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The Honourable Frederick Blake Jr, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

PRAYER	437
MINISTERS' STATEMENTS	437
28-19(2) – Promoting Importance of Oral Health (Thom)	437
MEMBERS' STATEMENTS	438
Trades Apprenticeships (Simpson)	438
Northwest Territories Housing Corporation Policy on Rent Scales (Jacobson)	438
Whati Housing Plan (Lafferty)	439
Affirmative Action Policy (Martselos)	439
Health System Navigator (Johnson)	440
Regulatory Change to Improve Preventative Oral Health (Cleveland)	440
Implementation and Promotion of Environmental Rights Act (O'Reilly)	441
Indigenous Languages Promotion and Revitalization (Norn)	441
REPLIES TO BUDGET ADDRESS	442
ORAL QUESTIONS	444
WRITTEN QUESTIONS	454
TABLING OF DOCUMENTS	454
CONSIDERATION IN COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE OF BILLS AND OTHER MATTERS	455
REPORT OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE	480
ORDERS OF THE DAY	482

YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

Tuesday, March 3, 2020

Members Present

Hon. Frederick Blake Jr, Mr. Bonnetrouge, Hon. Paulie Chinna, Ms. Cleveland, Hon. Caroline Cochrane, Ms. Green, Mr. Jacobson, Mr. Johnson, Mr. Lafferty, Ms. Martselos, Hon. Katrina Nokleby, Mr. Norn, Mr. O'Reilly, Ms. Semmler, Hon. R.J. Simpson, Mr. Rocky Simpson, Hon. Diane Thom, Hon. Shane Thompson, Hon. Caroline Wawzonek

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

Prayer

---Prayer

DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms. Semmler): Item 2, Ministers' statements. Minister for Health and Social Services.

Ministers' Statements

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 28-19(2):
PROMOTING IMPORTANCE OF ORAL HEALTH

HON. DIANE THOM: Madam Speaker, good oral health is important to our overall health and quality of life. Healthy mouths and teeth in children promote healthy growth, nutrition, speech development, good school performance, and social well-being. Cavities, however, are the most common chronic infectious childhood disease, and they place a substantial burden on our population. Poor oral health contributes to a child's inability to eat, speak, sleep, and learn. In adults, oral disease has been linked to diabetes, heart disease, pneumonia, and Alzheimer's.

Madam Speaker, it is important to note that, while dental treatment services are not an insured service paid for by the Northwest Territories Healthcare Plan, our government is working to reduce oral disease among children and youth through the Oral Health Action Plan released in October 2018. This plan outlines four key areas of action to improve oral health outcomes to promote oral health throughout the entire Northwest Territories population; to establish systematic supports for improved oral health services; to implement the Northwest Territories Oral Health Service Delivery Model; and to provide high quality, sustainable, and culturally-safe care.

Some highlights of what has been done since the release of the action plan include the addition of a registered dental hygienist in Norman Wells and the rollout of daily brushing programs in daycares and schools in our communities. There have also been investments in dental equipment across the Northwest Territories by the federal government to

support the delivery of dental services in communities where there are no established dental clinics. As part of this action plan, front-line primary healthcare providers have begun to integrate oral health screening and education for children and expectant mothers during prenatal and Well Child Record appointments, as well.

The Department of Health and Social Services and health authorities are also collaborating with community partners to deliver a multi-age group oral health literacy program. This program will feature arts-based learning in schools and at community gatherings. Finally, a territory-wide oral health social marketing campaign will be launched this spring to encourage better oral health self-care to promote oral health outcomes in the NWT.

Madam Speaker, research shows that starting good oral health practices in early childhood will ensure that children will continue to practice brushing and flossing as part of their daily routine. This is why we partnered with the Northwest Territories Literacy Council to provide parents with a brushing song book that they can sing along with their children aged one to four.

Our Ever Awesome NWT Brushing Song book, which I will table later today, was illustrated by Neiva Mateus and written by Tlicho Dene author Richard Van Camp. Funding was provided by the federal governments' Children's Oral Health Initiative. The aim of this book is to provide parents with a resource that makes brushing and flossing with their children something that is a fun, daily, family activity. The brushing song book also promotes the importance of snuggling, reading to one another, and sharing time with each other. It honours the gift of family by looking after their health and spending time together.

Over the months of March and April, Richard Van Camp will be touring communities in the Northwest Territories to raise awareness about the book and the importance of oral health. The book will be translated into all the NWT official Indigenous languages, and the audio files for the song will be made available on the department's website. An animated storyboard promoting oral health for older children is also being produced in all the NWT

official languages. We are looking forward to the first screening of this original media project later this summer.

Madam Speaker, oral health is an important part of our overall health. This book is one of many resources that we will be developing for parents and caregivers to help them teach good oral health practices to their children. I want to thank Richard Van Camp, Neiva Mateus, and the NWT Literacy Council for partnering with us to raise awareness about good oral health.

I encourage all parents to embrace the idea of fun-filled brushing and flossing time with their children, and encourage everyone to give oral health the time and respect it deserves as an important part of overall health and wellbeing. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Ministers' statements. Item 3, Members' statements. Member for Hay River South.

Members' Statements

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON TRADES APPRENTICESHIPS

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I want to talk about the trades and, more specifically, apprenticeships. With an aging workforce and people leaving the trades, the demand and competition for skilled trades workers will only increase. I see this currently happening not only in Hay River, but throughout the NWT.

In the digital age, the ways we work, communicate, and utilize technology are changing at a swift pace. The use of high-tech equipment in different sectors of the economy requires that trades workers possess strong essential skills in literacy and mathematics. This change in technology is becoming increasingly noticeable in our communities, which are receiving energy-efficient homes, state-of-the-art water and sewer treatment plants, solar options for power; all those are associated with high-tech equipment requiring technical expertise to maintain and operate.

Madam Speaker, in the Northwest Territories, we have many workers who, over time, have gained a wealth of experience in the trades. The problem is that the opportunity for work in the NWT is sporadic and, in many instances, short-term or seasonal, the result of employers not willing to undertake the effort, cost, and time it takes to recruit, train, and develop apprentices. The consequence is that the employee does not receive the recognition for the hours of work and training they received while on the job. Furthermore, today's employers are expected to be social workers, psychologists,

therapists, counsellors, and bankers for its employees, which all results in added costs to the bottom line. Today's apprentices need more than on-the-job and technical skills. They require skills that include judgment, common sense, adaptability, initiative, dependability, responsibility, attitude, and safety consciousness.

The question is: how are we going to replace the aging workforce when we have all this going on? There is no easy answer, but we can start by providing access to a quality education for our residents. We can strive to develop a sustainable economy that promotes full-time employment opportunities. We must recognize that the mindset of the workforce is changing, and we must adapt to that change. We must reconsider legislation that impedes business through red tape. We must provide support to our small businesses as they are most often ground zero for those looking to enter the trades.

Madam Speaker, the trades can provide exciting and rewarding careers in terms of challenges and financial return, and I strongly encourage our youth to seriously look at this as a career choice. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you. Member for Hay River South. Members' statements. Member for Nunakput.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON NORTHWEST TERRITORIES HOUSING CORPORATION POLICY ON RENT SCALES

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Today, I want to bring up, again, proof of income in Housing Corporation policies. A few weeks ago, I raised a concern of the corporation's practice of using T4 slips, Madam Speaker. This results in public housing clients being assessed at a much higher level than the rent scale where they should be. That's because the T4 slips show the income from the previous year, not from where they are currently. This is causing unnecessary stress to the public clients in Nunakput and across our territory. I'm trying to help them, Madam Speaker. I need the Minister responsible for NWT Housing Corporation to listen to their concerns to show leadership that's needed to fix this problem. I have looked back in Hansard. I am not satisfied with the answers the Minister gave me, so I am going to ask these questions again today in the simplest language possible.

First, I want to see the Housing Corporation's policy manual. It should be available online. They call it "public policy" for a reason, Madam Speaker. It's not just a guide for LHOs to let the public know what to expect paying their monthly rent, so I'm giving the Minister a heads-up today. My first

question will be: will the Minister be able to table the policy that says the LHOs must use T4 slips to determine income of the public housing clients? The second question is going to be: will the Minister commit to ensuring that the policy, and all Housing Corporation policies, are posted on their website, ASAP; and finally, will the Minister commit to making a policy more flexible so that other documents can be used as proof of income, Madam Speaker? I'm still hopeful for this Minister and her corporation, but if we don't get today, I will be looking to move a motion in this House to direct the Minister to amend the policy that requires T4 slips as proof of income. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Nunakput. Members' statements. Member for Monfwi.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON WHATI HOUSING PLAN

MR. LAFFERTY: Masi, Madam Speaker. Today, I'd like to speak about the Whati housing plan. Madam Speaker, the Minister of Northwest Territories Housing Corporation proudly announced early to mid-December that Whati was the first community in our territory to complete their housing plan. Being the Member of the Monfwi constituency, I was indeed proud of the community of Whati. I then heard through the grapevine that a big celebration was scheduled for Whati on December 17, 2019. I checked with the Minister's office. Sure enough, a celebration was indeed scheduled, and I was not notified about it. By that time, I had already committed to being at another important event on the same day, so unfortunately, I was therefore not able to attend the celebration.

Thankfully, after contacting the Minister's office, I received a letter from the Minister expressing her apologies for not informing myself in a timely manner about the celebration. Madam Speaker, she ended with "Again, I regret that I was not able to speak about this with you directly. I look forward to collaborating with you for the betterment of the residents of Monfwi." That was her statement back then.

Madam Speaker, the mentioned housing plan was finished in December 2019. The community received the actual plan and approved it in early February. On February 11th, I requested a copy of the plan. The Minister responded on the 19th that the plan would be available online on the 20th. She also mentioned that a printed copy would be made available to my office on the 21st of February. My office followed up with an e-mail on February 25th, and we did not get a response.

