reviewed by the OAG, only eight guardians had been screened, and one of the unscreened guardians later assaulted the child in their care. During the public hearing, the department also advised that half of these agreements have since broken down, meaning that CFS failed to achieve permanency for those children. Staff were also unable to identify how many of these guardians had been screened or otherwise followed up with since the audit was concluded.

Responding to these findings, the department stated that staff had "acted with good intentions." Similarly, during the public hearing, staff emphasized to Members that the agreements had been reviewed by legal counsel. Such responses appear to focus on legal liability rather than practical responsibility. That front-line staff

considered such use of guardianship agreements to be part of their regular suite of tools, with senior staff unaware, suggests a considerable breakdown in communications.

Foster Care

Screening and Annual Reviews of Foster Homes

During the public hearing, the committee also considered authorities' failure to properly screen and review foster homes. Since 2014, "serious deficiencies in the screening and ongoing monitoring of foster homes [have] persisted": two-thirds of reviewed foster care files revealed that the home had not received an initial screening, including criminal record and reference checks, and that most files contained only incomplete annual reviews, largely because children were not interviewed.

Again, departmental staff were unable to identify how many of these foster homes had been appropriately screened and/or reviewed since the audit was concluded.

Persistent Deficiencies in Foster Care Monitoring and Support

The department must act to address severe gaps in permanency planning for children in care. Quoting from the OAG's report:

"In particular, HSSAs did not maintain the required regular contact with many of the children they had removed from homes and placed in foster care or other out-of-home placements. As a result, they had no way of knowing whether these children were receiving the care they needed. They also did not develop permanency plans for most of these children. In some cases, this contributed to children moving between foster care homes multiple times. Such frequent moves make it difficult to provide children with stability and support."

An "Early Warning System" for Children in Care

During the public hearing, the department told the committee that its new information system, MATRIX NT (which is new and was not part of the OAG's audit), would enable staff to quickly and effectively "track children who make multiple [moves], which will trigger a quality review."

This type of "early warning" mechanism for children in care is necessary not only to track the movement of children in care, but system-wide. The department must be able to identify common "pinch points" in the CFS system, then intervene before children themselves are harmed. The committee hopes that new tools, including MATRIX NT and SDM, will prove useful. We also counsel the

department to provide regular adequate training, including refresher training, to staff and to ensure that "boots on the ground" action accompanies all "tabletop" data analysis.

The System for Delivering Child and Family Services

Assessment of Required Financial and Human Resources

The OAG "found that the department had still not determined the financial and human resources required to deliver child and family services and had only started to assess what was needed toward the end of the audit period." The OAG also found that authorities' CFS funding was "based on historical amounts dating back to 1998" and that the daily rate paid to foster parents has only recently been increased for the first time in 10 years. The OAG also noted that, outside Yellowknife, authorities still did not employ family preservation workers.

None of these issues are new. The recommendation that the department do this work has been made and reiterated for the past 18 years. That it remains unaddressed has significant continuing implications. Without a clear understanding of what is needed, the department cannot assess the value or impact of staff vacancies, make appropriate budget proposals, identify the positions and skillsets needed, or implement initiatives to resolve longstanding issues. Such a needs assessment would also need to account for the unique challenges presently facing the system, for example, the demographics of system users, or the OAG's finding that 80 percent of children's files identified alcohol or drug misuse as a factor, while 50 percent identified domestic violence, which itself is more likely to negatively affect women. Appropriately resourcing the department's ambitious two-year quality improvement plan will be key to its success.

At the public hearing, departmental staff told the committee that an assessment of resource needs would be presented as part of the 2019-2020 budget. This assessment has yet to be considered and assessed. However, the committee is troubled that it appears that increases to CFS will be partially funded through reductions to other health and social services functions, including a reduction of homecare. Without a detailed resource needs assessment, money alone will not solve the problems facing CFS, and certainly not money reallocated from other departmental priority areas.

Recommendation 11

The Standing Committee on Government Operations recommends that the Department of

Health and Social Services incorporate into its quality improvement plan for child and family services a clear commitment to complete the assessment of financial and human resources required to deliver child and family services, as recommended by the Auditor General of Canada;

That this assessment incorporate gender-based analysis, e.g., via the Gender-based Analysis Plus tool;

That the department share with the committee its project plan for this work, developing subsequent timelines in discussion with the committee; and

That the quality improvement plan for child and family services be revised and re-released to reflect this assessment upon its completion.

Mr. Speaker, I pass this back on to the Member for Kam Lake. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Kam Lake.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Caseload Management

Nearly two decades ago, the Child Welfare League of Canada (CWLC) recommended that the department develop caseload standards for CPWs. Following the OAG's 2014 report, the department commissioned the Child Welfare League of Canada to complete a workload management study, wherein the CWLC repeated its recommendation. Our predecessor committee made a similar recommendation in 2014.

Despite this, the OAG found that the department has still not completed this work.

Recommendation 12

The Standing Committee on Government Operations recommends that the Department of Health and Social Services develop and implement caseload standards for child protection workers by June 30, 2019.

The Role of an Advocate for Children and Youth

Our territory is one of just two jurisdictions in Canada without a child and youth advocate, that is, an independent officer of the legislature dedicated specifically to the rights, interests, and voices of children and youth, particularly those who are especially vulnerable, such as children in care. The committee observes that a similar role may be performed by the future ombud.

Recommendations

The committee's recommendations have been listed above. We also note that we have considered

the recommendations of our predecessor committee. Although some progress has been made, for example, in the areas of extended services for youth aged 19 to 24, many of that committee's 30 recommendations remain incompletely addressed. Looking to the future, we hope for change.

In keeping with regular practice, the committee recommends that the GNWT formally respond to this report.

Recommendation 13

The Standing Committee on Government Operations recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories provide a comprehensive response to this report within 120 days.

Conclusion

This concludes the committee's Report on the Review of the 2018 Report of the Auditor General of Canada to the Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly (Child and Family Services).

All committee reports are available online at the Legislative Assembly website: www.assembly.gov.nt.ca.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Kam Lake.

MOTION TO RECEIVE COMMITTEE REPORT 12-18(3) AND MOVE INTO COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE,
CARRIED

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Deh Cho, that Committee Report 12-18(3) be received by the Assembly and moved into Committee of the Whole for further consideration. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: There is a motion on the floor. The motion is non-debatable. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried.

---Carried

The report will be available for consideration in Committee of the Whole on Thursday, February 28. Reports of standing and special committees. Member for Kam Lake.

COMMITTEE REPORT 13-18(3):
REPORT ON THE REVIEW OF BILL 31:
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES 911 ACT

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Your Standing Committee on Government Operations is pleased to provide its Report on the Review of Bill

31: Northwest Territories 911 Act, and commends it to the House.

INTRODUCTION

The Standing Committee on Government Operations ("the committee") is pleased to report on its review of Bill 31: Northwest Territories 911 Act.

Bill 31, Northwest Territories 911 Act, sponsored by the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs, has been referred to the Standing Committee on Government Operations for review. The bill proposes to:

- Direct the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs to establish a territorial 911 service;
- Bind the Government of the Northwest Territories;
- Establish a 911 cost-recovery fee to be paid by local landline and wireless/mobile subscribers and collected by telecommunications carriers;
- Mandate the participation of local authorities and emergency service providers; and
- Mandate the participation of telecommunications carriers, who will be required to comply with any prescribed registration and reporting requirements, and who will also be required to bill subscribers, collect the fee, and remit it to the GNWT.

Background

In 2015, the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs commissioned a report by Pomax Consulting, a firm headquartered in Ontario that provides independent emergency service consulting expertise to public governments at all levels and to public safety organizations. That report, which presented recommendations and an implementation plan for a territory-wide 911 service, was completed in January 2015. The report found that the Northwest Territories was well positioned to move forward with the implementation of basic 911 service.

Basic 911 service requires the caller to verbally identify the location from which they are calling, unlike enhanced 911, which uses automated number identification technology. With this in mind, basic 911 service was confirmed by the consultant to be the most cost-effective and timely option available for implementation in the Northwest Territories, provided it was done in partnership with an existing NWT emergency dispatch service provider. The consultant also noted that implementation of a basic 911 service would avoid the considerable technology, cost, and timing challenges associated with enhanced 911, which

was rapidly becoming outdated and would not preclude the Northwest Territories from moving directly to next-generation fibre-optic 911 technology in the future.

In May 2015, MACA presented the Pomax report to the 17th Assembly Standing Committee on Economic Development and Infrastructure which, at that time, had responsibility for the oversight of MACA. The Department also committed to working with the City of Yellowknife to validate cost and planning assumptions associated with a proposal to house 911 with the Yellowknife Fire Department. In September of the same year, Pomax Consulting delivered an addendum to their original report, which updated the cost estimates for the proposed service. For those who are interested, both reports are available online.

Subsequent to the commencement of the 18th Legislative Assembly in November 2015, responsibility for the oversight of MACA was transferred to the Standing Committee on Government Operations. Since the outset, this standing committee has taken a keen interest in 911 and has advocated for its implementation. Members were briefed on the department's work, including the planning work related to the establishment of a 911 emergency service in the Northwest Territories.

Members were, therefore, disappointed to note that funding for the implementation of 911 emergency service was not included in the GNWT's 2016-2017 Business Plan, which stated only that "research has been completed on 911, and the initiative is under consideration as a future strategic priority of the GNWT."

At the conclusion of the 2016-2017 Business Plan review, the committee expressed the view that the value and life-saving potential of a 911 system in the NWT far outweighs the relatively small investment of costs set out in the Pomax report, which identified one-time start-up costs of \$616,100 and ongoing annual operational costs of \$869,300. Committee urged the department to move forward with the implementation of 911 without delay.

On the basis of the costs identified in the Pomax report, committee also supported implementation of basic 911 service on a full cost-recovery basis, which would require a monthly user fee estimated at approximately \$1.15 per subscriber. Committee took note that this fee, according to Pomax, "is noticeably higher than the rest of Canada" and "likely attributable to the low volume of phone subscribers in the North." For comparison purposes, the monthly user fee in Newfoundland and Labrador was, at the time, \$0.75, the fee in Prince Edward Island was \$0.70, and in Saskatchewan, \$0.62.

It is important to note that the fee estimate is exclusive of any tariff authorized by the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC). This additional tariff, if approved by the CRTC, may be collected by an incumbent service provider, in this case NorthwesTel, for costs associated with implementing and maintaining a 911 network, including trunk lines, selective routing software, and lines terminating at the dispatch centre. As yet, these costs are unknown, but were estimated in 2015 to potentially add an additional \$0.27 to \$0.47 to each subscriber's monthly user fee for 911. The potential impact of these additional costs has been factored into committee's assessment of the bill.

The Department of Municipal and Community Affairs has continued to be responsive to the standing committee's requests for information related to this initiative. In March 2018, the Honourable Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs and the Honourable Minister of Health and Social Services met with committee to update Members on the decision to co-locate the 911 dispatch centre with Med-Response, the service currently being used by the GNWT for the dispatch of medevac flights for residents in need of urgent medical care, rather than with the Yellowknife Fire Department.

Additionally, committee was most pleased to note the inclusion of funding in the department's 2017-2018 budget, and in each subsequent budget, for costs associated with the planning and implementation of 911. The committee wishes to take this opportunity to thank the previous Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs and the current Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs for their willingness to work with committee on this initiative. Committee also thanks all Members of Cabinet for their responsiveness to the committee's requests for funding of this initiative, despite it not having been identified in the government's mandate.

Bill 31 received Second Reading in the Legislative Assembly on November 1, 2018, and was referred to the Standing Committee on Government Operations for review. It was with great anticipation that the committee started its review of Bill 31, the results of which are reported below.

Mr. Speaker, I would now ask to turn the reading of this report over to the honourable Member for Nunakput. Thank you.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Nunakput.

MR. NAKIMAYAK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a proper copy here now.

The Public Review of Bill 31

To commence its review of Bill 31, the Standing Committee on Government Operations sent letters inviting input from an extensive list of stakeholders, including all municipal and Indigenous governments in the Northwest Territories, and a number of non-governmental organizations.

During the week of January 21, 2019, the committee travelled to and held public meetings in Fort Smith, Inuvik, and Fort McPherson, returning to Yellowknife for a final public meeting on January 24, 2019. Committee thanks every individual and organization who attended these meetings in order to share their views on 911 with the Members.

What We Heard

Qualified Support Depending on the Cost

The support that committee heard for 911 could best be characterized as "mixed." The City of Yellowknife commended the GNWT for contemplating Bill 31, noting that the "implementation of a 911 system quite simply saves lives," and that it "achieves this by eliminating any doubt or delay regarding the correct number to call in an emergency." The City of Yellowknife also noted that "as tourism increase[s] the numbers of visitors to our city, it is becoming increasingly important to have a 911 system that is recognized by travellers worldwide, to ensure that emergencies are reported in a timely manner to avoid adverse consequences."

Not all comments were as supportive, however. Mr. Bill Buckle, senior administrative officer for Fort McPherson, said, "I hate to say it, but it's really more of a Yellowknife problem with a Yellowknife solution."

Mr. Clarence Wood, current president of the NWT Association of Communities, with 20 years of experience on Inuvik Town Council, told the committee that he is concerned about the cost of the service and its efficiency. He posed the question, "Why pay for something when we don't have cell service across the territory?"

In general, committee heard qualified support for bringing 911 emergency service to the Northwest Territories. Most people who supported it saw the value in having a universal emergency number across the Northwest Territories, but were not prepared to subsidize the service at any cost.

Mr. Dez Loreen of Inuvik said he thought it was "cool" that 911 is coming to the Northwest Territories. He noted that he would be comfortable paying a surcharge, but wondered if the service could be introduced in a staged fashion, so that only those who have access would have to pay.

A comment made by Ms. Anna Kikoak of Fort Smith resonated with committee members. She said, "One of the things that ties us together in the North is that we take responsibility for one another; I would be willing to pay a little more [for 911] to help others."

From the input received, committee took away the message that people were prepared to pay a user fee for 911 service, but that costs should be kept as affordable as possible for the end user in these difficult economic times.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to pass it over to the Member for Sahtu.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Sahtu.

MR. MCNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Desire for Better Cellular Coverage

Committee heard comments about the limitations of the current cellular service in the Northwest Territories. In Fort McPherson, Mr. Richard Nerysoo pointed out that cell service is sporadic around town and that smaller communities won't benefit from 911 if they don't have the infrastructure. Mr. Buckle suggested that maybe it would be better to spend the money on expanding cell service on the highway. The Hamlet of Tulita wondered if the GNWT was preparing to lobby Bell Canada to encourage them to install more cellphone towers along existing highways. In developing its recommendations to government, committee considered this input in the context of the future growth of the Northwest Territories.

Need for Training and Support to Communities

Mr. Buckle, drawing on his experience as the senior administrative officer for Fort McPherson, noted that it will be important for MACA to have an assessment of what infrastructure is needed in each community before implementing 911.

Mr. John Itsi, an elder in Fort McPherson, emphasized how important training is, not only for implementing the 911 system, but for everyone who is involved in emergency response.

Mr. Grant Hood, senior administrative officer with the Town of Inuvik, noted that Inuvik currently uses a 24-hour-per-day external call centre, and wondered if this system would become redundant with 911.

In a submission received from Tulita, the Hamlet Council noted that its understanding that small, remote communities, such as Tulita, may never be fully 911 compliant, because there is not a full need for the service. "After all," the submissions observed, "a resident shouldn't call 911 and request

an ambulance if there isn't an ambulance in the community." With that said, the community noted its willingness to take steps to become 911 compliant by implementing a civic addressing system with standardized street signage and house number, but noted the need to make "special one-time funding and resources available to the communities in aid of this transition."

The City of Yellowknife pointed out that it currently operates a dispatch service receiving calls for fire, ambulance, and other emergency situations and that the proposed Northwest Territories 911 Act will bind the participation of the city as a local authority, which will be the case for all local authorities in the Northwest Territories. The city also expressed its concern about any increased cost of living for residents. On this basis, the city made clear its position "that the GNWT must undertake detailed consultation with the City of Yellowknife to ensure successful implementation of 911 services," and that "the GNWT must fund any costs incurred by the City of Yellowknife as a result of the transition to a 911 system, such as incremental costs incurred as a result of any necessary improvements to the Yellowknife fire dispatch and telephone network costs that are not covered by the 911 fees charged on monthly phone bills."

When questioned by committee, representatives from the City of Yellowknife indicated that they would be interested in participating in an implementation working group. They also noted that their discussion with MACA on the subject was in the spring of 2018 when the city was advised of government's decision to co-locate 911 services with Med-Response.

The concerns raised by those representing municipal authorities and those who have experience working for them demonstrates that there is a great need for information about the implementation and the operation of the proposed 911 system on the part of local governments.

At this point, I would like to pass the reading on to the Member of Kam Lake. Thank you.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Kam Lake.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Need for Further Public Information

Committee heard a number of questions from the public. People were interested in knowing how the system will work. They asked whether the government intends to get rid of the existing emergency numbers. They asked whether there are any communities in the Northwest Territories using 911 right now.