Madam Speaker, we are now into the first week of March, and I still have not received a copy of the housing plan, and it is still not available online. These are the questions I will definitely have for the Minister of the Housing Corporation at a later time. Masi, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Monfwi. Members' statements. Member for Thebacha.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON AFFIRMATIVE ACTION POLICY

MS. MARTSELOS: Madam Speaker, I want to revisit the issue of the Government of the Northwest Territories Affirmative Action Policy once again, because, as I see it, this policy is not serving the people of Fort Smith or the people of the NWT. The e-mail that I received from the finance Minister on February 27, 2020, is a typical government explanation, and I do not accept a response like that from a Minister. When an MLA asks for a response in confidence, I expect a more personal and detailed response.

Madam Speaker, I strongly feel that the Affirmative Action Policy across the NWT, including the riding of Thebacha, is not transparent or accountable. I have attended many meetings across the territory over my 10-plus years of leadership, with multiple levels of government, and the issue of affirmative action has always come up numerous times in a negative way.

Madam Speaker, many people have approached me about how this process is not benefitting Northerners, especially those P1s and P2s within the policy. If the Minister truly feels she wants to make a difference as a Minister of human resources, she has an opportunity to change the direction of the Government of the Northwest Territories Affirmative Action Policy as intended.

Madam Speaker, we need to develop guidelines and criteria that the human resources department must follow, without interference from favouritism, and must be based on qualifications, must be indigenous to the North, and northern-born residents must be considered. It is not to be based on friendship, personal preferences, and not who you know, and not what you know.

Madam Speaker, change must take place with the Affirmative Action Policy immediately. No more direct appointments that end up excluding all candidates that would like to apply for any position. It is crucial that the hiring policies of the Government of the Northwest Territories must be objective, fair, and the best possible candidate must be hired. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
HEALTH SYSTEM NAVIGATOR

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Speaker. We spend a lot of time in this House criticizing GNWT practices, trying to right the wrongs of the past, and hold the government to account. Today, I would like to focus on an initiative that has been performing exceptionally well in our government, based on my experience. One of the most helpful tools the Department of Health and Social Services has is its system navigator.

The system assists residents with enquiries in the various sectors of the department. It directs residents down the right path depending on their individual needs, both frees up resources within the department and delivers a higher level of service to residents, whether it's accessing non-insured health benefits, seniors' services, or using medical travel for the first time. Instead of being sent through a maze of e-mail chains and phone calls, you're one e-mail or call away from the answers you're looking for.

Madam Speaker, the health system navigator has helped numerous constituents of mine. It has been very helpful to my constituency assistant, and Madam Speaker, the goal in the long term is to not have our processes be so complicated that we have a navigator, but that's not the world we presently live in. There has been a lot of talk in this House lately about discussing personnel issues. I usually would not do this, but I would really like to commend the current Health and Social Services net navigator, Shoshanna Caneul-Kirkwood, on behalf of myself and all my constituents. I thank you for all the work you have done in ensuring that this process runs smoothly. Thank you, Shoshanna.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
REGULATORY CHANGE TO IMPROVE
PREVENTATIVE ORAL HEALTH

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Madam Speaker. A couple of weeks ago, we heard from the Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes about the importance of oral health. I share her concerns and believe that the Department of Health and Social Services could be doing more to support good oral health and the prevention of oral diseases.

We live in a unique part of the world with unique needs. In our remote communities, access to

regular dental care is not consistent, and treatment is not timely or immediate. Accessing treatment is complicated by the fact that dental services are not insured medical services under the Canada Health Act. Depending on an NWT resident's ancestry, their funding for dental care comes from different funding pots. For example, Inuit persons may have access to services through the Children's Oral Health Initiative and funding through the Non-Insured Health Benefits Program or their Inuit self-government agreement.

Unfortunately, not every community has access to dental services, and not everyone can access preventative care. If a dentist travels to a remote community and needs to choose between a preventative dental cleaning or a dental emergency like a root canal, the emergency will always take priority. Prevention programs in small communities are virtually nonexistent because of funding restrictions and lack of access to community-based dental professionals.

One of the key objectives of the GNWT's oral health strategy calls for establishing systemic supports for improved oral health services, including improving the regulatory environment. This is one of the areas where I feel strongly that the GNWT must reconsider its policy position. The Dental Auxiliaries Act stipulates that no dental hygienist shall practice dental hygiene except under the direction and control of a dentist.

Nurses work in our small, remote communities without doctors. Preventative healthcare professionals like chiropractors and massage therapists are free to work under professional accreditation, using their professional discretion to provide services to NWT residents. Given the huge demand for oral health practitioners and the known fact that prevention saves future burdens on our healthcare system, why are we not allowing dental hygienists to provide preventative oral healthcare without the oversight of a dentist?

Madam Speaker, the GNWT's oral health strategy is meant to be in place until the end of the 2021 fiscal year. With this in mind, I believe it is timely for the department to provide a progress report to this House on the work completed to date. I would also appreciate the Minister's support for changing the legislation, to allow dental hygienists to provide oral healthcare without a dentist's oversight, a win for both the final chapter of this strategy and the people of the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Kam Lake. Members' statements. Member for Frame Lake.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
IMPLEMENTATION AND PROMOTION OF
ENVIRONMENTAL RIGHTS ACT

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Madame la Presidente. The original Environmental Rights Act was passed as a private Member's bill by the Assembly in 1990. That legislation went through its first and only review in the last Assembly. There have been only four requests under the act in 30 years, so it's obviously not very well used or promoted. Of the four requests filed, there has only ever been one investigation actually carried out.

Unfortunately, the new Environmental Rights Act only made some minor improvements to what was already in place. The basis for investigations was extended to include acts of omission, but there is now a significant harm test; you have to show that something has significant effects on the environment before an investigation or a court action might be permitted. There is to be a state of the environment report and a statement of environmental values. Those are improvements, but it's not a rights-based approach.

What was promised were things like an environmental registry, a method for the public to propose policies, programs, agreements, initiatives, and a period for public comment on those items, and, in some cases, even a response required from the department. There was to be a definition of the "right to a healthy environment," "public trust" was to be defined, and an obligation placed on our government to basically take care of the environment. There was to be a dispute-resolution mechanism incorporated into the bill, and investigations would initially be carried out by inspectors.

Most of the changes proposed by the committee were incorporated into the bill. Unfortunately, there was never a response to the recommendations from the committee that were approved by this House. Noteworthy recommendations included following:

- anti-SLAPP legislation for introduction during the life of the 19th Legislative Assembly, and I will explain that term a little later;
- a registry be created to capture all reporting requirements found in the various environmental and resource management bills, allowing the public a one-window access point to information;
- coordination of reporting with other environmental legislation; and
- a public awareness campaign around the Environmental Rights Act.

I will have questions later today for the Minister of Environment and Natural Resources on the implementation and promotion of the new Environmental Rights Act. Mahsi, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. Members' statements. Member for Tu Nedhe-Willideh.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES PROMOTION AND
REVITALIZATION

MR. NORN: Mahsi cho, Madam Speaker. I want to speak today about the state of our 11 official languages and what I would like to see our government doing to keep these language programs running and alive. Language preservation is important to me. It's an important part of our culture and identity here in the North, and in my opinion, if you do not use it, you lose it.

When you go for a drive on the road, you will often see signs with the kilometre markers and landmarks, such as parks, and they are primarily written and English and French. I am not okay with that. Moving forward, I would like to see more homage paid to at least one language other than English in all regions of the NWT. For example, if we go to the 60th parallel sign, I would love to go up there and push a button and have at least a welcome in all of our official languages, and when you leave, to come again, and have that in one of our official languages. I would love to see that, and that also at our points of entry like our airport, as well.

According to the ECE document, Indigenous Languages Action Plan, it states that GNWT departments should be able to offer improved public services in Indigenous languages. In consultation with some of my constituents, some departments are better at this than others. Departments such as ECE are making a lot of inroads with students in terms of language instruction, and I am very thankful for that. However, other departments, such as ITI, ENR, and Infrastructure, still have some room for improvement.

In addition, Madam Speaker, there are many public hearings, as well, I would like to speak about, and they deal with a lot of legal, medical, and scientific jargon. I feel that we need to have more language interpretation workshops to help keep our interpreters up to date. I am hoping to see them implemented on a more frequent basis.

Growing up, I was raised by my great-grandparents, and my great-grandfather used to have a little recorder and a dictionary, and he would say words in Chipewyan. For a lot of words, for

things like "constitution," there wasn't anything in there. He used to sit there, record it, and then he'd put them in a box. When he passed on, a lot of that language was lost. I wish I could have access to that, but, no, it's gone. Again, I'm hoping we can see some more work like that done in future.

In closing, Madam Speaker, language revitalization is important. Again, if we do not use our language, we will lose it. It's important that we have all of our languages in written form and visible to the public, because, in my opinion, our government is not doing enough of that. However, I am hopeful that we will start doing more work in this House in having our Indigenous languages more visible. I will have questions for the Minister of ECE at the appropriate time. Mahsi cho, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Tu Nedhe-Willideh. Members' statements. Item 4, recognition of visitors in the gallery. Item 5, replies to the budget address.

Replies to Budget Address

MS. GREEN'S REPLY

MS. GREEN: Mahsi, Madam Speaker. I seek your permission to deliver my reply sitting down as I find it difficult to stand in one place for a long time.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Yes.

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Last Friday, the NWT Bureau of Statistics released more data from its 2019 community survey. This latest report focuses on financial security. As my colleague from Tu Nedhe-Willideh said in this House yesterday, the findings are shocking.

Fully one in five NWT households reported that they had trouble paying for their most basic needs, including housing, food, clothing, and transportation. Broken down by age, 2,271 children under 15 years of age are living in or near poverty. This is another shocking number, larger than most communities' populations, yet it's not surprising if you listen to statements by my colleagues that so many households and families are in dire need, and that need is heightened in small and remote communities.

A deeper dive into the report reveals significant detail about food insecurity. Almost a quarter of households say they were "often" or "sometimes" worried about having enough money for food during the previous 12 months. Again, this issue is most pressing in small communities. The place people are most worried about not being able to afford food is K'atlodeeche First Nation, the Hay River Reserve, followed by Wekweeti and Paulatuk.

Madam Speaker, the report also includes a section on housing insecurity. Across the NWT, 14 percent of households reported they have experienced significant financial difficulty in the previous year because of increases to rent or mortgage payments. That figure is highest in Behchoko, with Inuvik and Yellowknife close behind. As well, the report estimates that 9 percent of households include at least one person who would like to but does not have their own accommodation, and 242 people who said they were homeless at some point in the previous year. The bottom line is this: a significant number of households, including children, are going hungry at least some of the time, and finding affordable housing and preventing homelessness are chronic problems.

Madam Speaker, this information captured my attention because of my many years of advocacy on poverty in the NWT and also because we just started reviewing a budget that promises the better part of \$2 billion in spending. My question is: how can we spend this much money more effectively to meet the needs of residents? In particular, how do we help the one-in-five households living in poverty meet their food and shelter needs? How do we help alleviate the almost constant worry of having to make agonizing trade-offs such as paying the rent at the expense of buying food? Once someone's housing and food needs are met, they can get on with other important aspects of life.

Let me start by reiterating that \$2 billion is a lot of money. In fact, spread evenly among the 44,895 of us who live here, it is approximately \$45,000 each. It is the highest per capita spending of any province or territory, except Nunavut. Yes, our operating costs are high, but why isn't all this spending doing us more good? Not only with respect to food and housing, but health outcomes, graduation rates, and economic opportunity. How can we help one-fifth of residents who live in poverty to live free from want? Today, I am going to do my own deep dive for answers. I am going to review our revenue and spending with a focus on what is working, what isn't, and what needs to be assessed to ensure we are getting maximum value for each dollar spent.

Madam Speaker, let's start with revenue. Our largest source of revenue is, of course, the grant from Canada, and it is forecasted to go up in the next year to \$1.4 billion. The balance of our budget comes from own-source revenue streams, primarily taxation, and our taxation is focused around individuals. Personal income tax and the payroll tax account for more than half of our annual own-source revenue. Corporate income tax is very unpredictable. It was forecasted to deliver \$23 million to the GNWT in this fiscal year, but instead will produce a \$12 million shortfall. Non-renewable resource revenue amounts are also variable. The last budget predicted \$46 million, but that figure has

now been revised downwards to \$39 million. The total is forecasted to drop again in the next fiscal year. We have a stagnant economy that is stable for now because of government spending, but it is not feasible to stay on this path for the life of this Assembly and beyond.

We are almost at our federally imposed debt wall. To make a comparison that is easy to understand, we have almost maxed out our federal credit card. Contrary to the advice I would give someone in this situation, the territorial government wants to increase our capacity to borrow. The question isn't about whether we have the fiscal capacity to handle the extra debt; we do. For me, it is more about how we are going to repay this debt, given our weak revenue. I am also concerned about the speed with which we have been expanding our borrowing capacity.

Madam Speaker, each year, during the budget address, I talk about the need to increase revenue, and I am going to do that again today. The most recent revenue options paper from 2016 lays out several possibilities to raise more money. A tax bracket for high individual income earners would net \$2 million a year. A 1 percent increase in the payroll tax would bring in \$20 million. A 1 percent increase in corporate tax would yield \$5 million. The revenue options paper dismisses all of these options because they would increase the cost of living, the cost of doing business, and/or generally make the NWT a less desirable place to work and live. There is no evidence presented to support this conclusion. It is instead a Department of Finance mantra and a common talking point for those subtly arguing for austerity.

A report commissioned by the previous Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment concludes there is "a significant opportunity for the NWT to benefit more from mining." For me, that is a no-brainer. About \$30 billion worth of diamonds have been produced in the NWT in the last 20 years. How is it possible, then, that we are at our debt wall and that a fifth of households live below the poverty line? What we need is an open dialogue to look at mining income specifically and revenue generation generally, based on evidence rather than received wisdom. I am pleased to hear that the Minister of Finance wants to engage all residents on the question of government revenue. This conversation is long overdue.

Madam Speaker, before I turn to spending, I want to look at the options that low-income households have to meet their needs. According to that same report I spoke about at the beginning, residents of small and hub communities are most likely to ask friends and family for money. A significant number also take on debt or sell something of value. Those who live in communities where non-profit

organizations offer services use them. These solutions are obviously short-term and easily exhausted. They don't address the root causes of not having enough money to live.

Madam Speaker, someone somewhere is now asking, "Why don't the adults in those low-income families just get a job?" Easier said than done in most places, even if people have skills in demand, someone to care for their children, their health, and transportation to and from work. The overall employment rate in Yellowknife and communities outside the capital is at its lowest point in 10 years. The rate is especially low at just over 50 percent in the small communities. In the 18th Assembly, we made efforts to increase small community employment by creating a special job fund. The revised estimates for this fiscal year peg spending at about \$5 million, but the budget for the next fiscal year is going down by almost three quarters of a million dollars. This area should be a priority investment for this government. A job is preferable to income assistance, borrowing from family members, or going without for those who are able to work. The other way the government has tried to create employment is through infrastructure investment. Building the Inuvik to Tuktoyaktuk Highway and the Stanton Territorial Hospital created jobs, but never as many as we hoped for or for as long as we would like. After two or three years, unemployment in the regions goes up again.

Madam Speaker, the most recent disappointment is the road to Whati. I had high hopes for increased employment in the Tlicho region and the positive effects jobs would have on high rates of inadequate housing and hunger in that region, but no. We learned last week that a little less than 50 percent of the workforce is comprised of NWT residents and, of that number, only 35 percent are Tlicho citizens. Further, only 40 percent of the contracts have gone to northern businesses. What are we getting for our \$411 million investment in the Tlicho road? Clearly not enough, at least when it comes to the number and duration of jobs created, and we haven't learned our lesson. It is astonishing to me that our priorities include three more large infrastructure projects that perpetuate the boom-and-bust cycle of employment. I believe we should make greater investments in the economic diversification ideas included in our mandate. My hope is that the regional economic plans will be completed sooner than the current timeline of 2023. Otherwise, we will continue to hemorrhage money, jobs, and opportunity to out-of-territory firms and workers.

Madam Speaker, you might be wondering why I am talking about roads when we are reviewing the operations and maintenance budget. The answer is because our operating budget is designed to generate surpluses, which help pay for our 25

percent share of infrastructure projects; or, if surpluses don't pan out, then we have to increase borrowing. Surpluses, Madam Speaker, are fickle. The Finance Minister of the time forecasted a \$60 million surplus in last year's budget. What we are getting instead is a \$70 million deficit. When the current Finance Minister says our surplus for the next fiscal year will be \$203 million, I think we have to take that with a grain of salt. Likewise, surpluses in future years that are forecasted to dwindle to just \$3 million in the last year of this Assembly.

We don't have a lot of choice about generating a surplus if we continue on our current path of cost-sharing big infrastructure projects with Ottawa. We need to come up with millions of dollars to pay our share of the planning and regulatory process for the Slave Geological Province and the Taltson hydroelectric system expansion during the life of this Assembly. At the same time, the GNWT is contributing \$37.5 million to build a bridge across the Great Bear River, as well as additional planning and feasibility studies for the Mackenzie Valley Highway.

Madam Speaker, these projects raise a lot of questions. Can we afford to work on all of them simultaneously? Do we have enough workforce and business capacity to maximize the benefits of these projects for Northerners? Is it reasonable for a jurisdiction with such weak revenue generation to come up with a 25-percent share of the millions of dollars required?

It feels to me as if the federal contributions to the start-up costs of these projects are the tail wagging the dog. Ottawa offers 75 percent, and it seems like a good deal, and it addresses our chronic and significant infrastructure deficit but, in our current economic situation, 25 percent for all these projects is just too ambitious. We are building roads at the expense of building houses. Houses, not roads, are our greatest need right now. House construction will also produce a variety of economic benefits, including jobs, for the NWT.

If there was ever a time to think outside the box on infrastructure spending, this is it. If there was ever a time to talk with federal counterparts about changing this federally imposed requirement for large infrastructure projects, this is it, and I'm glad this government is taking this issue on.

I'm now going to turn to spending. There are some good initiatives in budget 2020 to help low-income families, including more money for those on Income Assistance to offset increased rent and utility costs; carbon tax rebates for individuals; and funding to make the Integrated Case Management program permanent. There is, of course, other government spending that will benefit all of us, but if you are looking for money for those two areas which low-

income people describe as their biggest concerns, you won't find it here. There is no new money for additional housing and no new money that will help alleviate hunger. I look forward to seeing these additional investments in a supplementary appropriation on our mandate.

Madam Speaker, I'm going to circle back to the question of value for money spent by the GNWT. This issue has new urgency, given the Minister of Finance's announcement that there is just \$25 million available over the life of this Assembly for our priorities. Clearly, we aren't going to get transformative change for that price. I welcome the Minister's interest in the value-for-money question and her focus on increased program evaluation. Given our current economic situation, the most important sentence in budget 2020 is: "The GNWT will undertake strategic reviews to ensure programs and services are meeting expectations and that budgeted expenditures for those programs are properly aligned with our mandate and additional revenue options are considered." This rigorous assessment holds the promise of delivering more effective programs and services without spending more money. This is a promise I'm going to hold onto.