There was also a recognition of the benefit that 911 would bring for tourists visiting the NWT and for travelers to other communities. However, committee was cautioned that information for the public should ensure that people are made aware that 911 will not work on those parts of the highways where there is no cellular service. One of the elders in Fort McPherson stressed the importance of uncovering and upgrading the kilometre marker signs on the highways.

Committee is aware that MACA has been developing public information, the release of which will be timed to coincide with the launch of 911.

What We Did

911 System Costs and Affordability

Committee initially supported a full cost recovery approach to funding 911 based on the basis of the estimates set out in the September 2015 Addendum to the Pomax report. Since that time, a number of events have occurred. Significant assumptions in the report have changed, including the decision to co-locate the service with Med-Response. Committee has consulted with the public on the Bill. As well, the department has confirmed that key information related to the budget estimates for the 911 service are based on proprietary information that has not yet been confirmed. This includes the estimated number of devices the fee estimate is based on and the amount of the additional CRTC-approved charge that may be levied on users by the incumbent telephone company to cover its costs for systems operation and fee collection.

Committee developed a proposal to amend Bill 31 that would see user fees capped at no higher than \$1.70 per subscriber per month for the first three years of the operation of the 911 service. This figure is significantly higher than the original \$1.15 quote and it is at the higher end of the range of \$1.35 to \$1.77 per subscriber per month quoted on the department's web site.

The cap will allow for the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs to compile at least two years of actual operational data. This data can then support an informed discussion about whether NWT residents should pay the full cost of 911 through user fees, or whether the GNWT should consider subsidizing the service on an ongoing basis to keep user fees in line with the fees in other Canadian jurisdictions.

The cap is designed to sunset after three years, making it a temporary measure. Should the 19th Legislative Assembly wish to continue to cap the user fee, the legislation would need to be amended. This proposal gives committee some comfort that

they haven't supported full cost recovery being passed to an end user in the absence of full and substantiated operational program costs.

Cellular Coverage

Committee notes that, with the emphasis placed by the GNWT on the development of the Northwest Territories highway infrastructure, through projects such as the Tlicho all-season road, the Mackenzie Valley Highway, and the Inuvik-Tuktoyaktuk Highway, the demand for cellular service in the Northwest Territories is only going to grow over time. Committee also notes that increased cellular coverage will be vital to ensuring motorist safety on NWT highways in the future. Accordingly, the committee makes the following recommendation.

Recommendation 1

The Standing Committee on Government Operations recommends that the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs work with the Department of Finance to develop a strategic approach designed to secure support and funding to expand cellular coverage in the Northwest Territories, as part of a national cellular network.

Committee recommends that this strategic approach identify current cellular coverage, along with funding needs and goals for future cellular coverage, and timelines associated with system improvements. Committee further recommends that this strategic approach consider appropriate ways to involve the Government of Canada, the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission, and large cellular service providers such as Telus and Bell Canada in any system-improvement efforts.

Mr. Speaker, at this point, I would like to request the reading of this report be continued by the honourable Member for Deh Cho. Thank you.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Deh Cho.

MR. NADLI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Training and Support to Communities

Committee clearly heard that community governments are concerned about the financial and operational impacts of implementing territory-wide 911. The City of Yellowknife correctly points out the Bill 31 mandates the participation of local authorities in the operation of the 911 service, yet this appears to be inconsistent with the information provided on MACA's website and reported in the media that participation is optional. It is important that MACA update all of its public information on 911 to be consistent with the provisions contained in the version of the Act that receives assent.

Committee notes the information contained in the Pomax report indicating that civic addressing is not a requirement for basic 911. Committee understands that this is one of the reasons the GNWT chose to move forward with basic, rather than enhanced, 911. Nonetheless, the Hamlet of Tulita is of the understanding that civic addressing is a necessary step to becoming 911 compliant, and it is likely that other small communities share this understanding. MACA confirmed for committee that the department has planners available to assist communities with street names and addressing, as noted by Tulita in its submission. It is important that MACA ensure that communities are clear in understanding the relationship between the basic 911 system being implemented and the role of civic addressing.

Committee heard that communities are concerned about their implementation costs, yet the department has been quoted as saying that there will be no costs to communities. It is important for MACA to have a dialogue with communities about the implementation of 911 to ensure a shared understanding of the costs that will be incurred as a result of implementation, and how those costs will be handled.

The questions that committee heard, and the apparent inconsistencies in understanding about what 911 will require, raise concern as to whether the department has done the necessary planning and communication to ensure that their local government partners will have the knowledge required to confidently meet a June 2019 go-live date. When asked by committee if the City of Yellowknife was prepared for a June go-live date, Mayor Rebecca Alty replied that it remained to be seen. She also indicated that the City would be interested in participating on a working group.

To ensure successful implementation, direct and extensive involvement by MACA of all local governments in the implementation of 911 will be vital. As anxious as committee members may be to see 911 implemented, they caution the department to take the time needed to launch the service correctly.

Recommendation 2

The Standing Committee on Government Operations recommends that the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs develop a detailed municipal implementation plan that sets out the information and supports needed by each local authority to ensure successful implementation of NWT-wide 911 service.

The standing committee further recommends that this implementation plan identify a realistic timeframe for discussion with local authorities and

that the department be prepared to adjust the go-live date to a later date, if necessary, to accommodate the consultation needs of local authorities.

Public Information

It is important that all residents of the Northwest Territories and all visitors to the Northwest Territories understand how the 911 system is intended to work, the relevant operational dates, and the responsibilities of individual system users.

The committee recognizes that the department is in the process of developing a communications campaign aimed at developing public awareness. Committee strongly encourages the department to review its currently available public information to ensure that it is consistent with the provisions of the Northwest Territories 911 Act as assented to by this House.

With respect to the provisions in the bill, clause 7 of Bill 31 makes it an offence for anyone to use an automatic dialer to place a 911 call. This offence is subject to a fine of up to \$500. Committee was concerned that members of the public might not be familiar with the term "automatic dialer" and could misunderstand clause 7 as a prohibition against using the speed dial function on one's phone. An automatic dialer is an electronic device or software that automatically dials telephone numbers for the purpose of playing a pre-recorded message. Placing these types of calls, a practice referred to as "robo-calling," is often associated with political and telemarketing phone campaigns, but can also be used for public service or emergency announcements. Committee proposed an amendment to clause 7 of Bill 31 providing that, for greater certainty, an automatic dialer is not to be confused with the speed dial function on a personal phone or alarm.

Committee also considered the importance of public information being made available by the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs, to allow for a better public understanding of how the 911 system is working and being used in the Northwest Territories. As a result, committee proposed an amendment to Bill 31 to require mandatory annual reporting on the 911 service. The motion sets out the information that committee members would like to see included in the annual report, including: the total number of 911 calls received in each official language and from each community or region of the Northwest Territories; the total funds collected through imposition of the cost recovery fee; a breakdown of the operational costs of the service; and information regarding the performance of the service.

Mr. Speaker, I now pass the floor back to the honourable Member for Kam Lake, Mr. Kieron Testart.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Kam Lake.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Clause-by-Clause Review of the Bill

The clause-by-clause review of the bill was held on February 21, 2018. At this review, the committee moved the following motions:

Motion 1: That Bill 31 be amended by adding the following after subclause 4(4):

Subclause 4(5) - [Limit on cost recovery fee amount]:

For a period of three years following the coming into force of this section, the cost recovery fee established under subsection (1) shall be no more than \$1.70 per month. The honourable Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs concurred with this motion, and the motion was carried.

Motion 2: That Bill 31 be amended by adding the following after subclause 7(2):

Subclause 7(3) For greater certainty, subsection (1) does not prohibit a person from programming the number 911 on any speed dial feature of any communications device.

The honourable Minister concurred with this motion, and the motion was carried.

Motion 3: That Bill 31 be amended by adding the following after clause 11:

REPORTING

11.1.(1) For the purposes of this section, "Official Language" means a language referred to in section 4 of the Official Languages Act.

(2) The Minister shall, within 90 days following the end of each fiscal year, table a report of the NWT 911 service in the Legislative Assembly,

which includes, for the preceding fiscal year,

(a) the total number of 911 calls received, including the number of calls received

(i) in each Official Language of the Northwest Territories,

(ii) from each community or region of the Northwest Territories, and

(iii) in each month of the preceding fiscal year;

(b) the total funds collected through imposition of the cost recovery fee;

(c) a breakdown of the operational costs of the service; and

(d) information regarding the performance of the service.

The honourable Minister concurred with this motion, and the motion was carried.

Conclusion

This concludes the Standing Committee on Government Operations' Review of Bill 31. Committee wishes to thank the honourable Minister for his concurrence with the motions to amend the bill that were moved during the clause-by-clause review. Committee also thanks Cabinet for its support of and funding for this important initiative.

Recommendation 3

The Standing Committee on Government Operations recommends that the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs provide a response to the recommendations contained in this report within 120 days.

Following the clause-by-clause review, a motion was carried to report Bill 31, Northwest Territories 911 Act, as amended and reprinted, as ready for consideration in Committee of the Whole.

The committee thanks the public for their participation in the review process and everyone involved in the review of this bill for their assistance and input.

MOTION TO RECEIVE COMMITTEE REPORT 13-18(3) AND MOVE INTO COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE,
CARRIED

Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Deh Cho, that Committee Report 13-18(3) be received by Assembly and moved into Committee of the Whole for further consideration. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Testart. There is a motion. The motion is in order and is non-debatable. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried.

---Carried

The report will be ready for consideration on Thursday, February 28th. Reports of standing and special committees. Item 5, returns to oral questions. Item 6, recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member for Range Lake.

Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to recognize one of the Pages, young Ms. Brooke Vallis, who is a member of Range Lake, and we are really honoured to have her here as a Page. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member for Nahendeh.

MR. THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to recognize two Pages from Sambaa K'e, Adam Lamalice and Aiden Kotchea. As well, I'd like to thank the principal, Donna Fradley, for recruiting our great Pages here. Thank you very much.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

MR. BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too would like to recognize Pages. I'd like to recognize Taylor Schear and Victoria Beaulieu from K'alemi Dene School. Thank you.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Recognition of visitors in the gallery. If we missed anyone, thank you for joining us. Thank you for sticking it out with us today. I want to welcome everyone in the gallery and everyone listening and watching in the Northwest Territories and around the world. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Item 7, acknowledgments. Members, at this time, I will call a brief recess.

---SHORT RECESS

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Welcome back, Members. We had left off on item 7, acknowledgments. Item 8, oral questions. Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

Oral Questions

QUESTION 615-18(3): AUDIOLOGY SERVICES WAIT TIMES

MR. BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have questions for the Minister of Health and Social Services. During the last session, the honourable Member from Frame Lake addressed an issue that I would like to follow up on today regarding the wait time for people who see hearing specialists or audiologists in the NWT. One of the Minister's responses last session was that Health and Social Services was going to release a review on addressing wait times for audiologists. When can we expect this report to be released to the public? Thank you.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Minister of Health and Social Services.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am going to have to go back and review the previous audit because I don't recall saying we are doing a review that we are going to release on audiology.

We are currently reviewing a number of our services in a number of the areas that we are providing. We certainly were working to address some of the challenges and wait times that we were feeling in our experience in audiology. As a result, last sitting, last budget session, we actually increased the number of audiologists in the Northwest Territories by creating a position in the Beaufort-Delta. Currently, all three of those positions, all three of the audiology positions we have in the Northwest Territories, are filled, and we are hoping to see some improvements in our wait times as a result of those investments. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. BEAULIEU: It looks like the Minister has answered some of my other questions, but maybe I could ask a question a little bit differently. The department has some plans, long-term plans, to reduce the wait list in the future for audiologists. Can the Minister explain what some of those long-term plans are?

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: As I indicated, one of the primary things that we did to help with our wait times is we actually created a position in the Beaufort-Delta that will be providing audiology services to both the Beaufort-Delta and the Sahtu. Initially, those services were provided out of Yellowknife by the two different audiologist positions that we had, and they are done by way of travel clinics, five-day travel clinics per year.

Those travel clinics are no longer required, because they will be handled by the audiologist up in the Beaufort-Delta, and those five day clinics that the Yellowknife office was providing will now be provided in the South Slave, so we will be enhancing the number of audiology visits that we have in different jurisdictions within this territory.

We believe that that will help us bring down the wait list times. I do want to be clear, though. As with the mental health wait lists that we were discussing earlier or later last week, where there is urgency or risk, we do get our patients in immediately. Where they are considered non-urgent, that is where the wait lists exist.

MR. BEAULIEU: Back in October of last year, during session, a story came out on the way that Health and Social Services was looking at the priority list. It said priority 1 was 72 hours, working its way down to four months on priority 5. The reason that I am asking questions today is because there is an elder from Detah that is telling me that

he was told that he had to wait maybe two years before he would see somebody that could work with him.

I am wondering if there is any plan for addressing people that may not have the greatest need, but do need to see someone sooner than two years, or maybe even sooner than four months. I am wondering if there is any sort of reprioritizing of the list.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: My list shows that our wait times in 2017-2018 for adults was about 47 weeks, and that is non-urgent cases. It is about 40 weeks for [2:09]. If the Member is aware of an individual who has been told that it is going to be over two years, I would suggest that the best way to deal with that is to meet with me and discuss that particular file. I am not prepared to discuss the file of an individual here in this Assembly.

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, we have filled that position in the Beaufort-Delta. That was filled in December. We are only just now fully staffed with the three positions. We are only now able to provide those services in the Beaufort-Delta and the Sahtu without having to do the travel clinics. We are only now in a position to roll those travel days that were allocated to the Beaufort-Delta into the southern part of this territory.

We now are in a position to start seeing some improvements in this area, and we will continue to monitor to make sure that we are improving those wait times and providing the services that the residents expect and hope for.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Oral questions. Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

MR. BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister is telling me now that all of the positions are filled. Does that mean, essentially, the priority lists would come down? I think at one point you said just now 47 weeks, but would that list now go down to a reasonable amount so that all people that are waiting for this service can be seen within a month? Thank you.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: We do have a long way to go, as the Member knows. We have a bit of a backlog that we need to work our way through to the point where we can actually have quicker turnaround times on all of our files, to have a standard or a more reasonable wait time for initial assessments, but we need to get rid of some of the backlog. We need to work through some of the backlog.

It is going to be a lot of work. I can't say that we are going to see immediate improvement and a more reasonable wait time immediately. It is going to take us a bit of time, but we are now in a position to start

knocking off some of those wait times and bring down some of those wait times. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Oral questions. Member for Yellowknife North.

QUESTION 616-18(3):
PRESERVING INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES

MR. VANTHUYNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In my statement today, I spoke about the need for us to continue to preserve our Indigenous languages. My questions are to the Minister responsible for Official Languages.

Mr. Speaker, the Tlicho people are doing many great things to preserve and promote their language. They have guides for teaching how to read and write. They have some online resources, such as apps, and they even have a Tlicho dictionary, as I mentioned in my statement.

I would like to ask the Minister: what are some of the initiatives that our government is undertaking to protect and promote the NWT's Indigenous languages? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you. Member, there is no Minister of Official Languages. Would you like to clarify who you are directing this to?

MR. VANTHUYNE: Thank you. That would be the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. Sorry.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you. Minister of Education, Culture and Employment.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do want to put a shout out to the Tlicho government for the work that they have done. They actually gave me a copy of their language resource that they are using in the school and the teaching guide, and I was quite impressed with what they do, but the question was: what are we doing? That is important.

We did table our Indigenous language action plan; I believe it was last year. It is called Shared Responsibility, recognizing that preserving and revitalizing language is a shared responsibility. We all have a role to do in that. The action plan really focused on two big priorities: one was revitalization of languages and the other was access to languages.

The revitalization actions include working with the federal government to try to get funding for Indigenous languages and then providing that money to the Indigenous governments so that they can do their own language revitalization actions.

We also provide funding to the schools to implement language revitalization in the schools, language knowledge for the younger children, and as well, we train government employees on how people can get access to the 11 official languages. We actually also supplement GNWT employees who use a second language in their work, if it is required for their work.

We are doing quite a bit. We have more to do. Languages are at risk, but it is something that we are actively pursuing. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. VANTHUYNE: I appreciate the Minister's reply, and I appreciate that she has indicated that the Indigenous Languages and Education Secretariat has an action plan under way. She had mentioned a couple of things with regard to it.

Could she maybe just outline for us whether the action plan actually not forthcoming but is under way? It is something that we are engaged in as a government right now, and if she can, could she possibly share a little bit more with us as to what exactly the action plan consists of?

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Yes, we are actively working on our action plan, implementing the strategies that are in it, again, reminding that the two main priorities within the action plan are revitalization, and the other one is access.

We have been working with access, training GNWT employees. With revitalization, we have done quite a bit. We have got the scholarships in schools. We are working in partnership with Aurora College to implement a program for language revitalization for people.

The other thing that we have done already is we have updated our Aboriginal language directive and replaced it with a new policy for languages in schools. We are in the process of renewing how we fund and support language across the education system.