I started this reply by reflecting on the number of NWT households who are not making ends meet for their most basic expenses. I want us all to make our best efforts to improve their circumstances, to help them get a hand up. Whether it's jobs, housing, food, or increased tax benefits, we need to develop a plan now to lift low-income families into the middle class. We need to make sure that we are not allowing our most vulnerable to continue to fall through the cracks and be left behind. We need to give these families, and especially their children, hope for a better future, right here in the Northwest Territories. Mahsi, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Yellowknife Centre. Replies to the budget address. Item 6, replies of committees on the review of bills. Item 7, reports of standing and special committees. Item 8, returns to oral questions. Item 9, acknowledgements. Item 10, oral questions. Member for Hay River South.

Oral Questions

QUESTION 135-19(2): TRADES APPRENTICESHIPS

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Speaker. My questions will be for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. Small businesses are a cornerstone in the development of apprentices. Small businesses are willing to hire and support apprentices but rely on the subsidy

program to offset associated costs. I would ask the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment: what is the total budget amount of financial resources directed toward wage subsidies for apprenticeships? Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Speaker. My first set of questions from the Member for Hay River South. It's a big day for me. The total amount budgeted in the previous main estimates was \$1.072 million, and that's for the Trades and Occupations Wage Subsidy Program. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: It's a big day for me, too. Can the Minister confirm whether this budget amount is routinely fully subscribed or under-subscribed?

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: We don't have the actuals for this fiscal year yet, as we are still in it, but in 2017-2018, there was \$948,000 spent, so nearly the entire budget. In 2018-2019, it was down to \$655,000, so there was a carry-over of over \$400,000, and that is due to a decrease in the number of apprentices, the new registers, from 92 in 2017-2018 to 70 in 2018-2019.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: The question I have here is: what are the current subsidy rates and the maximum term of those subsidies provided to employers?

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: The subsidy rate is \$8 per hour, to an annual maximum of 1,600 hours per apprentice, and the maximum wage subsidy support is \$25,600, because it's over two years; so it's for two years, \$8 an hour, 1,600 hours a year.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Member for Hay River South, final supplemental.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Speaker. For the final question, well, first of all, it's good to hear that, in a sense, there is extra money in the budget, money that may have not been spent. Is the Minister willing to look at extending the term for third- and fourth-year apprenticeships, as well, to add another year on? I would like to see the money be spread out a bit, and it will really help small business, as well. Will you consider subsidizing third and fourth years, as well? Thank you.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: I appreciate where the Member is coming from. I know it's difficult for small businesses across the territory right now, and apprentices and journeypersons are in high demand. It's difficult to compete with the wages that

are being offered by the mines and by government and by big industry, so to have that wage subsidy, it helps. If you're a small business and you're going into your third year with an apprentice, you might be concerned that you might lose that apprentice, and we need to help support them, so I am definitely going to look into this. We're going back to industry and to small businesses to see how these recent changes to the program have rolled out on the ground, and we'll make the decision from there, but I'm definitely going to consider all options, including extending this if those funds are available. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

QUESTION 136-19(2):
RENT SCALE POLICY REVIEW

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Today, I spoke about proof of income in Housing Corporation using the T4 policy. Madam Speaker, will the Minister table the policy that tells the LHOs in the communities that they must use a T4 slip to determine the income of the public housing clients? Thank you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Nunakput. Minister responsible for the NWT Housing Corporation.

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Looking at the policy that we currently have for the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation, I see that it was more meant for consistent income. It does not meet the needs of seasonal workers, and I see that. So then, looking at this policy, I want to review it. I want to see where we are at. I think that the decision made at that time was a perfect decision for that government, and it did reflect a lot of good intent. However, now, times have changed, and it does not meet the needs of the seasonal workers, so, yes, I am wanting to go back and take a look at that. I will follow up with the Member with the discussion and outcome.

MR. JACOBSON: Could the Minister table the policy, though, in the House in regard to the LHOs using that to determine public housing for the clients?

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Sorry, I did not confirm that. Yes, I would like to table the document, and I would like to have the chance to review it and look at the changes going forward.

MR. JACOBSON: I am pretty sure there are going to be a lot of happy people in the territory today in regard to that. Thank you, Minister. Will the Minister commit to ensuring the policy and all of the Housing

Corporation policies are posted on their website ASAP?

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: I did instruct my department to have the policies available online. I am not too sure where we are at with that right now. I am not too sure of the technical process or the administration for that to happen, but I will inform the Member when the policies are available online.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Nunakput.

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I was so excited at question one that I forgot to ask: what is the timeline? Can this Minister give me a timeline on you getting rid of the T4 system and just people being able to go in every month, they show their pay stub, and then get their rent assessed on a timeline?

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: I don't want to commit to timeline, because there are going to be a lot of reviews that are going to have to take place in order to look at this policy. However, I also want to be mindful that I feel that the intent for the policy was to accommodate the consistent income earners, but, looking at the T4 slips, it's not working for the seasonal workers. I see that, but also that the rent scale also accommodates -- I don't want to say "accommodates," but also works with the Northwest Territories, that we are the lowest at the rent scale for the rest of Canada. The rest of Canada is at 30 percent. We are at 19 percent. I just want to be very mindful of that, but then I see where the rent scale is very confusing to understand and very confusing to administer, but I am looking at the best results for the residents of the Northwest Territories.

If there need to be changes within that policy, I want to review it and speak with the Member, just to make sure that we are meeting the needs of the Northwest Territories. Looking at the T4 slips, I am not going to commit that this would happen anytime soon. I have to take a look at it first, before we end up making the changes, because our administration has to follow through with that. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

QUESTION 137-19(2):

ANTI-STRATEGIC LAWSUIT AGAINST PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (SLAPP) LEGISLATION

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Madame la Presidente. My questions are for the Minister of Environment and Natural Resources. One of the recommendations from the standing committee in reviewing the Environmental Rights Act and approved in this House was the passage of anti-SLAPP legislation, or a law to prevent strategic litigation against public

participation, and that that should be introduced in the 19th Assembly. Can the Minister tell us whether or when anti-SLAPP legislation will be introduced in this House? Mahsi, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. Minister of Environment and Natural Resources.

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is my understanding anti-SLAPP legislation is outside the scope of the work performed for the Environmental Rights Act and most likely would not be the responsibility of Environment and Natural Resources. However, in getting a heads-up with this question and understanding and looking at that one part of the report, I have reached out to my honourable colleague, the Minister of Justice, and we are more than willing to have conversations and with the Member, as well.

MR. O'REILLY: I am feeling kind of SLAPP-happy right now. I want to thank the Minister for that, but talk is cheap. I am happy to be part of that conversation. My next question: I have reviewed the ENR website and could barely find any mention of a public registry for the Protected Areas Act, let alone some of the other legislation that the department is responsible for, including the Environmental Rights Act. Can the Minister tell us when or whether his department is considering a central environmental public registry to capture all of the reporting requirements found in the various environment and resource management bills, allowing the public a one-window access point to information, as is done in Ontario, for example?

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: The Environmental Rights Act and the Protected Areas Act are bills that were passed in the last Legislative Assembly, including registries. To implementation, ENR would start by meeting the information required in each of the acts. When implementation occurs, we will be looking for opportunities to centralize information as resources allow while not duplicating the comprehensive land and water board registries.

MR. O'REILLY: I want to thank the Minister for that. Look, I am trying to find ways to save this government money, and having a central registry is one way to begin to do that. There is similar reporting that is required from ENR around the Cumulative Impact Monitoring Program. That is under the Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act. There is state of the environment reporting under the Environmental Rights Act. Can the Minister tell us how all of this environmental reporting is going to be coordinated?

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: The purpose and process and timelines for the environmental audit

and the state of the environment reports are different. A state of the environment report is required to be tabled within three years of the revised Environmental Rights Act coming into effect and every four years afterwards. An environmental audit is conducted every five years by an independent body, and the next audit is due to be completed in 2025. The department continues to ensure that it meets reporting requirements in our environmental legislation and that this report is coordinated where appropriate.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Madame la Presidente. I want to thank the Minister for that. Just because he says it's coordinated, it doesn't actually mean it actually is coordinated, so I am going to have to push that with him. There is nothing, though, on the ENR website about the Environmental Rights Act. There is a general page that talks about how the bill or the legislation was going to be reviewed in the last Assembly, but there is nothing there to help promote the understanding of the new legislation. Can the Minister tell us when his department will finally take a more proactive role in promoting this legislation, and will a plan be shared with the relevant standing committee?

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: I thank the Member for these questions. I've heard that ENR's website needs to be improved, and we're looking at that to make sure we have the information and we can easily find out, including the Environmental Rights Act. The environment website does include a web page for the Environmental Rights Act. The department plans to conduct a public awareness campaign on the Environmental Rights Act, and the department has already updated its plain-language summary of the act to support the public awareness campaign. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

QUESTION 138-19(2):
PROCESS CONVENTION

MR. LAFFERTY: Masi, Madam Speaker. [Translation] As Cabinet and Members, we work under this policy. It's in front of us to use, so when these Ministers come into our community, they have to give us notice, two weeks', and send us the documents. This is the question I want to ask the Minister. [End of translation]

As Members of the Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories, we adhere to what we call a process convention. Madam Speaker, according to the process convention, Section 11(b) states, "Ministers will, whenever possible, provide a

minimum of two weeks' advance notice of any public meeting being held by their departments in a Member's constituency." That did not occur in my riding back in December. I'm just wondering, Madam Speaker, a question to the Minister responsible for the NWT Housing Corporation: is the Minister up to speed and also familiar with section 11 of the process convention that we have in place? Masi, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Monfwi. Minister responsible for the NWT Housing Corporation.