MR. VANTHUYNE: Thank you to the Minister for expanding on that. Mr. Speaker, there used to be a time when you could just look at a picture from way back in the day, and there were always a number of interpreters or elders or some other folks who were at whatever this public engagement was, making sure that the Indigenous languages were alive and well by doing interpretation and other things like that.

Today, as a government, we engage in a number of forms of public interaction. I would just like to ask the Minister: how can the government promote and protect Indigenous languages by including them when we go out and conduct community consultations, public hearings, conferences, trade

shows, workshops? How can we keep the languages alive during those public interactions?

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: I would like to be able to stand here and say that at every workshop, forum, et cetera, we do use an Indigenous language, but that is not true. That is a fallacy. I do want to give credit to the Members of the Legislative Assembly who do use their language. I think it is very important.

We are losing our languages quickly, and that is why we are really focusing on this revitalization within the schools. Until we can actually get our youth and people speaking more, we are at risk of losing it. Our elders right now are our knowledge keepers. They are our language keepers, but our elders are getting older, so we need to make sure that we are actually providing that support to younger people in the schools. We have a long way to go. We are losing our languages, and it is not okay. We need to start with our youth and give them the tools so that they can bring it forward.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Oral questions. Member for Yellowknife North.

MR. VANTHUYNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, I would agree with the Minister that, where there is assistance needed from ourselves as a government to make sure that the languages do not die and fade away, that it is incumbent upon us to do so.

Mr. Speaker, the department's Indigenous Languages Revitalization Scholarship Program had an application deadline here not long ago, just before Christmas. I would like to ask the Minister: can the Minister update the House a little bit on how the uptake of the scholarship program was and maybe even describe for us a little bit more about the scholarship? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: We do have funding, actually, to provide for people, for Indigenous people, who want to or people who speak Indigenous languages, I shouldn't be exclusive, that want to actually pursue a diploma schooling in Indigenous language revitalization. As of today, we have had 14 recipients of our scholarship program. That shows that we are working on it, the action. I mean 14 sounds good, but it isn't good, Mr. Speaker. Fourteen is only a start. We need to again promote more revitalization. We need to make sure that we have speakers so that they can bring forward this and so our 11 languages do not disappear. It is something we need to continue on a daily basis. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Oral questions. Member for Sahtu.

QUESTION 617-18(3):
TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION TRAINING FOR
NURSES

MR. MCNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Following up to my statement on nursing education and the TRC calls for action on how this preservation of Canada's history could be incorporated into the curriculum of the nursing program.

My first question is directed to the Minister of Education: how does Arctic College address the calls to action of Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Minister of Education, Culture and Employment.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Aurora College right now is Aurora College, not Arctic College. We kind of consider ourselves a five-partner arrangement in that we work with the University of British Columbia on three components and we also work with the University of Victoria. The University of Victoria has a pretty comprehensive policy around it, but, in saying that, we need to do more.

Once we are done the visioning exercise across the Northwest Territories to look at what our polytechnic university will look like and then that work is brought into the polytechnic university, we need to make sure that we have a strong policy around Indigenous languages and our Truth and Reconciliation.

MR. MCNEELY: Thanks to the Minister for that reply. It is good to know that there is progress made in preserving the knowledge of Canada's First Nations and Peoples. My next question: how does the Aurora College Bachelor of Science in Nursing program ensure TRC recommendations are integrated into the curriculum of the program?

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: I am not sure what the terminology was, but earlier today I had heard somebody say, sorry if I get it wrong, but, basically, that our nursing program is a cornerstone of Aurora College. I agree that the nursing program is an example of what we should be doing and what we can be doing. The nursing program actually is one of the leaders on bringing in our Truth and Reconciliation. Things that they do: right now, it is reviewed regularly, on an annual basis, to make sure that we are taking in the Truth and Reconciliation recommendations. In year one, students take part in either an experiential based blanket exercise or a circle in the box workshop that is similar to the blanket exercise, so that is year one. In year two, our students learn on the land with elders to gain traditional knowledge skills that

support cultural competency and cultural safety practices. In year three, the Bachelor of Nurses program offers the elective course; it is an elective though: Indigenous People of the Northwest Territories, and the course is 45 hours. In year four, the program works with an array of Indigenous knowledge keepers and elders who share traditional knowledge in various classes, and then right throughout the years, the students engage in their practicums, working with elders in the hospitals and care facilities. Right throughout, from the first until the fourth year, our nursing students are actually engaged in it. They are a model that we need to look at.

MR. MCNEELY: Having attended residential school myself here, I am glad to hear those replies from the Minister. My third question: what are the some of the learning activities that demonstrate Aurora College's Bachelor of Science in Nursing integration of TRC recommendations?

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Like I had said earlier, our nursing program is actually a fine example of what we should be doing and how we can actually improve our college. Although I have to say that Aurora College is viewed by its partners as a leader in integrating our cultural competency and safety through the recommendations of the program, that may speak to the amount of speakers that we still have in the Northwest Territories and our vibrant culture that we still have, recognizing that we are losing it quickly. It is something that we need to expand on and that we need to work on, but at least we have something to build from. There are a lot of jurisdictions that are not where we are, and so I think we are a model across the country, and I hope that we can make that best practices across the country. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Oral questions. Member for Nahendeh.

QUESTION 618-18(3):
WORKERS' SAFETY AND COMPENSATION
COMMISSION OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND
SAFETY FEES

MR. THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday, I was asking questions for the Minister responsible for WSCC, and I would like to follow up on some questions with him here today. Can the Minister responsible for WSCC explain why occupational health and safety is under the board's responsibility and not another department? What is the rationale for this alignment? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Minister responsible for Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission.

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. All of our departments, as a government, as I mentioned in my response to the Member's questions yesterday, we do have a focus on promoting health and safety as well as providing care and treatment for anybody who is injured that we do work for. We also have a governance council that is made up of members from both the Northwest Territories and Nunavut.

I just want to inform the Member of a little bit of history. Back in 1993, the safety unit was transferred from GNWT to the Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission. They have been doing some great work. The staff has been working very well with our counterparts in Nunavut to make sure, as I mentioned, our mandate is to promote health and safety and provide the care and treatment for our employees and the people that we do work with. I think the rationale is that we are sticking with our mandate. All departments do have that best interest of the employee in mind, and we will continue to have WSCC and the governance council work in this area. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. THOMPSON: I agree, and I think that the government does a great job with the occupational health and safety, and so does WSCC. Can the Minister explain if this is the common practice, to have the occupational health and safety division located within this type of organization in other jurisdictions?

HON. ALFRED MOSES: I want to thank the Member for his comments and comments towards the government and WSCC and the work and services that they do provide. In reality, Mr. Speaker, there is a mixture right across Canada. Some governments, departments, agencies, some of them are stand-alone with funding through their workers' compensation boards, and then there are some that are similar to structures as we provide here in the Northwest Territories. There is a mixture right across Canada, and I believe what we are doing here in the Northwest Territories, working with Nunavut, is a good model.

MR. THOMPSON: Yesterday, I talked about the rates and that that the organizations and the companies have to pay and the government does. Can the Minister advise: are these rates to help pay for occupational health training courses, or is it just to deal with the administration of injured workers?

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Currently, WSCC is funded through payroll assessments and investment revenues. Program development, codes of practice, educational resources, and tools are funded from the fund. The only two things that are fully funded from WSCC are first aid and WHMIS. I don't want to speak on behalf of all employees, but I think, as an employer, we do provide the adequate

care, treatment, services, and programs for all our employees and partners that we work with.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Oral questions. Member for Nahendeh.

MR. THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, I'd like to thank the Minister for his answers for the first few questions. My last question: can the Minister advise us, have they done an evaluation of WSCC recently, or when is the last time it has been done?

HON. ALFRED MOSES: In terms of evaluation, I'm not sure where the Member is specifically wanting to ask about what type of evaluations that we have done. In terms of the Auditor General of Canada, the last time that they did audit the WSCC was back in 2006 at the request of our Legislature, the NWT Legislative Assembly. However it was with the concurrence of the Nunavut Legislative Assembly. That was back in 2006. I can let the Member know that, since then, we have been going through annual audits. This is something that we need to be on top of and evaluate and make sure that the program services and the dollars that we are spending and the dollars and the revenue that we are getting is actually going to the appropriate care and treatment of GNWT employees. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Oral questions. Member for Frame Lake.

QUESTION 619-18(3):
NATIONAL ENERGY BOARD REGULATORY
AUTHORITY IN THE NORTHWEST
TERRITORIES

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. My questions are for the Minister of the Justice, who is the regulator for oil and gas legislation in the Northwest Territories, at least in those areas where we have jurisdiction. Can the Minister tell us why the federal National Energy Board is the regulator of onshore and offshore oil and gas development in the Inuvialuit region? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Minister of Justice.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The National Energy Board was preserved as the regulator of oil and gas operations in the Inuvialuit Settlement Region through the devolution negotiations at the request of Canada and the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation. I understand also that Canada and the Inuvialuit had an interest in maintaining the existing relationship and that Canada in particular felt it was important to maintain as much consistency in the regulation of offshore resources with adjacent onshore resources as possible. That arrangement may have made

some sense as an interim measure. OROGO, in my view, as since proven itself as an excellent regulator.

MR. O'REILLY: I want to thank the Minister for promoting OROGO, and, at his suggestion, I have gone over and met with his staff, and I do agree that they're doing a good job. In the event, though, that there are interests in or development of petroleum resources that straddle areas where the National Energy Board and OROGO have jurisdiction, can the Minister explain how this would be managed?

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: I may have to look further into that issue, of these straddle types of arrangements, so perhaps I can handle the question best by saying that I will get back to the Member opposite.

MR. O'REILLY: I want to thank the Minister for that commitment. I recognize that Cabinet views OROGO as a bit of a hot potato. It appears to me that OROGO's doing a good job. I mentioned that earlier, even though there are limited oil and gas activities, they're doing some work on old wells, which is good. I'd like to ask the Minister whether our government has given any thought to asking the federal government to end the reign of the National Energy Board over the onshore areas of the Inuvialuit Settlement Region and, if not, why not?

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: I thank the Member opposite for his kind words about OROGO. It is an established regulator now, and I believe that, at this stage, with this proven track record, both Canada and the Inuvialuit might be receptive to having a conversation around the benefits of replacing the NEB as regulator for in the ISR area. Increasingly, this government over the years is becoming master in our own home, if I may use the French phrase, "maitres chez nous."

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. I want to thank the Minister for that. We started a conversation here on the floor of the House, so I'm hoping that he could meet or pick up the phone and talk to some of our friends about this issue. In considering whether the National Energy Board should continue as a regulator of oil and gas activities in the Inuvialuit Settlement Region, there of course would need to be consultations with the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation. Can the Minister tell us, the public, whether he's had any of those discussions so far and, if not, why not? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

HON. LOUIS SEBERT: No formal request to have that conversation has been made, but it is

something that I think we should be looking into. After all, we are maturing as a jurisdiction. The Member opposite mentioned the excellent work that OROGO is doing, so, yes, we should have that conversation. It is time, in my view, to re-examine this situation. Thank you.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Oral questions. Member for Yellowknife Centre.

QUESTION 620-18(3):
INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES IN JUNIOR
KINDERGARTEN

MS. GREEN: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. As I noted in my statement, the science of early childhood development points out a number of tips and best practices, so let's see how these are being followed in our new junior kindergarten programming. First, the science says, "Children learn by copying, so they hear the Indigenous languages." How has JK ensured that Indigenous language teachers and teachers' aides, speak the words children must hear in order to learn? Mahsi.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Minister of Education, Culture and Employment.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Early integration or early exposure for children to learn Indigenous language is not a new thing. We do provide funding effective 2018, this year, actually, for junior kindergarten, so they are included in the funding that is given to schools for Indigenous learning, Indigenous teaching. Even before that, I remember operating a daycare and, for many years, actually, looking to bring elders into daycare centres. It's always been promoted to actually utilize people that are from the land, from the speakers, into early childcare programming, remembering that JK is play-based. It is not curriculum based. It's not the same as K to 12. It is a play-based experience. Bringing in elders and using the programming, introducing the children to the language is utilized, but it is a different structure.

MS. GREEN: Thank you to the Minister for that response. My next question is about materials. We know that children like to hear stories and songs, and I wondered what work was underway or is planned for expanding the library of Indigenous language materials for JK?

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: We do have some resources already that we use within our schools. We are always redoing our resources. The same resources that we would use for kindergarten with our Indigenous languages will be used for junior kindergarten. A lot of that is actually having elders

come in and speak with them and play with them, so the development of resources isn't always having a book. That is more of a western culture. Within an Indigenous culture, it's more storytelling, having elders coming in and speaking to the children and showing them concrete examples, so we try to incorporate both western culture and Indigenous culture into the practice.

MS. GREEN: The last time we reviewed the funding for JK, there was a \$300,000 shortfall in the area of Aboriginal languages operations and maintenance for things like the resources and language assistance. Are these two areas now fully funded?

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: I do know that we've received money from the federal government to address Indigenous languages. I can't say if they are fully. I will have to get back to the Member and let her know where we are with that.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Oral questions. Member for Yellowknife Centre.

MS. GREEN: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Last of all, our JK programming course is fairly new, and I'm wondering how the department is monitoring and evaluating the Indigenous language learning elements of the JK programming and how they are implementing the results of this evaluation. Mahsi.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Again, like I had said -- sorry, we just knocked over a basket -- the Indigenous language programming is offered not only to JK; it's also to all students, so the JK students are actually able to take part in the programming that's already being offered to the kindergarten students. I do want to point out that we have two communities, Fort Providence is one of them, and Behchoko, actually, that have more of an Indigenous immersion. Within Behchoko, it's JK, junior kindergarten, to grade two, full immersion, and then Fort Providence is junior kindergarten to grade three. I think those are fine examples, and I think that we need to promote that more within the territory. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Oral questions. Member for Yellowknife Centre.

QUESTION 621-18(3):
WISE WOMEN AWARDS

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Minister responsible for the Status of Women. Last week the Minister confirmed that there won't be any Wise Women Awards this year on International Women's Day. She said the awards may take place in October. Can she confirm that having the awards in October depends on the

success of the Status of Women Council's fundraising efforts? Thank you.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Minister responsible for the Status of Women.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, recognizing that the Status of Women is not under my direction, I cannot. I've been told by the standing committee to be hands-off, so I'm respecting that direction. My understanding from the Status of Women, though, is that they are looking at doing it differently. Like I said last week, or the other day, and I agree with that, community people are very focused on community events. When we do the event, it has traditionally been in Yellowknife. We bring one person, a wise woman, from the communities, and an escort, but they don't get to be around their family and their friends. So the Status of Women, not myself, the Status of Women is looking at a new model where we actually provide the funding to communities so that they can provide those awards within their communities, so that it can become a community event versus a Yellowknife event. That is my understanding. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. GREEN: My follow-up question is: who is going to pay for the new style of recognizing women?

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Again, as I stated the other day in answering that question, the Status of Women Council has been successful in accessing -- one of the mines has given them, I believe, either \$8,000 or \$9,000, and then they are also eligible for at least \$5,000 through the Women's Initiative. That, in total, if I look at the lower of \$8,000, that's actually a total of \$13,000. If we were to honour four women, that would be probably about \$3,000 per community. Traditionally, throughout my years of being a Minister here and going to events, usually it's about \$500 that we give for a community feast, which leaves an extra \$2,500 for the community to use as they want. The extra \$1,000, because if we did four, four times three is \$12,000, the extra \$1,000 should be able to pay for the awards, the trophies that we give out, and any administration. So I do see it as doable. I think it would be cheaper, and I think it would be more effective and more within the spirit of the community to do it as they are looking at it.

MS. GREEN: Thank you to the Minister for that answer. There were two points to the Wise Women Awards, in my mind, and I have a question related to each of them. First of all, the awards were the focal point of the Status of Women Council's celebration of International Women's Day on March 8th. Can the Minister tell us what events, activities, or projects her office is planning in conjunction with

the council to commemorate and promote this year's International Women's Day?

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: I do not know, actually, what the Status of Women, the NWT Status of Women, is doing for International Day. I do know that I will be doing a speech in the House to recognize it. Other than that, I'm not sure, again, what the Status of Women will be doing, or if they are doing it. That is the direction for the Status of Women to do. It is not for me as the Minister to direct them on what to do.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Oral questions. Member for Yellowknife Centre.

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The second point of the Wise Women's Awards was to acknowledge and promote women's leadership, and to me that is especially important, given our efforts to attract more women to political leadership in the NWT. Can the Minister tell us how she plans to acknowledge and promote women's leadership on an ongoing basis? Mahsi.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Again, that was one of the contentious issues that was brought, and that was why I came to standing committee, was when I had given a direction asking the NWT Status of Women to support me in having more women in the leadership. I was definitely told that that mandate is my mandate. It is not for the Status of Women to do, and that I need to do that. So what are we doing? We are doing the campaign schools. We're just finishing up the draft; I'll be sharing that fairly soon. We will be contracting with the Native Women's Association and the NWT Status of Women to actually do a pilot of those campaign schools. So I promote any campaign schools, any promotion of getting women in leadership, but that is what I am doing as the Minister responsible for Status of Women. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Oral questions. Item 9, written questions. Member for Kam Lake.