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you, Madam Speaker. My apologies. No, I'm not familiar with the process convention policy, but, back in December, we were just newly elected. This was a project that was coming around, that was coming to closure. It was the Whati community plan for strategic housing plans. At that time, I went and I asked my department if the MLA for Monfwi was contacted; at that time, he was out, he had prior engagements, but just for that celebration that had happened, the celebration did not go forward. There was a death in the community. The celebration was put to a stop, and we just had discussions about the plan, but the celebration did not go forward. We did have a meal, but it was silent. There was a death in the community. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

MR. LAFFERTY: [Translation] The second question I have regarding the process convention is that it's stated in the policy that you give them notice for five days in advance to return your question or written question. They have five days to return that answer. [End of translation]

When the Regular Members request for information from ministerial offices, the general rule of thumb is that the turnaround time should be within five days or less. We understand that, sometimes, five days needs to be extended and, as long as the Minister's office lets Regular Members know about the necessary extension, we are generally fine with that. It has been well over two weeks since my request, so I'm just wondering if the Minister is familiar with the general rule of thumb, the five-day rule, within the process convention. It is very important to have this timeline turnaround.

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: My deepest apologies to the Member for the request that was not received within 10 days. I would like to ask him if he would be able to resend that request to me, and I will follow up with that immediately. My sincere apologies.

MR. LAFFERTY: Yes, I definitely will do, and I clearly hear the Minister's apology. This is an area that, obviously, we need to improve; not only her department, but other departments, as well, so I'll

be speaking to that in my probably last and final question.

Myself and my colleagues on this side of the House are getting extremely frustrated with how the government is operating and how our side of the House is being treated. In her letter to me, the Minister responsible for the NWT Housing Corporation mentioned that she would like to collaborate with me for the betterment of my constituents. Communication definitely needs to be improved in this area. Will this Minister responsible for the NWT Housing Corporation and her department commit to making improvements with respect to giving proper notice and on responding to queries from Regular Members? Clearly, Madam Speaker, this will be a message to other Ministers, as well.

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: I would just like to advise that I was actually in Behchoko in February, and we did meet with the local housing authority, and the MLA was present. It was his meeting request at that time. Going forward, I will keep the Members very aware of when the NWT Housing Corporation will be in their community, but going forward, I don't have a scheduled plan for community visits right now. Once our session is complete, I will be sure to forward that information to the Members.

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

QUESTION 139-19(2):
AFFIRMATIVE ACTION POLICY

MS. MARTSELOS: Madam Speaker, as the Minister responsible for human resources, is she confident that the Affirmative Action Policy is solid and that her direction as Minister is being followed?

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Thebacha. Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am very confident in the skills and abilities and dedication of the staff in the human resources department. These individuals work hard. They are working hard to be developing a representative workforce. That doesn't mean that that work happens over a day, and it doesn't mean that we have a representative workforce right now. Not to take away for a moment from the hard work that happens within that department. I do have every confidence that they are working toward that goal. That goal, however, as was already noted, has been noted more than once in this House, is more than simply that of one department; it is a goal for the entirety of the government. It's a goal that we are all going to be working toward. It's one that involves everything from early childhood indicators, to education, to better health outcomes,

so that people are ready to work and able to work, so that they can benefit from the variety of programs that we have in the GNWT's HR. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

MS. MARTSELOS: Does the Minister feel confident that the Affirmative Action Policy is objective and serving the people of the NWT in an honest and sincere manner?

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: The Affirmative Action Policy is one that has different classifications depending on the types of jobs to which someone is applying. A P1 individual, for example, is someone who is Indigenous Aboriginal to the territory or someone who is Aboriginal and spent more than half their life in the Northwest Territories. There are also the P2 classifications. Depending, for a management position, there are 1A and 1B classifications. They are quite rigorous. They are clearly stated and, indeed, if someone meets one of those classifications and passes the requirements for a position, they are hired even over a candidate who may not be so classified but who may actually have scored technically higher in their application process. I have inquired and ensured that that continues to be applied, and I am happy to receive any information from any member of the public who may be concerned, and we have followed up with every one of the requests that we've received in that regard.

MS. MARTSELOS: Is the Minister responsible for human resources confident that the Affirmative Action Policy is being accountable and transparent to the people of the NWT and the bureaucratic processes in place dictating it?

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: I understand that the Member has some concerns, perhaps arising from specific incidents. I am not sure. If that is the case, I want Members in this House to bring specific concerns to me. I have had specific concerns brought forward. We've actioned them. We take them back to the department. We run investigations. You make enquiries. Individuals who don't receive positions have appeal rights in some cases. I would encourage those who have access to such appeal rights to exercise them. Appeals are done by independent individuals, not Members of the GNWT. Indeed, very often workplace investigations, in many cases, can be done by individuals outside of the GNWT. There are a lot of different layers where independents come into play, external to the GNWT. In addition to that, Madam Speaker, again, there are obligations on all staffing to ensure that they are applying policies that are appropriate and following those policies that we have rigorously.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Member for Thebacha, final supplementary.

MS. MARTSELOS: Madam Speaker, could the Minister honestly say, before all the Members of this House, that the Affirmative Action Policy is actually working for the people of the NWT? Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: The Department of Human Resources is constantly working to ensure that it is doing the best it can to be a representative workforce. To that end, as I've said before in this House in the last month, there are a variety of programs. They are continuously making efforts to be responsive as new ideas arise to be innovative. For instance, developing the building capacity in Indigenous governments program that is being worked on right now is one where it's helping to build capacity in communities with secondments between the GNWT and Indigenous governments.

There's a constant effort to find new and better ways to improve the workforce, not only in the GNWT, but in some of our partners across the territory. One of those tools is the Affirmative Action Policy. I have already offered to this House to give a technical presentation to standing committee to go through that policy, to consider reviews that have been done, and to engage in a dialogue with all Members of the House if there are ways that we can continue to improve that policy for the betterment of the Northwest Territories and the people of the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

QUESTION 140-19(2):
PROMOTING INDIGENOUS OFFICIAL
LANGUAGES

MR. NORN: Mahsi cho, Madam Speaker. I have a question for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, going back to my Member's statement on language. Can the Minister share with us what work is being done to having more official languages on NWT signs and landmarks? Mahsi cho.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Tu Nedhe-Willideh. Minister of Education, Culture and Employment.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Currently, we have official language guidelines, and these guidelines lay out the signage rules for government buildings. In addition to English and French, exterior building signs are to be translated into the local official languages. For the main directory board signs, the ones you see inside, the official Indigenous language appropriate to the local area should appear before English and French. Currently, the department under the Indigenous

languages action plan, there's so many different names here, I can't keep them straight, but the Indigenous languages revitalization action plan, essentially, there's a lot that's going to be happening within the next two years. I just looked at the guidelines, actually, and the copy I found was from before division, and it's my understanding that that is the most recent copy. Some of the work we're going to be doing in the next two years is updating those, as well as updating the regulations. Infrastructure is doing work to update their guidelines around signage on buildings. The standing committee, with the assistance of the department, is going to be looking at the Official Languages Act. In the next couple of years, there's going to be a lot happening in terms of updating the way we display Indigenous languages in the territory. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

MR. NORN: Thank you for the response from the Minister. That's encouraging. I think, if our ancestors are watching, I think they would be very, very happy to hear that. My next question is: would the Minister be open to having an interactive "welcome" and "good-bye," so to speak, in all our official languages at our points of entry? What I mean by that, our visitors' centres and our border at the NWT-Alberta border as well?

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: I am not quite sure what the Member means by "interactive," if that's the people working at the centres or if that is like a touch screen type thing. That would really be up to the Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment who runs those. I would definitely encourage it. I know that at the north of 60, for the 60th parallel visitors' centre, when you enter the park, we have the big sign, which is strictly in English, but then, as soon as you enter the park area, the sign includes all the Indigenous languages.

MR. NORN: Thank you for that response from the Minister again. Encouraging. My last question for the Minister goes to language workshops. It's applicable to all of our interpreters who are assisting right now as I speak. Can the Minister commit to having more workshops for our language interpreters, especially assisting with legal, medical, and scientific terminology in the life of this Assembly?

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: The interpreters at the Legislative Assembly do an amazing job, and I'm sometimes in awe of all the languages that are spoken in this building. It is really like nowhere else. No other legislature around the world, I'm sure. To the Member's point, one of the additional actions that I discussed under the action plan is going to be updating the different terminologies. ECE is going to undertake that with Indigenous language experts and update the different terminologies for the legal terms, medical terms, et cetera, and are going to

provide support to interpreters and arrange training opportunities. Just the kind of work that the Member is talking about is the kind of work that we look forward to doing in the next couple of years.

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

QUESTION 141-19(2):
ORAL HEALTH REPORT

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Madam Speaker. My questions today are for the Minister of Health and Social Services. I appreciate the Minister's opening statement in regards to the oral health strategy, and I'm wondering if the Minister plans to table an official report of where we are with the oral health strategy. Thank you.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Kam Lake. Minister of Health and Social Services.

HON. DIANE THOM: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Oral Health Action Plan is currently in place, and it's in place until the 2020-2021 fiscal year. The outcomes are updated as the work progresses or completed. As this work progresses, and some of the work that's completed, as Minister, I am updated. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

MS. CLEVELAND: Will the Minister have her department undertake an assessment of the feasibility of allowing dental hygienists to practice without the oversight of dentists so that our small communities have better access to preventative oral healthcare?

HON. DIANE THOM: Under the current legislation, the dental hygienists are allowed to practise independently with only indirect supervision. Professional oversight is required. The direct supervision is not required, just the indirect supervision. Yes, we can look at the legislation.

MS. CLEVELAND: I am very happy to hear a "yes" in response to that one. I am wondering if the Minister has an idea of a timeline in regards to that type of a feasibility study?

HON. DIANE THOM: Apparently, I need to go back here and just talk about the -- I'm going to go back to the Member's original question because I think I might have gotten confused here. We have an action plan. The action plan is currently in progress until 2021. The Member had asked if the dental hygienists can go unsupervised. They can go, somewhere around the question. The dental hygienist does not require direct supervision. They do require indirect supervision. The action plan that the Member is referring to that I receive updates, yes, we can provide the updates if that is what the Member and all the MLAs are requesting.

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

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am going to go back, as well, then. I completely understand that the act stipulates that there is a requirement that there is indirect supervision from a dentist. However, that means that a dental hygienist who wants to practise in northern communities needs to find a dentist who is willing to take them on under their wing, so to say, and that prevents people from being able to just go to communities on their own as a business owner and provide dental hygiene appointments or preventative healthcare to people who live in these small communities. What that will end up doing is driving up costs of dental care to people who live in Tuktoyaktuk or who live in Deline.

In order for us to be able to provide cost-effective, preventative oral health care in small communities, being able to remove that stipulation and expect that dental hygienists who are accredited and who are trained professionals can work without the supervision of a dentist is required. I am wondering if the Minister is willing to do a feasibility study to look at removing that from the act. Thank you.

HON. DIANE THOM: I can see some of the Members are pretty happy over there. I am not sure about a study, but it is something we will look into. Oral health in the communities, like I said in my Minister's statement, is very important. There was a question in the House by Inuvik Twin Lakes asking me last month: will the department look at establishing a territorial chief electoral health officer role? That is something our department is looking into. We need a position in place to be able to go. We look at some of our health centers, and the hygienist chairs are empty. I recognize that. Our department needs to go in and have a look at the system and see what is required within the legislation or perhaps make changes to it. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

QUESTION 142-19(2):
ARNICA INN TRANSITIONAL HOUSING
PROJECT

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Speaker. There has been quite a lot of talk about the Arnica project over the last weeks in this House. I am happy to hear that there has been a meeting, and it seems there is still some hope for this project to go through, although I am still a little confused on some issues. The Minister had previously clarified that they had not seen the CMHC report and, in fact, relied on CMHC. My question to the Minister responsible for the Housing Corporation is: has the

Housing Corporation seen the CMHC application, and are they aware of the defects in that proposal?

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Yellowknife North. Minister responsible for NWT Housing Corporation.

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you, Madam Speaker. As of to date, we have not seen the Yellowknife Women's Society application. The application that the Member is referring to is a federal land application, and it is for federal funding. NWT HC is working with CMHC to work towards clarification on this funding that is available to the residents of the Northwest Territories. Right now, the application, I can't even confirm if it actually has been submitted. We have been meeting with the Yellowknife Women's Society, and we recently just met last week. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

MR. JOHNSON: It appears, despite multiple meetings and no shortage of questions here, there still appears to be some breakdown in communication. Will the Minister responsible for the Housing Corporation ask CMHC and the women's society to get a hold of that application and the response and make sure that they are aware of all of the shortfalls that were in the application so that we are all on the same page?

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Just to confirm with the Member that my staff did reach out to CMHC. They did have a conversation, and they did encourage Yellowknife Women's Society to submit the application. CMHC will be going through the application with them thoroughly so they would be able to address the concerns that CMHC had identified on the letter that was sent to them February 18th. Unfortunately, the Housing Corporation, we don't have the funding. We are not the main funding source, so we don't see the application at this point. Going forward, that relationship and that communication will start to improve.

MR. JOHNSON: I am a little perplexed that, at this point with such a close deadline, the Housing Corporation has not seen the application and isn't aware of the shortfalls. I heard the Minister responsible for the Housing Corporation previously discuss not wanting to set proponents up to fail, wanting to make sure, if we are going to provide our funding for any housing project, that we know that it is sustainable. I do not understand how the Housing Corporation is capable of doing that without looking at the response from CMHC and without knowing the shortfalls in the application. My question is: is the Housing Corporation, then, fully relying on the judgment of CMHC to commit their money? Have we done any review of the application?

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Going forward, we are looking at the process. I don't want to sound as if the Housing Corporation is discouraging the application. I would really want to stress that the application is a federal application, and it is federal funding. The Housing Corporation did have a conversation with the Yellowknife Women's Society. We did come to a conclusion in that we are here to work with them going forward. I really don't know how much further to comment, but the application does sit as a federal application. The decision is based on what the Yellowknife Women's Society is asking. The project, I believe, is \$4 million.

Going forward, I need to see what it is that they have been approved for so that we can work together going forward. I would like to encourage that the application that was completed, it was completed by consultant. I have encouraged the Yellowknife Women's Society to involve us in the process. The application belongs to them. It is a CMHC funding process, but we are here. We have supported them. We have met with them and, just going forward, want to improve their communication.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Member for Yellowknife North.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Yellowknife Women's Society has reached out to the Housing Corporation throughout this process. They have reached out to almost everyone in this House. There has been nothing but attempts to reach out to the Housing Corporation and work with them. My concern is: on one hand, the Housing Corporation Minister is talking about not wanting to set people up for failure, wanting to make sure we have a strong investment, which I support. Yet, on the other hand, they are saying they are not even part of the application process. There is a deadline on here. I do not want the Housing Corporation, once the CMHC has provided their funding, to all of a sudden raise some new concerns that should have been raised months ago. My question for the Minister responsible for the Housing Corporation is: can we set out a guideline of what our role is in making sure we can successfully get the co-housing federal money from the federal government? Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: I could hear the frustration in the Member's question. Going forward, looking at the process, I do find it very complicated, myself. I look at the project; it looks like it is almost simple to go forward, but it is the paperwork that is in between. It is federal money, territorial money, and looking at co-investment, co-investors, and to work with this project going forward. Right now, the Housing Corporation is engaged, and we are working on a process going forward and looking at how are we going to deal with projects like this and

making sure that they are set up for success. Right now, I do have a meeting that's scheduled with CMHC to clarify a lot of the justification that they identified on the application, but going forward, I understand, and I hear the Member that the communication needs to be clarified.

Going forward, the Northwest Territories does have access to this co-investment fund that is sitting there. We do have other interested parties going forward, but we really need to be clear on the process. I understand that the Member has expressed that there is a deadline for this project to go forward. I really want to stress that the Housing Corporation is not holding up that deadline, that there are requirements that are needed on that application. It needs to be completed, and I would really advise that, whatever the CMHC has included in their details in their letter and their conversation, that it needs to be met. The requirements need to be met. As the Housing Corporation, we are there to support the application. I hear the frustration, but, as the Housing Corporation, we are trying to work and figure out a strategy of how we are going to be working with the co-investment fund going forward. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Oral questions. Member for Nunakput, round two.

QUESTION 143-19(2):
REVIEW OF RENT SCALE POLICY ON INCOME
VERIFICATION

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a good day today, Madam Speaker. The Minister responsible for the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation is going to make changes for us in regard to our T4 system. Can we try to work with the Minister to get a timeline and using her Minister's directive in telling her staff before April 3rd, before this House is convened, that we have something in place where the LHOs could just start utilizing the income verification by cheque stubs in the communities instead of a T4 system or make it optional? Thank you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Member. Minister responsible for the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation.

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Thank you to the Member. I am not familiar with policy changes and how fast we could make this happen. The policy that is in place currently, right now, I feel that it has been accommodating consistent income. Right now, we have changed, and we are recognizing that we do have seasonal workers. Going forward, I need to be very strategic and very specific on making these changes, so, unfortunately, I cannot commit to the April 1st date. I need to make sure that how the

assessment was completed at first, that included the changes to the policy that we currently work with right now, what were the changes, what did they engage, what did they consider.

Looking even at the cost of living and what does it honestly take for our units to be maintained and for them to be administered, I want to take those into consideration, as well, because, as the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation, we do spend \$30,000 annually on the units; we do take care of the sewer, the fuel, the property taxes, the lease payments. I just need to make sure that, when we are calculating these rental incomes, it does accommodate the seasonal workers, just as we have made the adjustments to accommodate the consistent income earners.

MR. JACOBSON: In regard to that, policies can be changed anytime. Once the Minister has directed and once the Minister makes that decision to go forward with it, she can make change. Change will happen when she tells her staff to make it happen. In regard to it, I appreciate all the work and what she is saying to us and stuff like that, but again, we have to realize that, the housing units, we get \$45,000 a year, per person per year. That is every man, woman, and child, babies, everybody. The thing is, the housing, they are substandard housing in my riding, anyway. They are 30-plus years old. We have some new ones but not enough. We are short about 300 houses in my riding.

Madam Speaker, this Minister could make change by April 3rd if she gives a Minister's directive. Would the Minister commit to me about making change and using no more T4s or make it optional? Even making it optional, you are still doing the same thing, the department, but you are making it optional for the person to come in every month to show you that slip, and you will get the exact amount, what you are doing, instead of ripping them off.

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: I would encourage the clients in the riding of the Member to get into the LHO offices right now, do a rent assessment. Looking at the T4s, if they feel that they are paying a lot more and too much for the current public housing units that they reside in, that is an option. We do use the T4 slips annually to calculate their rent, to be consistent, but also there is the option to do the rent assessment. That can be done month by month, and it does not have to be based on the T4 for the rest of the year. We do recognize that we do have income earners who are not consistent throughout the year. I would really encourage the Member to speak with his constituents to get into the LHO offices in his riding and have a rent assessment completed.

MR. JACOBSON: I thank the Minister. Everybody in Nunakput, go get reassessed, in public housing. That is what I want you to do, please and thank you. It's going to help you. In regard to that, like I said before, the reassessments, not everybody has government jobs to go off T4s. All the jobs are taken in our small communities, and people are hurting; so if the Minister would come up and just say, "Yes, by this day, you can use your T4 or your monthly cheque to get assessed," would that be possible?