Written Questions

WRITTEN QUESTION 16-18(3): WORKERS' SAFETY AND COMPENSATION COMMISSION RATES

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have the following questions for the honourable Minister responsible for the Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission:

1. The classes and subclasses of Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission (WSCC) rates which could be applied to the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT), based on the type of work performed by GNWT

departments similar to that performed by private industry;

2. The total number of fees in dollar amount paid to the WSCC by the GNWT in fiscal year 2017-2018;
3. The four-year average of fees in dollar amounts paid to the WSCC by the GNWT;
4. The dollar amount of WSCC compensation paid out to GNWT employees in fiscal year 2017-2018;
5. The four-year average in dollar amounts of WSCC compensation paid out to GNWT employees.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you. Written questions. Item 10, returns to written questions. Mr. Clerk.

Returns to Written Questions

RETURN TO WRITTEN QUESTION 15-18(3): GNWT PARTICIPATION IN THE ASSOCIATION FOR MINERAL EXPLORATION ROUNDUP, JANUARY 2019

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer): Mr. Speaker, I have a provisional Return to Written Question 15-18(3) asked by the Member for Frame Lake on February 5, 2019, to the Premier regarding the Government of the Northwest Territories' Participation in the Association for Mineral Exploration Roundup in January 2019.

A full cost accounting and analysis are under way. Given the level of detail asked for by the Member and the need to consult with NWT Indigenous governments and other key stakeholders as part of the analysis and accounting process, a thorough response will be ready on the first sitting day in May. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. Returns to written questions. Item 11, replies to the Commissioner's opening address. Item 12, petitions. Item 13, reports of committees on the review of bills. Member for Yellowknife North.

Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills

BILL 25: AN ACT TO AMEND THE WORKERS' COMPENSATION ACT

MR. VANTHUYNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Your committee would like to report on its consideration

of Bill 25, An Act to Amend the Workers' Compensation Act. Bill 25 received second reading in the Legislative Assembly on October 29, 2018, and it was referred to the Standing Committee on Economic Development and Environment for review.

On October 25, 2018, our counterparts in the Legislative Assembly of Nunavut began their committee review of Bill 8, which largely mirrors our bill. Mr. Speaker, although it is not common, we again find ourselves in the situation whereby two distinct and independent legislatures are considering amendments to two pieces of legislation relating to a body that conducts business in both jurisdictions. Given the shared nature of the Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission and its importance to the residents and workers in both territories, it is important that our respective legislation be harmonized to the greatest extent possible.

Today I am advising this House of committee's wish to extend its review of Bill 25, with the intention to report back to the House at the earliest possible opportunity. This extension will allow us to continue to work with our counterparts in Nunavut and ensure that both Assemblies produce legislation that is in harmony and allow the Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission to work effectively and efficiently across both territories.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, in accordance with rule 75(1)(c) of the Rules of the Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Sahtu, that the review period for Bill 25, An Act to Amend the Workers' Compensation Act, be extended for a further 120 days. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: The motion is in order. The motion is non-debatable. All those in favour? All those opposed?

---Carried

Reports of committees on the review of bills. Member for Kam Lake.

BILL 26:
STATISTICS ACT

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, your committee would like to report on its consideration of Bill 26, the Statistics Act. Bill 26 received second reading in the Legislative Assembly on October 29, 2018, and it was referred to the Standing Committee on Government Operations for review.

To permit time for the legislative drafters to complete the proposed amendments, I would like to

advise the House of the committee's wish to extend our review of the bill with the intention of reporting back to the House on or before March 11, 2019.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, in accordance with rule 75(1)(c) of the Rules of the Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Deh Cho, that the review period for Bill 26 be extended to March 11, 2019. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: There is a motion on the floor. The motion is in order and non-debatable. All those in favour? All those opposed?

---Carried

Reports of committees on the review of bills. Item 14, tabling of documents. Minister responsible for the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation.

Tabling of Documents

TABLED DOCUMENT 355-18(3):
SENIORS PLANNING STUDY:
A TERRITORIAL SENIORS HOUSING
ASSESSMENT

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following document entitled "Seniors Planning Study, A Territorial Seniors Housing Assessment." Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Tabling of documents. Minister of Health and Social Services.

TABLED DOCUMENT 356-18(3):
CARING FOR OUR PEOPLE:
CULTURAL SAFETY ACTION PLAN 2018-2020

TABLED DOCUMENT 357-18(3):
FOLLOW-UP LETTER FOR ORAL QUESTION
527-18(3): AGING IN PLACE

TABLED DOCUMENT 358-18(3):
FOLLOW-UP LETTER FOR ORAL QUESTION
555-18(3):
YELLOWKNIFE ADULT DAY PROGRAMMING

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table the following three documents entitled "Caring for Our People, Cultural Safety Action Plan 2018-2020," "Follow-up Letter for Oral Question 527-18(3), Aging in Place," and "Follow-up Letter for Oral Question 555-18(3), Yellowknife Adult Day Programming." Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you. Tabling of documents. Item 15, notices of motion. Member for Yellowknife Centre.

Notices of Motion

MOTION 33-18(3):
EXTENDED ADJOURNMENT OF THE HOUSE TO
MARCH 5, 2019,
CARRIED

MS. GREEN: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I give notice that, on Thursday, February 28, 2019, I will move the following motion: I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Great Slave, that, notwithstanding Rule 4, when this House adjourns on February 28, 2019, it shall be adjourned until Tuesday, March 5, 2019, and further, that, at any time prior to March 5, 2019, 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 to that time. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you. Notices of motion. Item 16, notices of motion for first reading of bills. Item 17, motions. Item 18, first reading of bills. Item 19, second reading of bills. Minister of Environment and Natural Resources.

Second Reading of Bills

BILL 38:
PROTECTED AREAS ACT

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Hay River South, that Bill 38, the Protected Areas Act, be read for the second time.

This bill sets out the processes for establishing a protected area in the Northwest Territories. It sets out how to nominate a candidate area to be considered for protected area status. It also provides a mechanism for entering into established agreements with Indigenous governments or organizations for the management of a protected area.

The bill sets out detailed regulation-making authorities so that each protected area may be regulated in a manner that reflects the particular characteristics of that area. The bill also sets out prohibited as well as accepted activities within a protected area. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. There is a motion on the floor. The motion is in order. To the principle of the bill. Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. I wish to speak to the process that resulted in the bill. I will also provide some comments on the bill and concerns with what is there and what is missing.

This is a much anticipated bill and should be the spring board for building opportunities for public and private investment into a conservation economy. This law will help build strong and sustainable communities and promote cultural survival and economic diversification. I recognize that a lot of hard work, blood, sweat, and tears have gone into this bill and thank everyone involved for their efforts. This is the means of implementing Thaidene Nene, Edehzhie, and other protected areas that are in the queue.

The Process

ENR's approach on the development of its environmental legislation appears to have been similar to other departments in the post-devolution world, but there were some significant differences. ENR created a two-level approach for consultation. A large Stakeholder Advisory Group consisting of NGOs, industry, and others was invited to a series of three large workshops that were held October 12, 2017; February 28 and March 1, 2018; and May 9 and 10, 2018. Participants were promised a chance to review the draft bills before introduction into the House, but this was not done.

There were broader public engagements for four of the five bills under development in November and December 2018. Bulleted lists of possible principles and content were posted to the ENR website. "What We Heard" reports were promised but never delivered publicly. Submissions were also not posted. Public consultation and engagement appears to have ended in late 2018.

Technical working groups were also established for each of the five ENR bills being considered. Indigenous governments were invited to participate in detailed discussions and exchanges of proposals and drafts, at least as I understand it. Co-management bodies were eventually allowed to participate in the technical working groups, as some of them would be expected to implement parts of the bills. Indigenous governments who were not members of the Intergovernmental Council and some NGOs without paid staff were provided some limited financial assistance from ENR, and that was a good step.

As I understand it, notes were kept for all of the Stakeholder Advisory Group and technical working group meetings. ENR did not share any of its research, best practices, or cross-jurisdictional analysis publicly. Despite repeated attempts by standing committee and Regular MLAs, the Minister did not share anything substantive from the

consultation and drafting process with Regular MLAs. The Minister said in writing in March 2018 that he was "committed to provide SCEDE with updates on ENR's legislative initiatives and the technical working group and Stakeholder Advisory Group meetings." That never happened, despite several reminders to the Minister and even the Premier.

The standing committee had no idea what the actual bills would contain or what stakeholder and Indigenous government feedback that ENR had received. This is much worse than the ITI bills, much worse, and will make the job of standing committee that much more difficult. To be clear, I don't fault the hard-working ENR staff in any way for not sharing the consultation work that they undertook with very limited resources. It was the Minister who did not share the information, and this is not how consensus government is supposed to work.

ENR does not seem to have had access to the bottomless pit of communications funding that ITI had in developing its very slick, plain-language materials for the mineral rights legislation. It is not too late for ENR to produce some plain-language materials to explain what it is proposing in its legislation. This is complicated stuff, Mr. Speaker, and the public needs help to participate democratically in its review. Plain-language materials would help with that. There are lots of lessons we can learn about the development of these bills, and there is a need for formal review across departments of how we did with our first steps in the post-devolution world. I will now turn to the principles and merit of the bill.

GNWT has a Territorial Parks Act, and four regulations under it. This legislation allows for the establishment of various classifications of parks by regulation. Indigenous peoples may hunt and fish in territorial parks, and consultation may be required for the establishment of parks, changes to boundaries, and repealing regulations. Permits may be issued for park users, and entry may be controlled or prohibited. The positions of superintendents and park officers are created. Offences and penalties are set out, along with regulation-making authority.

Modern parks legislation should establish a park planning and management process, and the bill largely does this.

The Protected Areas Act sets out a rational approach to the establishment and maintenance of a network of conservation areas for the Northwest Territories. Some more work may be required to make sure we adequately protect wetlands. A public registry is to be established. It will contain information on areas nominated for protection, and

the movement of those areas through the process of notification, evaluation, and public engagement that leads to a candidate area becoming of protected area or not. An establishment agreement between public and Indigenous governments will be required for each area, and the formal step of setting up each protected area will be through a regulation. There is provision for notice to be provided to relevant co-management bodies established in the lands rights agreements at some points in the process. The administration and management of protected areas is covered in the bill, with a potential to establish management boards, advisory bodies, and management plans. The activities that are and are not permitted in protected areas are also set out in the bill. There is a lot of detail around enforcement, offenses, and penalties. A report of the Legislative Assembly is required at least every five years. There are sweeping powers for regulation-making. Lastly, there are some consequential amendments to the Territorial Parks Act to allow it to focus on smaller recreational and historic sites.

There are two main issues with this bill, as I see it. Again, there is a very troubling pattern of extensive and sweeping Ministerial power and discretion without many checks or balances. I will highlight some of these matters a little later. The bill does acknowledge and recognize Indigenous rights and the prevailing co-management system established under constitutionally entrenched land rights agreements. It does not fully embrace or support the role of the land use planning boards or renewable resource boards and councils. Notice to the co-management bodies of candidate areas, establishment, and potential changes to protected areas is a start, but hardly the kind of incorporation of their true jurisdiction and roles. Why would the Minister not want to seek the views of, and consult with, relevant co-management bodies with regard to nomination of candidate areas for consistency with existing land use plans, seek the views of these bodies with regard to park management plans, and more? The Minister may actually be obligated to make joint management proposals to the renewable resources boards for protected areas establishment and management. In any event, I recognize this is a complex area and that the bill likely represents a compromised position that was met under tight timelines. I certainly look forward to hearing from Indigenous governments and co-management bodies about the way in which they had been built into this bill, or not.

I strongly support the concept of protected areas public registry. The problem is that it is not clear what information will actually make it into the registry. In my view, all the correspondence among the GNWT, Indigenous governments, and other interests regarding the nomination of areas,

candidate area evaluation, public engagement submissions, final and amended establishment agreements, management plan development materials, and any changes to protected areas should be documented on the public registry. This should be available to everyone and made available online, similar to the public registries of the land and water boards of the Mackenzie Valley Review Board.

There appears to be very limited ability to expropriate land for protected areas. Such an arrangement is already in place for the mining industry, whereby rights holders can effectively expropriate, with compensation, surface rights holders.

Earlier, I mentioned the overwhelming Ministerial power and discretion found in the bill. The Minister appears to have unbounded ability to reject areas that may be nominated, without any appeal or dispute resolution, or even public notice with reasons and a public comment period. We may also need to consider if others should be able to nominate areas for protection. While I can appreciate that regulations could help clarify public engagement around protected areas establishment, there should at least be an onus on the Minister to seriously consider and provide reasons publicly for any decisions on the nomination and evaluation process. Those decisions should be placed on the public registry to build transparency, accountability, and confidence.

Cabinet can only reduce the size of a protected area or de-register a protected area with the consent of Indigenous governments. This reduces one of my greatest fears about what might be in the bill. This is a strong and necessary provision to ensure that there is permanency and clarity. However, I am alarmed with the provisions in the bill that would allow the Minister total and unfettered discretion to establish transportation and transmission corridors through and within protected areas. Now, that is expropriation and needs to be fixed.

This bill is a good start, and again, I acknowledge all of the hard work that went into it. I look forward to working with my colleagues on the Standing Committee on Economic Development and Environment to hear what Indigenous governments, non-governmental organizations, industry, and the public have to say about improving this very important piece of legislation. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you. If Members could turn their attention to the gallery, we have been joined by two constituents from Nahendeh, Ms. Valerie Lamalise and Ms. Norma Jumbo. Welcome to the House. To the principle of the bill.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried.

---Carried

Bill 38 has had a second reading and is referred to standing committee. Second reading of bills. Minister of Environment and Natural Resources.

BILL 39:
ENVIRONMENT RIGHTS ACT

HON. ROBERT MCLEOD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Yellowknife South, that Bill 39, the Environmental Rights Act, be read for the second time. This bill takes steps to modernize and broaden the existing Environmental Rights Act. It updates language use in the current act to make it consistent with more recent legislation. It broadens existing rights under the act to request an investigation, prosecute an offence, and bring an action. The bill provides correspondingly broader protections for employees who engage in those and other processes.

With respect to the right to request an investigation, the bill provides clear timelines and responsibility around the Minister's obligations to report. The bill requires the executive council to prepare a statement of environmental values and requires department and select public bodies to consider that statement in their decision making. It mandates the tabling of a state of the environmental report for the Northwest Territories, sets timelines around the report, and provides for public comment on that report. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: There is a motion on the floor. The motion is in order. To the principle of the bill. Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. I will not speak to the process that got us here with ENR, as I covered that in my previous remarks on Bill 38, but I will also provide some comments on the bill and concerns with what is there and what is missing.

The original Environmental Rights Act was passed as a private Member's bill by the Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly in 1990. The bill was sponsored by former Yellowknife Centre MLA Brian Lewis, who modelled his bill after a similar statute in the state of Michigan. I wish to recognize his important contribution to the public interest. The preamble to the original act sets out the special relationship we have with the land and establishes the right to a healthy environment, including ways

to protect it as set out in the legislation. A process is set up for the public to request investigations by the Minister into the release of contaminants into the environment. The public automatically has standing for environmental prosecutions and civil suits to stop the release of contaminants into the natural environment. Whistleblower protections are also established under the act. The Minister is required to table an annual report in the House.

Two Yellowknife citizens, my friend Chris O'Brien and myself, requested the first investigation under this act on April 22, 1991. We asked the then-Minister of Renewable Resources to investigate the stack emissions from Giant Mine and impacts on the environment and human health. The initial response from the territorial government was to ask for more evidence of arsenic emissions, so we sent back a report generated by the government itself.

More than two years after the request for an investigation, a report was released in July 1993 confirming that trees were being damaged by sulphur dioxide around the Giant Mine. A human health assessment was conducted by the federal Department of Health and Welfare that concluded that there was no imminent health hazard from the sulphur dioxide but that arsenic is a known human carcinogen, and exposure to arsenic levels should be reduced to the lowest possible level. Unfortunately, government moves very slowly, and nothing was accomplished on controlling sulphur dioxide and arsenic air emissions before Giant Mine eventually closed in 1999.

I am sure, Mr. Speaker, we can all agree that we can fix this and do much better. That is what I hope for in this new bill, but I can assure everyone that there has not been avalanche of investigation requests.

For the current bill, the scope of the "Have Your Say" consultation was limited to the following general objectives:

- Extend the right to protect the environment;
- Reflect numerous well-accepted developments in land claims and Aboriginal and treaty rights, environmental law, human rights and international law;
- Ensure consistency with provisions and approaches in other NWT legislation;
- Clearly acknowledge what is meant by the right to a healthy environment; and
- Clearly acknowledge and emphasize the obligation of the GNWT to act in accordance with the public trust.

Mr. Speaker, this was an ambitious set of key components for the bill. Unfortunately, we have no idea what anyone said during ENR's consultation process because the Minister refused to share any of this information with committee, and there was no "What We Heard" report produced from the very limited final consultation.