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: That is exactly how the program works. Bring in your monthly income, month to month, and get reassessed for that month, and bring those T4s forward -- sorry, bring those income slips forward into the LHO offices so we can reassess those rental incomes.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Member for Nunakput, final supplementary.

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Will the Minister commit to making this policy more flexible so that the documents used for income so that, again, I really want to make it clear for everybody, the T4 or a pay stub, to go and get reassessed every month? Are they allowed to do that?

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: I see that. You know I hear this throughout the Northwest Territories, that it's something that needs to be discussed a lot more. I think advertisement on the programs that the Housing Corporation currently has, but, right now, if the Member and their constituents are to get into their LHO offices with their T4s and their pay stubs, they are eligible for rent assessments, absolutely. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

QUESTION 144-19(2):
FULL-TIME PSYCHOLOGIST FOR CHILDREN
AND YOUTH FOR TREATMENT CENTRE

MR. LAFFERTY: Masi, Madam Speaker. [Translation] I want to ask a question regarding children. They go through difficult times. They have a lot of problems. I want to talk about the treatment. [End of translation] It's been brought to my attention on the territorial treatment centre here in Yellowknife. We have a treatment for clientele ages eight to 12, for those who have emotional, behaviour, or psychiatric difficulties. Madam Speaker, it has been brought to my attention that, at the facility, the centre does not currently have a full-time psychologist on site at the treatment centre, and it has been almost five years or just over five years since they had one full-time at the site. When there was one full-time at site, it was

well utilized by these high-risk clientele, these students or these children. Are there plans in place to have a full-time psychologist at site in the near future, similar to what they have had in the past? Masi, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Monfwi. Minister of Health and Social Services.

HON. DIANE THOM: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Member is referring to the Territorial Treatment Centre, which was formerly known as the Receiving Home, and the psychologist services are available to clients, but there is not a resident psychologist on site, so clients are driven to appointments with a psychologist. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

MR. LAFFERTY: That's the very concern that was brought to my attention, that the psychologist is not there on a frequent basis. Very rarely, a psychologist goes to the site, and by the same time the children are not assisted at the centre. The children have to be taken out of the centre. Those are just real concerns that are brought to my attention by parents and by Northerners in the Northwest Territories. How often is a qualified psychologist on site on any given basis, on a yearly basis? I'd like to know how many times that individual or that psychologist visits the centre.

HON. DIANE THOM: That's a great question; something that I can't get back to the Member right now, but I do want to say that the Northwest Territories Health and Social Services, the Yellowknife region holds the contract with the UP Community Services, and this is something we can work with the contractor on to have a look at.

MR. LAFFERTY: This particular facility holds most of the Aboriginal clientele throughout the Northwest Territories and a lot of them came from my region, as well, the Tlicho region. I'd like to know: what kinds of programs are available to these high-risk clients with respect to Aboriginal programming from a northern perspective?

HON. DIANE THOM: The Territorial Treatment Centre provides specialty services for up to eight children. Currently, there are four in attendance at the facility. Right now, the programming we deliver to the clients daily includes recreation, cultural, and therapeutic activities, and these are scheduled throughout the week.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Final supplementary. Member for Monfwi.

MR. LAFFERTY: Masi, Madam Speaker. I believe we need to do more work in this area, improvements, so I would like to suggest one area. So far, from what I've heard, I'm voicing concerns for these individuals who cannot speak for themselves. Their parents, their family members

came to me, so I'm raising that issue. We are currently being dictated to by a southern firm, I believe it's called Bosco Homes, on how to run this centre. After all these years, why haven't we got a northern contractor providing these valuable services to our children, to provide northern perspectives? Masi, Madam Speaker.

HON. DIANE THOM: I get what the Member is saying and, to be honest, this Territorial Treatment Centre is something that I have just been recently briefed on; as far as this morning, actually. It is something that, if we have children in care, I think it's important that we design some of our programming that is culturally relevant, that we improve services, and that we have a look at what are some of the culturally relevant services that are applicable to those clients who are in care right now. I understand that the age group is quite, you know, young ages that are in the facility.

In regard to the contract, this is something that I'm not fully aware on the length of the contract or what are some of the rules or any of the stuff that is in the contract. I'm sorry, Madam Speaker, but it's something I can look into, and I understand the frustration from the Member. I can get back to the Member on some of the details. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Time for oral questions has expired; we'll be moving on. Item 11, written questions. Member for Tu Nedhe-Willideh.

Written Questions

WRITTEN QUESTION 6-19(2): EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES

MR. NORN: Mahsi cho, Madam Speaker. I have some written questions on educational facilities directed toward the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment:

1. What standards or methods do the Department of Education, Culture and Employment have or use to assess whether educational facilities meet the physical requirements for existing educational priorities and teaching methods?
2. Has the Department of Education, Culture and Employment conducted an audit of the existing learning space at Kalemi Dene School to determine whether the present-day educational priorities and teaching methods are being met for both the community at large and the Department of Education, Culture and Employment?
3. What plans, if any, including design documents, is the Department of Education,

Culture and Employment in possession or aware of for future expansions to Kalemi Dene School, i.e., classrooms and a gym, in Ndilo?

4. Ecole Allain St-Cyr in Yellowknife was granted approval to for a new gymnasium, despite not meeting the Department of Education, Culture and Employment's Capital Standards and Criteria subsection 4.3, which determines when a school is considered in need of a new gym based on the number of student enrollees, based on charter-protected language rights. Will the Department of Education, Culture and Employment, in tandem with other departments, consider putting similar language safeguards in place for schools that teach Indigenous languages in the Northwest Territories, given that our territory has 11 official languages in total?

Mahsi cho, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Tu Nedhe-Willideh. Written questions. Item 12, returns to written questions. Item 13, replies to the Commissioner's address. Item 14, petitions. Item 15, tabling of documents. Minister for Health and Social Services.

Tabling of Documents

TABLED DOCUMENT 47-19(2): "OUR EVER AWESOME NWT BRUSHING SONG!" BOOK BY RICHARD VAN CAMP AND NEIVA MATEUS

HON. DIANE THOM: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I wish to table the following document: "Our Ever Awesome NWT Brushing Song!" book by Richard Van Camp and Neiva Mateus. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Tabling of documents. Item 16, notices of motion. Item 17, motions. Item 18, notices of motion for first reading of bills. Item 19, first reading of bills. Item 20, second reading of bills. Item 21, consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters: Tabled Document 30-19(2), Main Estimates 2020-2021; and Tabled Document 43-19(2); Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 1, 2020-2021.

By the authority given to me as Speaker by Motion 1-19(2), I hereby authorize the House to sit beyond the daily hours of adjournment to consider business before the House. I will now have the Member for Yellowknife Centre in the chair.

Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): What is the wish of committee, Mr. Norn?

MR. NORN: Mahsi cho, Madam Chair. Committee wishes to deal with Tabled Document 30-19(2), Main Estimates, 2020-2021, with the Department of Justice, and then the Department of Education, Culture and Employment. Mahsi cho, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Mr. Norn. We will resume that work after a short recess.

---SHORT RECESS

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Good afternoon, colleagues. Colleagues, we are considering the budget for the Department of Justice. We left off on page 279. I'm wondering what the wish of the committee is with the Department of Justice. Mr. Norn.

COMMITTEE MOTION 3-19(2):
TABLED DOCUMENT 30-19(2): MAIN
ESTIMATES 2020-2021 – JUSTICE – DEFERRAL
OF FURTHER CONSIDERATION OF THE
ESTIMATES FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF
JUSTICE,
CARRIED

MR. NORN: Mahsi cho, Madam Chair. I move that this committee defer further consideration of the estimates for the Department of Justice at this time. Mahsi cho, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Mr. Norn. I see the motion is being distributed. Is there any discussion on this motion? Seeing none, can we vote on this motion? All those in favour, please indicate on the motion to defer further consideration of the estimates for the Department of Justice. All those in favour? All those opposed? Motion is carried.

---Carried

We will defer further consideration of the Department of Justice. We will now turn to the Department of Education, Culture and Employment. Does the Minister have any opening remarks?

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Yes, I do, Madam Chair, thank you. I am here to present the 2020-2021 Main Estimates for the Department of Education, Culture and Employment. Overall, the department's estimates propose an increase of \$8.858 million, or 2.7 percent, over the 2019-2020 Main Estimates. These estimates support our fiscal objectives to prioritize responsible and strategic spending while

matching the modest expected revenue growth over the coming year.

The increase is primarily related to forced growth funding. The proposed estimates reflect:

- \$5.866 million for collective bargaining increases in the department, Aurora College, and education bodies;
- \$2.033 million to address increased demand on the Income Security Program;
- \$269,000 to provide for an adjustment to the funding provided to education bodies for student transportation; and
- \$129,000 for a new time-limited position to address the increased volume of requests from the public for day school student records.

The proposed estimates also reflect a total increase of \$1.052 million to continue initiatives approved in prior years. This amount is comprised of:

- \$604,000 for the expansion of the Northern Distance Learning program into 20 communities in 2020-2021;
- \$319,000 for the continued implementation of a Territorial Student Support Team that provides specialized health and mental health supports and guidance for school staff programming for students with complex needs; and
- \$129,000 for the continued development of a grade 11 and grade 12 Northern Studies curriculum.

The increase is slightly offset by a decrease of \$636,000 in total to reflect funding scheduled to sunset on March 31, 2020. The sunsets reflect year-over-year changes in departmental activities under both the Canada-NWT Workforce Development Agreement and the Canada-NWT Early Learning and Child Care Agreement; the ending of time-limited funding to assist education bodies to implement safe school plans; and the year-over-year changes in departmental activities of the Skills 4 Success territorial support team.