What is in the new version of the Environmental Rights Act, which repeals and replaces the old statute? On the whole, it is very similar, perhaps too similar. Investigations can be done, prosecutions and civil court action can be commenced, whistleblower protection is still there, and there are two new features. A vague statement of environmental values is to be prepared, and some new reporting requirements are added.

The preamble is strengthened but, as we will see, there are very few ways in which environmental rights are clearly defined or made enforceable. For example, the right to healthy environment is not clearly defined, and there are no actual ways to force compliance or provide remedies. In the current version of the legislation, paramountcy is established over all other legislation, but that is removed in this bill.

Investigations under the current legislation can be requested by any two adults who are of the opinion that a contaminant has been, is being, or will be released. Under the new bill, investigations can be requested by one person, an adult resident in the NWT, but only on reasonable grounds that an act or an omission has caused or is likely to cause "significant" harm to the environment. No definition is provided for the word "significant".

Clearly the bill establishes a higher and much more difficult standard for investigations to be considered legitimate. Sworn statements are required, with names and addresses required of anyone who might be able to give evidence. We can expect these higher and more costly requirements to reduce access to investigations and create a barrier to enforcing this sort of environmental right. Likewise, the Minister will have the broad discretion to conduct or discontinue an investigation if the alleged action or omission is not likely to cause significant harm to the environment. Some appeal mechanisms should be built into the bill, in my opinion. In the bill, the right to begin a civil action against any person for an act or omission also requires proof of the significant harm to the environment.

Whistleblower protection is expanded to include employees who comply with or seek to enforce any legislation, regulation, or authorization, or who provide information for an investigation review or hearing, or who refuse to carry out an order or direction that would contravene legislation,

regulation, or authorization. These are good things, but the only remedy seems to be a prosecution with fines increased from a maximum of \$5,000 to \$250,000 and imprisonment from up to 90 days to up to one year in the new bill.

Under the bill, Cabinet shall prepare a statement of environmental values, including the right to a healthy environment and explain how those values will be integrated into decisions made by a department or a number of public bodies, including Aurora College, the Business Development and Investment Corporation, the NWT Housing Corporation, and the NWT Power Corporation. Ministers or the head of the additional listed bodies are to take every reasonable step to ensure that the environmental values are "considered" whenever decisions are made that might significantly affect the environment. There is that test again. No reporting on implementation of the statement of environmental values is required, and there does not appear to be any consequences for non-compliance.

A new requirement is created in the bill for State-of-the-Environment reporting within three years of coming into force or four years after the first report. The State-of-the-Environment report seems to look a lot like the cumulative impact monitoring report under the Mackenzie Valley Resources Management Act. While there is to be a period of public notice for this new report under the bill, the Minister is also required to prepare a written response to any public comments within 90 days. This looks interesting, but I am not sure that this really will amount to much in terms of environmental rights or changes.

That is all that there is in this bill, Mr. Speaker: some minor changes to what is currently in place. The higher standards for many of the elicited environmental rights appear to restrict access to the ability to exercise those rights that are set out. The only areas of improvement appear to be a longer preamble, including some additional whistleblower protection coverage, the unenforceable statement of environmental values, and state-of-the-environment reporting. No other means to enforce the vague rights alluded to in the preamble are found in the bill.

What is not in the bill is any kind of novel or even radical means of setting out environmental rights and means to exercise them. The federal Auditor General Act creates a requirement for sustainable development strategies for each federal department and agency. Those strategies are to be monitored and reported on. There is also a petition process established, whereby a resident of Canada can raise any matter related to sustainable development, and the Minister or head of the

relevant departments or agencies are compelled to respond publicly.

Some other ideas that the bill could have considered include:

- The ability for the public to propose new policy;
- Non-court-based dispute resolution;
- Independent investigations of environmental complaints;
- Creation of government obligations to protect the environment;
- Specific procedural rights, such as public notice of changes to policy, regulation, and legislation, with opportunities for comment; and
- Restrictions on or even prohibitions against strategic lawsuits against public participation.

Lastly, many countries have begun to create constitutional environmental rights or even recognize the rights of nature as enforceable. It is not clear whether ENR seriously considered any of these approaches.

This bill needs a lot of work to improve access to environmental rights, and I look forward to working with my colleagues on the Standing Committee on Economic Development and Environment to hear what Indigenous governments, non-governmental organizations, industry, and the public have to say. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: To the principle of the bill.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

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

---Carried

Bill 39 has had its second reading and is referred to standing committee. Second reading of bills.

By the authority given to me by Motion 7-18(3), I hereby authorize the House to sit beyond the daily hour of adjournment to consider the business before the House.

Item 20, consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters. I will hand the chair over to the birthday boy and Member for Mackenzie Delta.

Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters

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

MR. BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Committee would like to consider Tabled Document 322-18(3), Main Estimates, 2019-2020, with the Department of Health and Social Services. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake): Thank you, committee. We have agreed to begin consideration of the Department of Health and Social Services. Minister of Health and Social Services, would you like to provide opening comments?

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Yes, please, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake): Okay, proceed.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm pleased to present the 2019-2020 Main Estimates for the Department of Health and Social Services. The total proposed budget for the department is \$495,934,000. Overall, the department's estimates propose an increase of \$34.4 million, or about 7 percent over the 2018-2019 Main Estimates.

Highlights of the proposed estimates include:

- Forced growth of \$3.98 million;
- Funding for initiatives totalling \$7.87 million; and
- Sunsets and other adjustments of \$16.5 million, which includes operationalization of the new Stanton Hospital.

These estimates continue to support the priorities of the 18th Legislative Assembly. Specific support of these priorities includes:

- \$3.28 million to increase capacity in Child and Family Services;
- \$863,000 for the public awareness and education campaigns in response to cannabis legalization, and another \$234,000 to monitor and act on health impacts of cannabis legalization;
- \$400,000 to increase support to Indigenous governments in proving land-based mobile addictions treatment;

- \$352,000 to improve the chemotherapy program at Stanton Territorial Hospital;
- \$373,000 to expand the Midwifery Program;
- \$972,000 increase to combine the Yellowknife day shelter and sobering centre in one location, with improved programming;
- \$500,000 to support family violence shelters; and
- \$2 million to continue with the establishment of school and community child and youth care counsellors this year in the Beaufort Delta and Sahtu regions.

Mr. Chair, that does conclude my opening comments, and I'm happy to answer any questions that committee may have.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake): Thank you, Minister. Would you like to bring witnesses into the Chamber?

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Yes, please.

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

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'd like to introduce my witnesses. On my left is Bruce Cooper, who is the deputy minister of Health and Social Services, and on my right is Jeannie Mathison, who is the director of finance. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake): Thank you. Committee, you have agreed to forgo general comments and proceed directly to the detail for the Department of Health and Social Services. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake): Thank you. The department begins on page 161, but we will defer the departmental summary pages and review the estimates by activity summary, beginning on page 169. Health and Social Services, administrative and support services, operations expenditure summary, 2019-2020 Main Estimates, \$106,958,000. Any questions from committee? Ms. Green.

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm looking at the line that is described as "facility maintenance and support." Could the Minister confirm that the increase in this expenditure relates to Stanton Hospital? Thank you.

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

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Yes, Mr. Chair.

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

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Could the Minister please provide us with a breakdown of how that money is being disbursed over the fiscal year? Thank you.

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

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. About \$7.2 million plus a little bit is for amortization, and then \$114,000 is incremental O and M, and about \$11.5 million is for monthly service payments for Stanton Hospital. Then there are positions in there, as well. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you for the detail on that. Does this line not capture the cost of moving the department out of the current Stanton Hospital into the new one? Where is that cost? Is it here? Thank you.

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

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Those funds are actually included within the capital project, as part of the total capital process. They're not part of the O and M costs.

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

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Is that also the case for the cost of moving the department out of the existing hospital while the existing hospital is retrofitted? Thank you.

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

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: That's my understanding, Mr. Chair.

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

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Nothing further on this page.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake): Thank you. Any further questions from committee? Okay, I'll read the page. Health and Social Services, administrative and support services, operations expenditure summary. Committee, in order to read the page, I'll have to ring the bells here to get a quorum.

Thank you, committee. I recognize the quorum. I will now read the page. Operations expenditure summary, 2019-2020 Main Estimates, \$106,958,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake): Thank you. That brings us to Health and Social Services, ambulatory care services, operations expenditure summary, \$77,575,000. Any questions from committee? Does committee agree? Ms. Green.

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I noticed that the expenditure on out-of-territory hospitals and physicians is the same to the dollar between the two years where I would have expected that there may be some variation. Is there a reason that it's exactly the same for the two years in a row? Thank you.

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

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. You'll notice, in the document in front of you, there is a column of actuals for 2017-2018. As we know, those are based on the actual numbers after recalculations and whatnot in that fiscal year. Last year, 2018-2019, or rather this current year, we had a big base adjustment that brought our mains up to the \$29,278,000. We anticipate that there will still be a minor supplementary that might increase that number slightly, but this is the base amount that we have moved forward with on each year. We recognize that, given that these ultimately are based on actuals, there might be a small increase compared to previous years, where there was a much larger increase.

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

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Is this the page which would capture any additional spending on audiology, as some of my colleagues have questioned in the past? Thank you.

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

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. No, that would be in diagnostic and therapeutic services, not in ambulatory care. Before we go on, though, I'd just like to point out that, throughout this budget, I think it's important to recognize that there are multiple areas within this budget where you'll see increases that are directly related to Stanton, the growth at Stanton and opening the new facility. For instance, on this page, it's under "Emergency Services." We have four new RN's in the Stanton emergency. I just want to make it clear that, although we talked about in the previous section, it

will be through many sections that you'll see the standing up of Stanton in this budget. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MS. GREEN: Thank you to the Minister for pointing that out. I have nothing further on this page.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake): Thank you, Ms. Green. Any further questions? Mr. Beaulieu.

MR. BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Out-of-territory physicians, are those locums? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake): Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. Minister Abernethy.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: No, Mr. Chair. "Out-of-territory physicians" refers to services received by residents of the Northwest Territories when they're outside of the Northwest Territories. For instance, we send somebody out for medical travel. We still have to pay for those services. That would be under that. The cost of locum physicians is out of our medical budget, and we don't have an extra budget for that. We have to use it out of the existing funds. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake): Thank you, Minister Abernethy. Any further questions, committee? Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. Is this the section where midwifery is found, or is it in the next one, under community health programs? Can someone help me? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: No, Mr. Chair. This isn't the appropriate section. That section would be nursing inpatient services.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. I will wait until we get to that part of the main estimates. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake): Any further questions, committee? Seeing none, I will call the page. Ambulatory care services, 2019-2020 main estimates, \$77,575,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake): Agreed. Thank you. Next, we have community health programs, operations expenditure summary, 2019-2020 main

estimates, \$180,818,000, from pages 175 to 179. Any questions? Ms. Green.

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I have a number of questions that relate to this activity. The first relates to homecare and support services. The estimates for the next fiscal year show a reduction from the current fiscal year. I'm wondering if the Minister can tell us why there's a reduction. Thank you.

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

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: The drop in this particular line is actually not as large as it looks because what this line does not show is the federal money that we're getting, which has been included in previous years' budgets. It hasn't come through the appropriation process to appear. It will likely come through by way of a supplementary. That will increase the budget here by a fair amount. There is a reduction in this area, a \$600,000 reduction, which is part of the \$2.5 million that was allocated in 2017-2018 but not spent. We had to make some hard decisions moving forward. We knew that we wanted to or, rather, we needed to make some additional investments in the Child and Family Services areas. There was some money in this particular area that was not spent. We are looking to stand up some work, and we're still making some progress around testing some of the new models for homecare, so we had to make the hard decision to reinvest some of those dollars in Child and Family Services.

I would like to point out that, since 2016, our budget in this area has increased by \$3.2 million, and that's even with the reduction of \$600,000 calculated in. This is basically a 24-percent increase in this area, and it has added 14 new homecare positions during that time, which is basically an increase of 21 percent of positions in this area. The \$600,000 does not result in the reduction of any services that currently exist in homecare. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I have a number of follow-up questions. How much money is the department expecting to come from the federal government, for homecare? Thank you.

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

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: \$790,000 in the upcoming fiscal year. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. My second follow-up question has to do with the lapse of the \$600,000 in homecare. What steps is the Minister going to take to prevent lapsing of homecare money in the future? Thank you.

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

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Given the positions we've put in place and the programs we've put in place, we can fully spend the dollars that are in front of us. We did lapse some money in the previous year, that were the result of that \$2.5 million that was allocated to us. We anticipated lapsing some money again this year, as we continue to do our work around the family and community caregivers, and other programs that we are testing and modelling at this point. There is a chance, once we've done that testing, that we'll have to come back for future consideration, future asks, but at this point in time, for 2019-2020, based on the programs that we currently have in place, we figure we'd be lapsing about \$600,000. Rather than lapsing it, we wanted to use it for something where we knew there was a real demand, and that's Child and Family Services. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. It was my understanding from the Minister's remarks during question period a few days ago that what drove this lapse was not being able to fill all of the positions. If that statement holds, then why is he confident there won't be any lapsing in the future? What would have changed to prevent lapsed funds in the future? Thank you.

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

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. If the Member were to go back and review Hansard, she would notice that the first indication was, in the first year we got those dollars, we lapsed over \$900,000. That was mostly because of the fact that we had to create positions, get positions evaluated, get positions established, and then go out and recruit and attempt to fill those positions. That work does take a bit of time, and, as a result, we did not fill the positions on day one of the fiscal year, and we ended up lapsing \$900,000. By the second fiscal year, we had all of the positions established. We had all of the positions created. We had a significant number of the positions filled, and we were still in the \$570,000 to \$600,000 in lapsing. We are still in that position; that is why we feel that we will be lapsing about \$600,000.

Having said that, we are doing the review of home and community care to help us figure out what best numbers are for these services in the future and what best types of positions are. We have also taken advantage of some federal funds and made some good investments in other areas, such as wheelchair accessible vans, negative-pressure wound therapy, Doppler assessment for peripheral arterial disease, and we have been able to use some federal money to roll those out in the Northwest Territories.

We have been making some progress in these areas. There is still work to be done. I accept that, but we feel that, given where we are today, that \$600,000 would be lapsed for 2019-2020. Once again, given the significant demands that we are experiencing with Child and Family Services and the \$3.2 million that we are increasing in that area, we felt that we needed to be able to put some of our dollars in to make that a reality, so that we can meet the needs of children and families in this territory. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The part that I am finding is confusing is that the number of seniors in the territory is increasing significantly year over year, and the demand for homecare is increasing as that group ages. The part that I am not understanding is why it is not possible to spend all of the money allocated to homecare in a given year. The question is: why is it so hard to spend this money? Thank you.

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

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. In 2017-2018, we got a \$2.5 million ongoing investment into homecare that we weren't anticipating when we did our initial work in preparation for that budget. We had to stand up a significant amount of services, the creation of 14 positions and other things, to make that a reality.

As the Member knows, and I think all of the Members know, we want to spend money for a maximum benefit. We want to make sure that the things that we are designing make sense and have ongoing and long-term benefits. I get that the number of seniors is increasing in this territory, but in order to ensure that we are spending money wisely, we have to make sure that there is a solid business case, a plan.

I am sure that, if Members really wanted, we could throw money at issues for one-time things, but we would get no real benefit for it in the long-term. We want to make sure that our dollar investments have

long-term benefits that are based on sound evidence as opposed to opinion. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I remain concerned that money for homecare has lapsed, given the increased number and needs of seniors in the territory. I understand that there is a homecare study under way now. Does this budget include implementation of recommendations from that homecare study in the 2019-2020 fiscal year? Thank you.

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

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Not at this time, Mr. Chair. We need to get that report in. We need to have that report analyzed. We need to make sure that our design is getting maximum benefit for the dollars that we do have.

If it turns out that the report suggests that we need to make significant new investments in this area, recognizing that this is the Non-Insured Health Benefits and not covered in most jurisdictions, then we are prepared to begin that work to build the business case that it is necessary to approach FMBS and seek additional funds in the future. There is still a lot of work before we will be ready to do that. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would like to hear, if there are funds required for homecare, that this work would be expedited, and we would see a supplementary appropriation for these funds. What my constituents indicate to me is that they need more help than they are getting. I want to make sure that their needs are met with money that is allocated to them, not only through the federal government, but money that may need to be allocated through the territorial government as well. Can the Minister assure me that those needs will be met in the next fiscal year, once they have been identified? Thank you.

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

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. We do need to wait for the report to come in. That will help us articulate where our pressures are and where we need to strengthen our investments. That would certainly include ensuring that we are spending our money the right way today, which might mean changes of positions, re: description of positions, and doing those types of things.

If it does require money, we have an obligation to build a business case, as every department does, that is evidence-based and makes sense. We are prepared to do that work, but we can't guarantee, obviously, that it would make it as far as an investment in the life of this government. We will certainly make sure that FMB is informed and understands the challenges that we are under.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake): Thank you, Minister Abernethy. Next, we have Mr. Thompson.

MR. THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. On page 177, it talks about the Anti-Poverty Fund and day shelter there. Can the Minister give us a breakdown on the Anti-Poverty Fund, how much is in that pot of money, and not just combined with the day shelter? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake): Thank you, Mr. Thompson. Minister Abernethy.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, \$1 million of that is actually for the Anti-Poverty Fund, which is an application-based program. \$150,000 is for day shelters; \$75,000 goes to Inuvik; \$75,000 goes to Yellowknife.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake): Thank you, Minister Abernethy. Mr. Thompson.

MR. THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Can the Minister tell us how much was actually requested in funds last year through the budget? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake): Thank you, Mr. Thompson. Minister Abernethy.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. We allocated the entire \$1 million in the 2018-2019 fiscal year, but I don't think it is a surprise. There were certainly significantly more applications than funds available. I think it was \$4 million that was requested. That is up double from the previous year.

The previous year, we started with a budget of \$500,000. Through the O and M process that we are going through today, it was increased to \$1 million. We had \$2 million in asks that time, and we spent the entire \$1 million. This time, \$1 million was known, \$4 million in applications, \$1 million approved. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake): Thank you, Minister Abernethy. Mr. Thompson.

MR. THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. This is a very good program. There is \$1 million, and we had \$4 million worth of requests. I guess my question is to the Minister is: why weren't you guys looking at trying to increase the budget in this area by at least

another half of a million dollars to help people with this great anti-poverty work that they are doing? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake): Thank you, Mr. Thompson. Minister Abernethy.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. This government is committed to fighting and addressing poverty as one of the many partners necessary to fight that battle, but there are limited funds, and there were significant amounts of mandate items that we needed to make some progress on.

Recognizing that there are multiple areas that are actually addressing poverty, housing, education, and many other things that we are doing, we felt, given that we had the \$500,000 last year, that we weren't in a position to seek more when we had so many other priority areas to spend a very limited amount of money on. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake): Thank you, Minister Abernethy. Mr. Thompson.

MR. THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I guess that I will have to kind of disagree with the Minister on that. I understand that other departments are doing that, but those are the other departments. I would have hoped that the government would have put a little bit more money in there from this department.

I know that we did work with the committee last year and the department on that. Will the Minister be looking at that or the department looking at that for not this budget but the next one, if we continue to see this increase or demand of \$4 million worth of requests? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake): Thank you, Mr. Thompson. Minister Abernethy.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The Member's point is certainly noted. We have made significant investments in this, in this Assembly, that will support families and will support individuals who are struggling, and that is across many departments. There are also other pots that people can be referred to. The federal government provides wellness funding that goes directly to communities. Many of the communities are trying to run initiatives that will focus on poverty. ITI is working on supporting more community gardens for food security. There are multiple things happening. There is no one department that is alone in the battle to address poverty in this territory. In addition to this fund, I mean, if you look at many of the things that Health and Social Services is doing, they are intended to help address those challenges that our residents face, whether it is addictions or mental health or just overall healthcare. I take the

Member's point. That is certainly something that I anticipate will appear in transition documents in planning for the new Assembly, and that is certainly something that I think the next Assembly is going to have to consider. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake): Thank you, Minister Abernethy. Mr. Thompson.

MR. THOMPSON: Thank you, and I thank the Minister for that answer. When he talks about mental health and addictions, on page 177, we see a decline of \$200,000 from that line. Is that being replaced by federal funding, or is there a reason why we have had a reduction of \$200,000 in this important area? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake): Thank you, Mr. Thompson. Minister Abernethy.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Mr. Chair, the money from the mental health and addictions, which was \$450,000 and now moved to \$250, \$200,000 of that has actually been moved into the line directly below, on-the-land healing fund, as part of the increase there of \$725,000. Some of that money is new, but some of that money has been moved into this area from that area, so it is still in the budget. It has just moved. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake): Thank you, Minister Abernethy. Mr. Thompson.

MR. THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I thought that the on-the-land healing was new federal funding, but we have taken \$200,000 from mental health and addictions and put it into on-the-land healing? What was the rationale for that decision to move that? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake): Thank you, Mr. Thompson. Minister Abernethy.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. With respect to on-the-land healing increases and changes that we have made, we have heard from individuals that they would like to see more focus on some of the on-the-land programming, focus on after-care treatment and mental health and addictions. We have sought through the budgeting process an additional \$400,000 that we have included in this line to take it from \$1.1 million to \$1.5 million, but we also took some of the money out of this particular area, out of the \$450,000, \$200,000 to support more on-the-land training programs focused on mental health and addictions. This is the new initiative that we have been talking about. We also took an additional \$120,000. In total, we reallocated \$330,000, which will take the amount of money for on-the-land healing from \$1.1 million to \$1.825 million, and \$7.25 million of that is really focused on, really, the mental health and

addictions on-the-land programming, to strengthen it. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake): Thank you, Minister Abernethy. Mr. Thompson.

MR. THOMPSON: Thank you. I thank the Minister for that answer. I understand the \$200,000. I understand the increase of \$500,000, but, the \$125,000, where did that come from? Where did you get that taken from? Was it out of this section or another section? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake): Thank you, Mr. Thompson. Minister Abernethy.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Some of those dollars came from a consultant position we had in the department which was vacant. Then we felt that we could get more bang for our buck, more benefit by rolling it into on-the-land program for mental health and addictions support with Indigenous governments. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake): Thank you, Minister Abernethy. Next on the list, we have Ms. Green.

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The Standing Committee on Social Development is eagerly awaiting the mental health and addictions recovery plan. Where do we find the money in this budget that will implement the actions that are recommended in that plan when we see it? Thank you.

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

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Some of it is what we just talked about, but, for the most part at this point in time, we are planning to use existing and our own resources to fund some of the activities that we want to undertake in this particular area. From there, we will be able to determine what additional asks and what additional business cases are going to be necessary to seek additional funding, if appropriate. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. It is hard to overstate how disappointed I am with that answer. We have been waiting since 2016 for this addictions and recovery plan to come our way, and now it doesn't come with a funding ask. All of the required actions are being funded from repurposed money. Do I understand that correctly? Thank you.

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

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Well, Mr. Chair, there is \$400,000 in here. We believe that, initially, we can use some of our own internal dollars to start implementing these types of things, but we need to finish the action plan and then, from there, test some of the hypotheses and theories, and then we need to figure out whether or not a business case is necessary to seek additional funds. I am not going to say that additional funds aren't necessary. I am saying that we need to do the business case and be able to have a defensible business case to compete against all initiatives that the GNWT is taking forward. Right now, we believe we have enough money to get started in the upcoming fiscal year.

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

MS. GREEN: Mr. Chair, the wait to have this action plan completed and the compounding wait of seeing which initiatives are going to work, I found incredibly frustrating. This is not an area that we should be playing wait-and-see with. This is an area which I would like to see treated like Child and Family Services, where there was a leaping over of all the government slowdown processes to actually make things work immediately. Why is that not the case for mental health and addictions recovery? Thank you.

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

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. We take this seriously. This is a priority. This is something that we have been working on for some time. I mean it isn't without its investment. We have invested significant new dollars in the day shelter sobering centre to help individuals who are struggling, to make sure that they have a safe place. We have also added programming there that never existed before, which is available to help people find a path to wellness and take advantage of some of the programs and services that we have in place. The 2018-2019 budget for mental health and addictions was \$17 million. There is significant money going into this, this particular situation. We need to make sure that we are getting maximum benefit for those dollars being spent, and that will help us demonstrate and build a business case that is solid and will help us seek additional funds in the future.

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

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. When the standing committee submitted its report on the addictions tour that we did with the Minister about 15 or 16 months ago, it was clear to all of us that there needed to be money for after-care. The day

shelter is not an after-care program, and, on-the-land, it may be an after-care program, but people talked about needing ongoing support to maintain their sobriety. They talked about the need to have somewhere to be discharged to, somewhere to live, to be discharged to, so how are these priorities captured in this budget? Thank you.

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

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. As an initial starting point, some of the on-the-land money that we have talked about today is actually intended to be used through Indigenous governments, for on-the-land care, after-care, those types of things. I acknowledge that, obviously, we need to continue to do work in this area. I hear the Member loud and clear. I do note that the draft action plan went to committee last week. We are hoping to have a sit-down with committee to go through that and get their feedback and input on that action plan to help us strengthen it and help us build the business case that is necessary in order to make arguments for funding where appropriate.

I think everybody recognizes that we have tight fiscal situations. We have to make sure that our money is being spent well, being spent wisely, and that we are actually getting benefit from dollars. Once we can confirm that, we will be in a far better position to demonstrate a need for additional money, if that is indeed the case.

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

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. This job is making me very cynical. The fact that we have to do the budget today, but we don't get to talk about the Mental Health and Addictions Recovery Action Plan until next week means that we are not able to discuss the details today that are relevant to this budget. I find that the timing of this is unfortunate, if not directly purposeful.

I want to point out to the Minister that money that isn't paid upfront to support people on whom we have spent thousands of dollars to achieve their sobriety doesn't make any sense. We are talking about value for money and supporting people in their health and well-being. If we don't do that, then they continue to cycle through the system, and they require more service at the hospital, more service in addictions treatment, and so on.

What am I missing here? Why is this not a priority for funding right now? Thank you.

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

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am proud of this government. I am proud of the work that everybody in this building does. I think we all do an incredible amount of work in order to improve the lives and well-being of people in our House. I got to tell you; I take great offence to the Member's insults in suggesting that we don't care. I think that the Member's comments are deeply disturbing, deeply frustrating, and I think, frankly, she is insulting every Member of this House, not just myself, but the Members on that side and the Members on that side and, frankly, Mr. Chair, all of the hard-working staff who are investing time in their lives to try to make these things a reality and a priority.

This department cares deeply about the work that we are doing. We have made significant investments. We are making significant strides in improving mental health and addictions services here in the Northwest Territories. I am as frustrated as the Member that things move at the speed that they move, but they do move at the speed that they do, and we are trying to make improvements on a day-to-day basis.

We have made significant investments in this area, significant dollars have been spent in this area, and I think we owe due diligence to our residents to make sure that we are actually spending that money wisely and that we are spending it in the best way. To suggest that every dime that has been spent on mental health and addictions is spent in the right way and the only way to improve it is to spend more, I think is forgetting the fact that we have an obligation to ensure that those dollars are being spent wisely.

We will do that work, we will continue to make investments, and we will continue to take action to make improvements in these areas. I am sorry that it is not as fast as the Member wants, but we need to do things based on evidence and information as opposed to rhetoric and opinion. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am all about evidence-based decision-making. It has been a hallmark of my time here to talk about that. I stand by my remark that I am cynical about the timing of finally producing this action plan after the budget itself will have been considered, but I don't see that we are going to go any further on this today.

I would like to know if questions about Avens are in community health programs, or are they in another activity area? Thank you.

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

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. They are.

Just in response to that last comment, I still take offence to the suggestion that we would hold back the draft action plan as some way to subvert the budget process. That is deeply insulting. We brought it forward to committee as soon as we had it done. It is a draft. There is still room to move on that, and frankly, I find that incredibly insulting.

Back to the original question, yes, Avens falls under this area.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake): Thank you. Next on our list, we have Mr. McNeely.

MR. MCNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. This is not necessarily a question, but a note in observation to the increase as mentioned on the community programs on 177. I clearly hear the Minister's comments here recently. When I look back at healthcare progress and the delivery, I totally agree that we have made a lot of progress in that area.

As you know, in a couple of my communities back home, there has been quite an extensive amount of outburst from the youth community. As one of the front-line workers in receiving most of the phone calls, I have seen a lot of assistance from this department in the whole area of rehabilitation and reconciliation and individuals seeking medical care as well as sobriety assistance.

We have a system in place here with the bilaterals, with our land claim process, in Cabinet, so that is a venue for enhancing delivery of programs and, also, taking into account the new health facility in Norman Wells, as well as the new establishment of the Regional Wellness Council, an organization to improve delivery of healthcare in our communities in that region.

As a matter of fact, I am travelling home tomorrow, and I got the invitation to attend the evening session for the Renewable Resources Council tomorrow evening, which I am looking forward to, because I have seen progress made in that area of communication, which gives me confidence there.

There are a number of programs that I like here, and I see access to resources to assist in the mitigation of some of the social problems that we are having our youth and elders experiencing. I am quite satisfied with this summary. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake): Thank you, Mr. McNeely. Minister Abernethy.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would like to thank the Member for his comments. I didn't hear a question, but I will note for the Member that, on this particular page, you will see an increase of \$782,000. That is for the Norman Wells health centre and long-term care to help us continue to roll out the services there.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake): Thank you, Minister Abernethy. Any further questions, Mr. McNeely?

MR. MCNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I do look forward to working with the Minister of this department to continue to support improvements to the services here. I am still mindful that there are clients in the area of dementia and services that are not delivered at the new facility in Norman Wells but delivered elsewhere. I look forward to working with the Minister on those two fronts here. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake): Thank you, Mr. McNeely. Minister Abernethy.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I look forward to working with the Member as well.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake): Thank you, Minister Abernethy. Mr. McNeely.

MR. MCNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just for the record, it is dialysis and dementia services for clients that I look forward to working with the department in trying to seek some solution towards. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake): Thank you, Mr. McNeely. Minister Abernethy.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. As the Member knows, when it comes to dementia, we have one facility to provide services to our residents who have dementia. Obviously, that facility is full, and we are always looking for ways to support our people the best that we can. The long-term care facility in Norman Wells is certainly going to help us with that.

With respect to dialysis, I think that everybody in this building is aware of the pressures that we have under dialysis and the work that we are doing. Having said that, we are not looking at expanding our chairs right at this point. We are looking at exploring other options to provide dialysis, other than providing it just through hospital-based care. There are options there. I think Member Beaulieu has raised some options. I think the Member from Hay River has raised some options. We are exploring those options. That includes things like peritoneal dialysis and other things, so we certainly want to work with the Member and his communities.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake): Thank you, Minister Abernethy. Mr. Beaulieu.

MR. BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As you know, I speak a lot on strategic spending and leveraging of money, and one of the items that I speak a lot on is early childhood development. In this budget, we have an Early Childhood Development Action Plan, and we have an early childhood development breastfeeding fund and a Healthy Family Program. I see there is a limit to the amount of money in those programs. Why is that? Yes, maybe I will just ask the question: why is that? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake): Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. Minister Abernethy.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. One of the challenges with the budget that you see in front of you, as I said earlier when I was talking about the expansion of Stanton services and the money that is needed to do that, is a lot of the money for an initiative, call it early childhood and development, is spread throughout the budget in many, many different areas. If we were to look at this page, we would say, "Oh, there is X amount of dollars" and that sounds like that is it, but really, there is more. I think, if we actually were to quantify the types of money that we are spending on early childhood development, whether it is the Healthy Family Programs or many of the other things we are doing, we probably have about \$9 million in investment. I am happy to break those dollars out for the Member and provide him sort of a summary of all the areas that we are spending these dollars on, but in a quick conversation with the deputy, we think it is about \$9 million. Rather than trying to articulate where each one of those is, maybe I will provide that information to the Member in writing, because it is going to take me a bit of time to break it down and sort of articulate it across all the different areas, if that is all right.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake): Thank you, Minister Abernethy. Mr. Beaulieu.

MR. BEAULIEU: Yes, I am comfortable with that. I am also comfortable with just what the Minister is telling me here. I am pleased that it is that much money. I have always indicated that early childhood development spending has a return of 10:1, so \$9 million could see a return of \$90 million over a period of time on the early childhood or the children who we are spending that money on, so I am happy to hear that. I am satisfied with the response. I don't need anything in writing. If it is \$9 million, then I would suggest that we spend a lot more than that. Considering the great returns that we have, I think that setting up opportunities for kids to be productive citizens and graduates, educated people who return into our society, and if we could spend a little more money on them now, I think we would see great returns, but I am happy with that

response and I have nothing further. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake): Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. Minister Abernethy.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I appreciate the Member's comments. Just for clarity, it is about \$9 million through Health and Social Services. That does not include money that is being spent by Education, Culture and Employment or any of the other partners on this file. About \$7.9 million of that is GNWT, and the other \$1.04 or \$1.05 million is actually coming from Health Canada, and there is important work in this area.

Some breakdowns, just as an example so the Member can see some of the areas that we are spending the money on, is pre-natal and post-natal, there is about \$2.4 million going into midwifery, the healthy pregnancy program, and regional pre-natal and parenting programs. We have an infant feeding and nutrition program for \$344,000. We have some prevention and intervention work, around \$3 million. About \$38,000 of that comes from Health Canada, and that is the healthy families, traditional housing, those types of things that we are supporting. So there is a pretty significant list to the work that we are doing, and although it doesn't show in this area, but it is related, is the increased investment in midwifery as we begin to roll out the territorial program. There are a number of areas that we are doing work, and there are some really interesting work being done, too, in the Aboriginal health and community wellness division. They have done some incredible work on breastfeeding and those types of things for Indigenous parents. That is some really great work, and we have some great materials that I would be happy to share with the Member or any other Member who is interested in seeing some of that work. It is pretty exciting, solid work. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake): Thank you, Minister Abernethy. Next on the list, we have Mr. Nadli.

MR. NADLI: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I wanted to ask a question, and I don't know specifically where it might fall under, but it is in regard to the itinerant model for the pilots that ran in some communities in the Deh Cho. I could likely make reference to the community of Fort Providence, for it was a shift of resources of guidance counsellors to mental health workers who worked in schools, and in particular in Fort Providence, you know, the positions were created of child and youth care counsellors. I understand that, you know, it was a pilot. There is the move toward expanding upon that whole program initiative and move to other regions. I just wanted to understand whether there have been, you know, some lessons learned, some best

practices perhaps that have been analyzed, and whether there is going to be a report to ensure that there is a consistent role for the schools to play, and the community, as well. I just wanted to get a sense of what is the process, what is next for this program initiative. Mahsi.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake): Thank you, Mr. Nadli. Minister Abernethy.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The child and youth counsellor program that we are rolling out isn't a pilot. I mean, we have done a significant amount of research. We have heard from youth across this territory in what they wanted to see, and we have actually started rolling the program out. It is a four-year rollout. We rolled out the Tlicho and the Deh Cho last fiscal year, or rather the current fiscal year, and there was new one position added in Fort Providence, by way of example. There were other positions in the Deh Cho, as well. Almost all the positions are filled. I think we are still running one supervisor vacancy and one counsellor position vacant, but I believe we are really close to having that other position, not the supervisor, but the other one filled as we speak.

We are rolling out the Beaufort-Delta and the Sahtu in the 2019-2020 fiscal year, so that is a significant number of positions that are going to be created in that region. Although it is not a pilot, we anticipate that we will continue to learn as we roll out, and, if changes are necessary, we are open to making those changes, whether it is changing the types of positions or other things, but at this point, it seems to be going fairly well.

We have memorandums of understanding with the schools that will articulate clearly how much time those counsellors will be spending in the schools, because it is really important for them to be in the schools, not just the health centres. One of the primary differences between what was being done before and what is being done now is we have individuals with a certain skill set, knowledge skills and abilities, and they work year-round because, as we know, mental health issues don't take a summer holiday, like students do, and we need to make sure they have support year-round. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake): Thank you, Minister Abernethy. Mr. Nadli.

MR. NADLI: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes, that is the clarity I was seeking in terms of what could be the next stages of this initiative. I don't question the intent and spirit behind the initiatives that will ensure that our youth get the attention that they deserve, especially in terms of mental health counselling, so that was the purpose of my question.

I'm just trying to understand further whether there would be an opportunity to ensure that, other than the memorandum of understanding that has been struck between the department with the boards of education, but ensuring that the schools, you know, the teachers work as a team. To bring in a counsellor, they have to be part of the team. So I just wanted to understand and to ensure that people are communicating at all levels, and that there is a level of coordination. I heard the Minister say that fiscal resources are pretty limited, so if we have an impact, we try to have a maximum impact. I just wanted to be assured that there will be at least an assessment and some analysis done on a go-forward basis, ensuring that everybody is on the same level, including the new positions that are created within the schools. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake): Thank you, Mr. Nadli. Minister Abernethy.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I really appreciate the Member's comments about the relationship that is necessary between Health and Social Services and the school system. When we entered into this initiative, there was a lot of conversation that, the school boards, some of them actually have some dollars to do something like this, and they haven't always been able to do it, but one of the good things was those people were employees of the school boards and they were part of the team. We didn't want to lose that team environment. We didn't want to lose that relationship, but we also accepted that it has to move beyond just the school year. That's where the memorandums of understanding really come into place. We're really trying to embed that idea that you are part of the team and you need to be there in the schools, but at the same time we also recognize that some of the children who are struggling the most aren't attending school. They will spend some time out of the school, but during the school year, most of their time will be spent in the schools. We certainly want to make sure that we're not missing those kids who are not attending.

As far as evaluation and monitoring, this is a new approach. This is something we haven't done before, and we're rolling it out over a number of years. We're looking at how it has worked each rollout, hoping and intending to learn from each of those rollouts, and it is something that is certainly going to need to be monitored over time so that we can determine whether or not we're getting the real value for the money that we're spending.

Having said all that, this is what the kids told us they wanted. This is the approach they wanted us to take, and we are optimistic that we will begin to see those results that I think everybody in this Assembly wants to see. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake): Thank you, Minister Abernethy. Mr. Nadli.

MR. NADLI: No further questions.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake): Thank you, committee. I know we're on a roll, here, but we'll continue after a short break.

---SHORT RECESS

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake): Thank you, committee. I will now call Committee of the Whole back to order. Next on our list, we have Ms. Green.

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I have questions here about Avens. When I have attended Avens AGMs in the last couple of years, the balance sheet has shown that they are in the hole or about to go into the hole.

It is my understanding that the Minister offered an operational review to Avens to assess whether they were adequately funded. I am wondering if the money that we see that is extra in residential care adults and children corresponds to the results of that operational review or whether those are different entities.

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

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. We haven't put money in here to address the operational review because we only just got the operational review to us. We are working with Avens right now to analyze that report and make sure that everybody understands it. I think that there is work that we have to do, and there is work that Avens has to do. That work is under way. I am interested in, obviously, meeting with committee with Avens, together at the same time, to go through that report and help them understand some of the challenges that we both face.

In 2017-2018, we covered the shortfall to Avens from within the NTHSSA, and for 2018-2019, we are trying right now to actually quantify what the shortfall is. We have got a couple more weeks in this fiscal year that will help us figure out exactly what that cost is, and we will figure out how to cover that from within, but we can't keep doing that, obviously. This operational review is going to help us inform how we move forward, which may require some supplements.

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

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to the Minister for that answer. What is it about the report that needs this additional analysis and work?

What am I missing there? Don't we pay people to write reports that we can understand? Thank you.

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

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Sure, absolutely, but as people come back with information, they do apply some principles and theories that may be beyond some of the scope of what we are currently doing and providing. In this particular case, there were recommendations about how work is provided or how work flows within Avens. They want to look at their operations to see what opportunities exist there and what that might equate to once they attempt to implement some of those things. There is work that needs to be done so that we can actually totally have a sense of what the costs will be.

In the report, there are also some suggestions that we modify our hours of care. We know that some jurisdictions use the hours of care that they have suggested, but many or most don't. We want to make sure that, before we make decisions, we are fully aware of the consequences of those decisions and that whatever we do makes sense, both from an operational, a human, and a financial point-of-view.

We are trying to wrap our heads around the implications of some of the suggestions, and they are just that, Mr. Chair. Some of them are simply recommendations. There are some financial things that have been identified, and I think we are doing our due diligence, and we are working with our partner.

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

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Is the Minister planning to share this report with the committee? Thank you.

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

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Absolutely, Mr. Chair. I am hoping to come to committee with Avens, hopefully during this sitting. I think we have a request to meet with the committee during this sitting. We just need to make sure that, when we come in, we have some of those policy questions figured out. That is what we are working on right now with Avens. My intention is to do it in this sitting, probably towards the end of this sitting, and do it in cooperation with Avens.

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

MS. GREEN: Thank you. That is appreciated, that there will be a meeting of all of the parties with the standing committee in the next two or so weeks.

Is it possible that the committee could receive the report ahead of time so that we are starting with the same information as our guests? Thank you.

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

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. We will endeavour to have that report to committee three days prior to the meeting that we schedule with them.

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

MS. GREEN: Thank you. I appreciate that commitment. My next question has to do with the allocation of money for the day shelter and the sobering program. I am looking on page 177.

I guess my question is: are we talking about the same day shelter in Yellowknife as the one on this page that is combined with the Anti-Poverty Fund? Thank you.

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

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Mr. Chair, on page 176, there is an increase of about \$1.73 million, which is going to the combined day shelter/sobering centre. That is a new ask. That is new money to help provide the range of services that we are providing in the sobering centre.

The money that the Member is referring to on the other page, there is \$1 million for the anti-poverty, and then \$150,000. \$75,000 goes to Inuvik; \$75,000 goes towards the day shelter here in Yellowknife.

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

MS. GREEN: Thank you. Could the Minister please point me to the place on the page where the \$1.73 million is? Thank you.

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

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Mr. Chair, it mostly shows up on page 176 under line B, community and mental health and addictions and, yes, \$1.734 million.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake): Thank you, Minister Abernethy. Minister Abernethy.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Mr. Chair, I think it is important to recognize because, if you just added one number to the next, it wouldn't add up, but there have been some sunsets in that area as well. There was a grant in kind to Rockhill Apartments that would have fallen into this line that has been sunsetted. There is a home and community care, mental health and addictions service bilateral funding agreement, \$300,000. That is one that is coming back, right? So that will come back, and then there is \$542,000 for the Mental Health Act implementation, and that also comes back. Then there is some money that was allocated to the Yellowknife sobering centre, which has also sort of sunsetted, but we're bringing it back through other means. So it doesn't add up. We can provide the breakdown to show where the ins and outs are, so that it is clear.

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

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Sure, a breakdown would be helpful. I guess the other thing I am trying to understand is why the money appears in two places instead of just in one. Why doesn't that day shelter money get included in the line that has community mental health and addictions? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake): Thank you, Ms. Green. Ms. Mathison.

MS. MATHISON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. It is really just the way the budget for the project evolved. It started with an allocation from the antipoverty fund, and then we forward to request the additional money through the business planning process as a separate project and just loaded the budget in two different spots because of that. They are, yes, they are all funding the one project. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake): Thank you, Ms. Mathison. Ms. Green.

MS. GREEN: Thank you for that response. Is there any thought to actually combining them and calling them "the day shelter and the sobering centre" and putting them into one place under contribution agreements to the service provider? Thank you.

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

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. It seems like a reasonable recommendation. We will endeavour to do that for the next budget that is before the House.

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

MS. GREEN: Thank you to the witnesses for their responses. I have nothing further.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake): Thank you, Ms. Green. Any further questions, committee? Seeing none, I will call the page. Community health programs, operations expenditure summary, 2019-2020 main estimates, \$180,818,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake): Agreed. Thank you. That brings us to community social programs, operations expenditure summary, 2019-2020 main estimates, \$34,325,000, from pages 180 to 183. Any questions from committee? Ms. Green.

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am aware that the money for family violence has increased in this budget, and that will certainly be welcome to service providers. On what basis was this money increased? Does it tie to the shelter standards that have been discussed in years gone by? Thank you.

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

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. We have been working for a while with the shelters and the shelter network to develop a funding formula that makes sense. We are not a hundred percent done that work, but we figured we had made enough progress to build a solid business case that would allow us to start making valuable increases in this area, which is why you see the \$500,000 increase, which represents about a 15-percent increase overall to the shelters.

What we do know is that a lot of other jurisdictions are only partially funded in this area and that they raise a lot of money on their own, which is true here as well. We are looking at finishing our work and making sure that starting this year, but in future years, we are getting the funding right for these important family-violence shelters here in the Northwest Territories. This is an important step.

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

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. That is something the Minister and I can agree on. What is the status of the shelters standards work? Thank you.

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

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. That work is ongoing. They are all embedded and sort of tied together and will be part of the formula, as well. Our expectation is to be completed before

the end of this term. Hopefully, you know, summertime, late spring is kind of what we are hoping, but, recognizing that we do occasionally have human resource challenges, hopefully, it won't be delayed too far beyond then.

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

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Could the Minister just remind us what the purpose of the shelters standards is? Thank you.

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

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. It is to help us all and together to define the types of and scope of services that are provided in the shelters and what we are able to provide some financial support to so that we have some consistency across the territory and we are able to fund based on a consistent application. I think the Member knows, for many years, we have been funding the shelters, but there really hasn't been any sort of set criteria on why one shelter gets X dollars and the other one does not. So that is where we are working on, is finding something that will help us set sort of some consistency in application.

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

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. If I understand correctly, this would also have a financial application so that there was consistency in how the shelters were funded. Is that correct?

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

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: That is the plan. I will note that that wasn't applied this way in this particular round. We are funding all. We are increasing funds to all the shelters using the \$500,000 this time, but, going forward, that is the expectation. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MS. GREEN: Yes, thank you. Just finally in this area, when the standards are complete, is the Minister planning to come and discuss them with the Standing Committee on Social Development? Thank you.

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

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Certainly, I am planning to share them with standing committee. If standing committee wishes

to have a meeting, I am always happy to do so. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Nothing further on this page.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake): Thank you. Any further questions, committee? Seeing none, I will call the page. Community social programs, operations expenditure summary, 2019-2020 main estimates, \$34,325,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake): Agreed. Thank you. That brings us to Health and Social Services, diagnostic and therapeutic services, operations expenditure summary, 2019-2020 main estimates, \$28,280,000, from pages 184 to 186. Any questions from committee? Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. Yes, there have been some fairly healthy increases in therapeutic services here over the last couple of years, the same to a lesser degree with diagnostic services. Can someone explain what is happening? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. In the therapeutic services area, there have been some increases over the years. We've been doing a multi-year roll-out in this particular area. In phase one, we rolled out a speech-language pathologist and an occupational therapist and an audiologist in Inuvik, as well as one admin person to help with those services in Inuvik. Just as a note, I'd like to recognize that all of those positions are filled. I think the speech-language pathologist will be starting on March 3rd. Phase two is to roll out another speech-language pathologist in Yellowknife, an assistant in Yellowknife, an occupational therapist in Yellowknife, as well as admin support in Yellowknife to help support the hub-and-spoke model, to increase services across the Northwest Territories in these areas.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. Thanks for that information. The phase two increases, are they found in this budget, or are they spread out over a number of years? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Phase two increases are 2019-2020 increases. They appear in this budget. Phase one [microphone turned off].

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake): Thank you, Minister Abernethy. Could you please repeat that? You kind of broke up there.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: My apologies, Mr. Chair. Phase one was 2018-2019. Phase two is 2019-2020, so it appears in this budget. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. Is there anywhere that the public or Regular MLAs can go to see waiting times? I know the information is tracked somehow, but is it actually publicly reported in any way? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Mr. Chair, right now, the answer is no, but I, like the Member, believe it's important for people to know, and the department is working to getting to the point where we can report on some wait times. It is not here today, but it is work that is being done. I want to see it. The Member wants to see it. I think I've been asked in the House over the last couple of days a number of questions on wait times. People want to see it, so I will be directing the department to find a way to make that information public. Having said that, these investments we're making today will help us reduce the wait times, but we won't see them reduced until we bring people in and get them trained and start the work. We should start to see some improvements now, as a result of the Beaufort Delta investments, and we will see more improvements once we get Yellowknife staffed up. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. I appreciate the passion of the Minister on this. Any idea as to when the waiting times might be available? Is there a plan in place to do this? With the system transformation and so on, I understand that there's probably still some work that needs to be done there to standardize reporting and so on, but is it the Minister's intention to try to have this work done, what quarter of, say, 2019-2020, where the public could expect to start to see some wait times maybe posted to a website or whatever? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. What has become clear over the last little while and I think it's something we may not have recognized had we not moved to a single authority is there really isn't a solid definition of how people determine wait lists across the Northwest Territories. Now, in moving forward, the department is working closely with the authority to come up with some solid definition on how to define wait times. That work is underway. Once that work is concluded, we'll be in a better position to figure out how to report in a consistent manner wait times for all of the different services that we provide. Then and only then we'll probably be in a position to figure out how to get it out into the public. I anticipate we will be able to get the work done around trying to figure out what a usable definition of wait times and how to assess it is, and, from there, we'll make the second step. I'm cautious to commit to a time at this point because there is a significant amount of work being done by these people in other areas, but the department is committed to getting it done, and we'll certainly keep committee up to date as we make progress.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. Sorry. I don't want to flog a dead horse here, but could the Minister make a commitment to, I don't know, report to the standing committee maybe on a quarterly basis where the work stands, just so committee and Regular MLAs know the progress that's being made and when, say, a launch date might be scheduled? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm not going to make that commitment, but what I will commit to is having the department sit down and quantify what it thinks it will take as far as timelines to determine and work with the authority to define how wait lists will be determined and, from there, how long it will take to find a mechanism to reasonably and responsibly make that information public on a regular basis. I will commit to having the department do the analysis on how long they think that will take, and share that with committee.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks. I appreciate the commitment made by the Minister, and I will look forward to getting that information. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake): Thank you. Any further questions from committee? Seeing none, I'll call the page. Health and Social Services,

diagnostic and therapeutic services, operations expenditure summary, 2019-2020 main estimates, \$28,280,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake): Agreed. Thank you. Next, we have nursing inpatient services, operations expenditure summary, \$35,900,000, from pages 187 to 189. Any questions? Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. Our friends advised that this is where midwifery services are to be found. There are additional resources in here. Maybe if you could have somebody remind me of that and with a brief description of what the resources are going to be used towards? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. There are a number of increases in this area. It's not all midwifery services. Some of it is some additional positions in intensive care, long-term care, and medical-surgical nursing to help implement Stanton and a few other things. There is \$373,000 in here for midwifery program expansion, to help us move forward with the territorial midwifery program. It's a couple of different midwifery positions in Yellowknife and Hay River. Maybe I will go to the deputy minister, who can go through in greater detail exactly where those investments are to help us move forward with the territorial midwifery program.

Before we do that, just one quick note. When we made those changes around CFS that we talked about earlier, there was a half-time position which was a midwifery consultant that was vacant, that we took those dollars to roll into the CFS position. That's not in this area. That position was actually in the admin section, which was the first page we reviewed today. That reduction occurred there. It's not actually part of the midwifery program. It was a consultant position, half-time, vacant. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

MR. COOPER: This year's budget includes \$373,000 for three positions. One of them is a midwifery clinical specialist in Yellowknife. That's one FT. We have a midwife position, a three-quarter FT, for Yellowknife as well, and a three-quarter for Hay River. When you combine the total investments, our funding will be \$1.789 million for midwifery. We're going to move, this year, to have a program that has, with the successful passing of this budget, 8.5 full-time equivalent midwives in the Northwest Territories, which will turn this program into one of the most robust midwife programs in the

country, when you consider that Saskatchewan has, for their whole province, 15, and all of the Maritime provinces combined have 13.

With the addition of these resources this year, we are going to have the potential for a very strong program for women, and not just for maternity care, but also, using the model that we are rolling out, it is going to be an approach that will build capacity in other positions in communities to support perinatal care and education. This is really the movement to a hub-and-spoke model. This will be part of a multi-year plan where we will have made significant progress on implementing the Midwives Stakeholder Report by the end of this term, with a little bit more to do in 2021.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake): Thank you, Mr. Cooper. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. The deputy minister writes a pretty good Minister's statement there. That is excellent. All good news.

More seriously, though, it would be helpful to get this out, because I think it is a good news story, and the Minister knows that I have been bugging him about this for at least three years, as long as I have been here. It is a good news story, and I do appreciate the work of the department and his staff to move this forward.

This is a great investment of money and will have long-term payoffs, all the way down to those kids who will become productive adults in our society. I appreciate the Minister and his work on this, and I thank him very much. Thanks.

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

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I was waiting, and I am still waiting for the "but." However, I appreciate the Member's comments.

This really goes to the question that the honourable Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh asked earlier about early childhood development and the types of things that we are doing. This is one of those areas where, with the pre- and the postnatal services that these people provide, what we can do at a territorial level can really, I think, make some profound benefits and impacts on residents across the territory.

We look forward to seeing this roll out over a number of years and become a strong program, even though, frankly, we are better than some at this point, but there is a lot of room for improvements.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake): Thank you, Minister Abernethy. Mr. Beaulieu.

MR. BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just have one question. Maybe I will seek some clarification first. We should have a midwifery program in Fort Smith, because that has been up and running forever, and one in Hay River, and then some midwifery here.

In Fort Smith, half of the babies born in Fort Smith don't come to Yellowknife, approximately. Are we expecting the same type of numbers? Has the department done an evaluation? Fifty kids are born in Fort Smith every year. I am assuming it is, like, 60 in Hay River. I am not sure, but I am thinking it is around those numbers.

I am wondering if those are the types of numbers that the department is looking at, about half the kids in Hay River being born in Hay River, as opposed to all in Yellowknife. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake): Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. Minister Abernethy.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you. We are looking at a hub-and-spoke model here to roll out a territorial program, which is consistent with some of the recommendations that were provided. It doesn't mean that births will be facilitated in every community, but where the numbers permit, we are certainly willing to explore growth in those areas. Over time, that may change, so we need to be flexible.

We do know that, in order for a midwife to remain current in her competency, for her licensing purposes, he or she does have to facilitate a certain number of births, but that is not the only job. Right? For a midwife, it is a lot of the prenatal and the postnatal that really adds some of the profound value to healthy families, healthy, strong mothers, and healthy babies.

With this model, we will be working with people in the communities, different professionals in the communities, to help enhance those services across the territory. This is the first step in the rolling out of this new territorial approach, and we will need to continue to evaluate, and that includes looking at numbers of births, in order to figure out how to keep resourcing this properly moving forward. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake): Thank you, Minister Abernethy. Mr. Beaulieu.

MR. BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Of course, my, it's not even a concern, actually, it's a wish that the young ladies from Fort Resolution who are having babies in the future, that they would end up here. They end up here in a boarding home for three weeks prior to the birth of a child. They have to fly here. It is quite a ways off because they are part of, I guess, if there is such a thing as

Yellowknife Health and Social Services at this point, but I know that Lutselk'e and Fort Resolution are both under Yellowknife. If we had midwifery services in Hay River, fully functional in taking care of Hay River people, what would it take to just have the people from Fort Resolution have their babies in Hay River, as opposed to coming to Yellowknife? It is very easy. They can get there a couple of days before they have their child, because they will be in vehicles, not in planes.

I am wondering if the department has had any thoughts about this. We have a nice, big health centre in Hay River, and midwifery services now, and doctors. I am wondering if there are any thoughts of the kids from Fort Resolution being born in Hay River? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake): Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. Minister Abernethy.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. One of the nice things about moving to a single authority, with the exception of Hay River and the Tlicho, is that it actually allows us to have this discussion, which is a discussion that we weren't able to have before when services were provided for a group of people.

Now, certainly, we can explore the possibility of mothers who meet the criteria for midwifery-supported birth can explore possibly having that birth in Hay River. There are some conditions around the birth. I think, for some situations, a first birth is something that we can't facilitate. If a medical assessment demonstrates that there is a risk during pregnancy, we wouldn't be able to do that. We don't do that now. They come out of Fort Smith or they come out of Hay River if that is the case. We are not all the way there. This is really year one, start of implementation. The clinical supervisor, one of the positions that were created, is going to be the one to help us figure out how to facilitate that moving forward.

I think your dream is one of the ones that we are trying to actually get to on this particular model. It is going to take us some time, but it does make sense. It also could provide us some really solid results for those non-risk births out there that are happening in Fort Resolution and other communities in close proximity to our midwifery services that already exist.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake): Thank you, Minister Abernethy. Mr. Beaulieu.

MR. BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Chair. That is great news that we are working in that direction. I think that, of course, there are other communities nearby, like the Minister said, that may require more nurses or more doctors, even in Hay River, to

accommodate the convenience for the people that live in communities near Hay River as opposed to near Yellowknife. I think that, if the department has that in mind and they are moving in that direction, I am very supportive. That is all I have. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake): Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. Minister Abernethy.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I think that the Member did a really great job of explaining the hub-and-spoke model that we are trying to apply in many of the services that we provide.

Like I said before, without moving to a single authority, we wouldn't have had this opportunity. We are still in the early days of contemplating some of these opportunities that have presented themselves by having this new model, and we are excited by some of these opportunities. This is clearly one of them.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake): Thank you, Minister Abernethy. Any further questions? Good. Committee, if there are no further questions, I will call the page. Nursing inpatient services, operations expenditures, summary, 2019-2020, main estimates, \$35,900,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake): Thank you. Which brings us to Health and Social Services, supplementary health programs, operations expenditure summary, 2019-2020 Main Estimates, \$32,078,000, from pages 190 to 192. Mr. Beaulieu.

MR. BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm eligible for extended health benefits. Thank you.

---Laughter

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

MR. BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I have a question on the harmonization of the Metis health benefits and the non-insured health benefits. I'd like to ask the Minister if he could just talk about that a bit, just to ensure that everybody is getting all the benefits they should be getting. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake): Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. Minister Abernethy.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: I'm not 100 percent sure what the Member is asking. Are you asking about the comparability of the Metis health benefits compared to the non-insured health benefits that are offered by the federal government? I'll note that the Member is nodding his head in what appears to

be the affirmative, so I will do my best to answer the question. The Metis health benefit mirrors exactly the non-insured health benefits program as far as formulary and coverage levels. I don't know what else the Member wants me to say, other than it is an exact mirror of that so that all the individuals covered get the same.

I will note, Mr. Chair, that the supplementary health benefits that we provide are not a payer of first resort, they are payer of last resort, so we would expect that employees who have health benefits, Metis employees who have health benefits, would use their employer benefits before they access the Metis health benefits. In some cases, that may result in what appears to be a greater degree of support or coverage for individuals, but we would encourage Indigenous people to use their employer's insurance, as well, because sometimes employer insurances are better than NIHB. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake): Thank you, Minister Abernethy. Mr. Beaulieu.

MR. BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Is the increase the number of people or enhancement to the benefit? On the Metis health benefits, the increase of \$400,000. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake): Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. Minister Abernethy.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Those are based on demand. Not an increase in the level of coverage, but in the number of people accessing, or possibly the complexity of some of the cases. Many different clinical things could drive those costs. We know the costs are up, and we want to make sure we have the dollars to cover them, so the increase is for that.

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

MR. BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. On the medical travel, there is a drop of \$3 million. Is that \$3 million picked up somewhere else in this budget? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The decrease in that area is as a result of some of the corrections that we were trying to do earlier in the life of this government. There was a suggestion, or rather a direction, to modify some of our co-payments and save some or collect some more revenues in this particular area. This decrease basically represents that change of \$2.4 million.

I will note, however, Mr. Chair, that line doesn't show some of the money we're getting from the federal government, \$5 million to support medical travel, as well.

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

MR. BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just to be 100 percent clear, what is not really \$3 million but \$2.4 million is a decrease in the medical travel is co-payments? Thank you.

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

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Mr. Chair, originally that's how we were hoping to obtain the \$2.4 million in savings. We have done some more analysis; we have done some more digging. We wanted to make sure that we didn't adversely affect many of our residents. Most of the co-pay comes from insurance providers and others, so we've done some tweaking around that. I'm in the process of trying to finalize that work now. I met with committee a number of months ago, where we showed some scenarios. We've taken feedback from committee to make some changes to what we were proposing. We're very close to being ready to come back to committee on that. It doesn't change the \$2.4 million, but it changes how that will be realized. I'll be coming to committee shortly, once we've finalized a few more little pieces. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MR. BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. On extended health benefits there is an increase of, I guess, \$1.8 million. I'm wondering if that's an increase in the number of people now eligible for extended health, or an increase in the benefit. Thank you.

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

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Extended health benefits have not changed, as far as what is provided. It is still consistent with what is provided through NIHB. This is demand-driven.

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

MR. BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Chair. That's all I have, thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Any further questions from committee? Ms. Green.

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I also had questions about the medical travel amount. I heard

the Minister say that he is "tweaking," finalizing, and he will be coming back to the committee, but my question is: what portion of this \$2.4 million will come from individuals, versus the amount that will come from insurance companies? Thank you.

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

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. When I met with committee, this was an area of concern. The input I feel I received from committee was, if we're going to be moving forward, we need to reduce the impact on those low-income families who don't have an insurance provider and who may have to come out of pocket for co-payments. That's the work we're doing right now. It's a small number of individuals, and we're just, like I said, doing the final little bit of work on that to make sure that our numbers are solid. I'd hate to quote a number and then present to committee in the coming weeks and have that number be different because we're still trying to finalize it, but it's down from what was presented to committee previously.

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

MS. GREEN: Thank you. Will individuals without insurance have to pay a greater co-pay in the next fiscal year? Thank you.

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

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's based on a threshold, an income threshold, and we're looking to increase that threshold. We're also looking at having different tiers for a threshold for families as opposed to a threshold for individuals. Some individuals will still have to pay the co-payment, but with the threshold changes we're looking to minimize the number of individuals who may have to pay a co-pay who don't have insurance to help them.

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

MS. GREEN: Thank you. It sounds like a cost of living increase for people who are paying the co-pays for medical travel. Is there any reason to think it isn't? Thank you.

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

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Without question, Mr. Chair, some individuals will notice a slight increase in their co-payment. Like I said, following the suggestions from committee, we're trying to reduce the number of individuals who are impacted. We are modifying the thresholds. We are changing and

including different thresholds to help us ensure that we don't affect too many of our people. We've also been contemplating some other mechanisms to help support those individuals, but until such time as we get a bit more of that work done, and I anticipate it will be very shortly, we are just trying to verify some things before we bring it back to committee so that we are coming back with a full picture, but yes, it will affect the cost of living for a small number of individuals in this territory.

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

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Could the Minister quantify a "small number" of individuals, please? Thank you.

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

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I already said I can't, because we are making some changes as per our discussion with committee and I would hate to throw out a number. Given that we are just doing some final adjustments right now, it might be different tomorrow, so I am not prepared to do that at this time. Yes, I am not prepared to do that at this time.

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

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would like to know how the Minister is planning to roll this information out to the public about the increasing co-pays for medical travel. Thank you.

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

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. When we finalize the plan, we intend to do some communication through our existing medical travel program. We will certainly do some press releases. We will make sure that the information is included on the appropriate websites so people can see it and are aware of it and are aware of the other mechanisms that may be available to them to help them offset some of those costs, so that they know well in advance. Our anticipation is that we won't make the decision and roll it out the next day, that we will have some time in between so people are aware it is coming.

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

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. When would the new system take effect, the new co-pay system? Thank you.

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

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. At some point during the 2019-2020 fiscal year, but as I indicated, we are not fully done. We are making some last-minute adjustments to make sure that we have it right, and that includes figuring out exactly the timeline to roll it out in a reasonable way without causing too much shock and awe from some of those individuals who may, may, be impacted.

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

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Nothing further.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Any further questions, Ms. Green?

MS. GREEN: No, thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Ms. Green. Any further questions from committee? Seeing none, I will call the page on 191. Health and Social Services, supplementary health programs, operations expenditure summary, \$32,078,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake): Thank you, committee. Committee, we are now on the information items from pages 193 to 198. Any questions from committee? Seeing none. Minister Abernethy, do you want to ask a department question? I am just kidding. Minister Abernethy.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: I am good. I am good.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake): Okay. Thank you, committee. I know it has been a long day. We will now return to the departmental summary found on page 165. I will now call the page. Health and Social Services, total department, 2019-2020 Main Estimates, \$495,934. Sorry, I forgot there are three more zeros: \$495,934,000. Any questions from committee? Are we agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake): Thank you, committee. Does the committee agree that the consideration of the Department of Health and Social Services is concluded?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake): Agreed. Thank you. Thank you, Minister, and our thanks to your witnesses for appearing before us. Sergeant-at-Arms, please escort the witnesses from the

Chamber. Thank you. Mr. Beaulieu, what is the wish of committee?

MR. BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I move that the Chair rise and report progress. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake): Thank you. The motion is on the floor to report progress. The motion is in order and is non-debatable. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried.

---Carried

I will now rise and report progress. Thank you.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: May I have the report of the committee, Member for Mackenzie Delta?

Report of Committee of the Whole

MR. BLAKE: Mr. Speaker, your committee has been considering Tabled Document 322-18(3), Main Estimates 2019-2020, and would like to report progress, and Mr. Speaker, I move that the report of the Committee of the Whole be concurred with. Thanks.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you. Do we have a seconder? Member for Yellowknife North. The motion is in order and non-debatable. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried.

---Carried

Thank you, committee. Item 22, third reading of bills. Minister of Health and Social Services.

Third Reading of Bills

BILL 32: NATUROPATHIC PROFESSION STATUTES AMENDMENT ACT

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Range Lake, that Bill 32, Naturopathic Profession Statutes Amendment Act, be read for the third time, and Mr. Speaker, I request a recorded vote. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: There is a motion on the floor. The motion is in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

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

RECORDED VOTE

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer): The Member for Great Slave, the Member for Yellowknife South, the Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes, the Member for Hay River South, the Member for Thebacha, the Member for Mackenzie Delta, the Member for Sahtu, the Member for Yellowknife North, the Member for Kam Lake, the Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh, the Member for Frame Lake, the Member for Yellowknife Centre, the Member for Deh Cho, the Member for Nunakput, the Member for Inuvik Boot Lake, the Member for Range Lake.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: All those opposed, please rise. All those abstaining, please rise. The results of the recorded vote: 16 in favour, no abstentions, no one opposing. The motion is carried.

---Carried

Bill 32 has had its third reading. Mr. Clerk, orders of the day.

Orders of the Day

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer): Orders of the day for Wednesday, February 27, 2019, 1:30 p.m.:

1. Prayer
2. Ministers' Statements
3. Members' Statements
4. Returns to Oral Questions
5. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery
6. Acknowledgements
7. Oral Questions
8. Written Questions
9. Returns to Written Questions
10. Replies to the Commissioner's Opening Address
11. Petitions
12. Reports of Standing and Special Committees
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

- Bill 40, Smoking Control and Reduction Act

- Bill 41, Tobacco and Vapor Products Control Act

19. Second Reading of Bills

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

- Bill 31, Northwest Territories 911 Act

- Minister's Statement 131-18(3), Sessional Statement

- Minister's Statement 151-18(3), New Federal Infrastructure Agreement

- Tabled Document 322-18(3), Main Estimates, 2019-2020

21. Report of Committee of the Whole

22. Third Reading of Bills

23. Orders of the Day

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. Thank you, committee. It has been a long day. Thank you to all of the Pages for sticking with us. This House stands adjourned until Wednesday, February 27, 2019, at 1:30 p.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 7:36 p.m.