These estimates continue to support the priorities of the 19th Legislative Assembly by:

- increasing student outcomes by providing students with access to high-quality education and supports, regardless of the community they live in or the size of their school;
- increasing employment in small communities through strategic partnership with federal and Indigenous governments;

- advancing universal childcare by working with the federal government and childcare operators to increase availability and reduce the costs of childcare in all our communities; and
- working toward the creation of a polytechnic university by continuing engagement with Indigenous governments, communities, industry, and other key stakeholder to inform wide-ranging improvements to Aurora College's governance, programs, and students supports.

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

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Minister. Do you have any witnesses you wish to bring into the House?

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Yes, I do.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you. Sergeant-at-Arms, please escort the witnesses into the Chamber. Would the Minister please introduce his witnesses.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. To my left is Ms. Rita Mueller, the deputy minister of the department; on my right is Mr. Sam Shannon, assistant deputy minister of Corporate Services; on my far right is Mr. John MacDonald, the assistant deputy minister of Education and Culture; and, not sitting with us right now but waiting in the witness room for his time to shine, is Mike Saturnino, the assistant deputy minister of Income Security and Advanced Education, who I will, with your permission, call upon at the appropriate time. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Minister. Members, we will now turn to the main estimates document, and I will open the floor to general comments on this department, Department of Education, Culture and Employment. Are there any general comments on this department's budget? Member for Kam Lake.

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I guess just a general comment that might not be expected, but I will say, just for the record, that, compared to some of the other increases that budget saw, it was somewhat disappointing that the education department saw the lowest percent increase. I know that a lot of the increase was due to forced growth, but there was some addition of increases across departments, and it would have been nice to have seen that reflected instead in the Department of Education, Culture and Employment, especially with our interest in increasing trades and increasing graduation rates across the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Member for Kam Lake. Minister, would you like to respond?

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, and thank you to the Member for the comment. With such a large department, with such a large budget, an increase that would be a large percentage in another department might not show up as such a large increase here, but I appreciate the Member's support for education and advancing the priorities of the Assembly. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Minister. Any further general comments on ECE? Seeing none, we will now move into the detail. We will go back to the main page, and we will pick up at the first of the key activities, corporate management. Are there Members who would like to comment on corporate management key activity for ECE? Are there any comments on corporate management of ECE? Seeing none, I'm going to call the page. Education, Culture and Employment, corporate management, operations expenditure summary, 2020-2021 Main Estimates, total, \$10,059,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, committee. Let's now turn to page 35, corporate activity, culture, heritage and languages. Program detail begins on page 36. Are there any questions on the corporate activity, culture, heritage and languages? Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. I'm just wondering if the Minister or staff can tell us about the feasibility study to retrofit the museum. What is the status of that work, and is there a plan to actually retrofit the museum? I know we're talking about the O and M budget, but I think this feasibility study was partly funded out of the O and M budget last year. Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, and I appreciate the Member bringing this up. I know he has always been a strong advocate for the museum and all it does. As many of the Members know, the museum is getting on in age right now. I did a tour of there not long ago. There are sections of it where there are dehumidifiers that have to be emptied nightly by security guards. The space is an issue. The Prince of Wales Heritage Centre serves a central agency function for the GNWT, storing many of its archives, so we have a lot to store. In addition to all of the cultural treasures that we have in the territory, there are just a lot of documents, and space has become an issue.

As to the feasibility study, I know that is a capital issue, but perhaps I could have my assistant deputy minister, Mr. MacDonald, elaborate on where we are with that.

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

MR. MACDONALD: Thank you, Madam Chair. At this point in time, ECE has completed the functional program assessment of the facility, and we are looking at different alternatives for what the new facility would look like. We are hoping to have a schematic design as well as class D estimates in place by April 2020, this spring, and present that to our Minister for discussion and for some direction for us to proceed after that. Thank you, Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Mr. MacDonald. Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair, and thanks to the Minister and his staff for that information. Can the Minister commit to sharing that study with the standing committee, and options that the department might come up with, before they go to Cabinet for a final decision? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. Yes, that can be shared with standing committee. I think it likely has to be shared with the Cabinet, but not for decision, prior to going to standing committee, but I have no problem doing that. Thank you.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. Yes, I really appreciate that. I guess one of the things that is sort of in the back of my mind is the fact that we don't have a territorial visitors' centre. If anybody has been to Whitehorse, they actually have a spectacular one that is right in their downtown area, and it does serve the interests of the whole Yukon. Is there some thought being put into, perhaps, different partnerships or co-uses or however we may want to frame it, in terms of other government needs, given sort of the central location and the function that the museum has played over the years in terms of tourism and so on? Can the Minister tell us whether those sorts of possibilities are being looked at? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. Anything is possible, but for details on what sort of discussions have happened, I will turn it over to my

deputy minister, who is well versed in that. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Sorry, my deputy minister, Ms. Mueller.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Minister. Deputy Minister.

MS. MUELLER: Thank you, Madam Chair. As the Member knows, right now our museum is very well visited over the year. Many, many tourists, many of our NWT residents have pleasure in going into that beautiful facility, but, when looking at the future, there is a lot of possibility to even create more spaces, in a variety of ways, that would be open to the public and also to specialized groups, arts groups and so on, so that is being discussed. Primarily, though, a lot of the work that has been done to date is really looking at the functions and the requirements that we have for archives and for the collections that we have and ensuring that we have the proper air systems and so on, so that is really an important feature of our discussion to date. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Deputy Minister. Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. Yes, I guess the other thing that is sort of bubbling away in the back of my mind, too, is that, with a polytechnic university on the horizon, Yellowknife does need a real campus and that it would be great to be able to combine maybe the sort of things that could and should happen in a polytechnic with some of the things that do happen at the museum, as well. Because there is certainly a lot of interest in language revitalization, and the museum and some of the staff there do take strong roles with that, given the artifacts and some of the heritage items there and so on. I hope that is something else that the department will consider, is links with a potential polytechnic university. Is that something I can get some comment on? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. The Member was talking about synergies between a polytechnic university and the museum. I haven't really put much thought into that, but I think that would be an avenue, perhaps, to pursue, especially in terms of capital funding. You know, the federal government or other entities might be more open to supporting a museum project if it does have that association, given that there is also a research component, as well. The territorial archeologist is in that facility, as well.

I just want to temper everyone's expectations here, that this would not be a cheap build. We have a lot of needs in the territory, and a building of this magnitude, that has to be built to these specifications, would be quite expensive, so I am not saying that this was going to happen anytime soon, even though something has to happen soon, but I just want to let the Members know that this is not a done deal and that it's going to be a large, large expense if it happens. Thank you.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. Yes, and I take what the Minister says, that there are some very specialized requirements for a museum. There is also a great example in Whitehorse where Yukon archives are co-located with the Yukon College. They have an arts centre there. It's a wonderful kind of facility. It's a little bit out of the downtown area, but I think there is another example of how we can do things. I just want to move on to one other question, and that is the name of this facility, the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre. Is that something that we might look at, you know, finding a better name for, something that reflects our culture here more appropriately? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. That, it seems like it would be a simple fix, but for some of the details on this, with your indulgence, I would like to hand it over to Mr. MacDonald.

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

MR. MACDONALD: Thank you, Madam Chair. This is definitely an interesting question in terms of protocol. One of the things that we have wanted to look into is whether a name change for the facility would trigger any issues with His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales, other issues such as that, so, from a protocol perspective, we are still in the research stage, to try to understand what that would entail and who to actually speak to. However, we are hoping to wait until after there is a bit more clarity on the planning study, itself, before we really dive into some of those questions. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Mr. MacDonald. Do you have any further questions, Member for Frame Lake?

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair, no, other than I appreciate the information that has been provided by the staff. They know that I am a strong supporter of the facility and the functions that it performs, and I look forward to the next phase of

the life of that particular institution. Thanks, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

MR. NORN: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just looking at the operations expenditure summary, looking at the 2018 actuals, and there is a decrease to now, the mains, of about \$480,000 for the Indigenous languages and education secretariat. Would the Minister be able to explain that decrease in the last couple of years? Mahsi cho.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh. Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. Just one moment if you don't mind, Madam Chair? My apologies.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. That relates to the grants that go out through that particular division, and there were actually more applications and more money out the door than was budgeted for, and so it's not a decrease in budget. The budget remained the same, but we actually spent more than we budgeted for in the year the Member is referencing. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Minister. Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

MR. NORN: Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you for the response from the Minister. That's good that that's the case. Just moving along here, I'm looking at one other line here that kind of caught my eye. There's also a variance here from the 2018-2019 actuals, and the mains for this year for fees and payments, and 2018-2019 was \$795,000, and now, this year, it's \$371,000. Can the Minister explain the difference in that line is about? Mahsi cho.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh. Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. That's actually related to the overpayments referenced earlier by the Member, so the additional \$500,000 that went out the door with the Indigenous language and education secretariat, that's reflected in that same number right there, as well as the changes in the other program detail lines.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Minister. Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

MR. NORN: Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you for the response from the Minister. I have nothing further.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you. Are there further questions on this section? Member for Yellowknife North.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I had to Google, just so everyone is aware. Charles is the Prince of Wales. I didn't actually know that. I would be very happy if we changed the name of that. Talking about the Crown is one of my favourite topics. Madam Chair, my question is, I really think and need to emphasize that our museum is for the entire territory, and we have some of the most unique, cultural history in the world here, and our museum's job is essential to preserving that. I wanted to speak briefly about revenues.

I love the museum. Increasingly, it has more and more tourists going through it, and I want to emphasize that I think it should always be free for the Northwest Territories residents. I look at all the tourists who go in there, and it's completely free, and I wonder why we're not making some money off of that, and perhaps it could be in a revolving fund or something. My question is: has there ever been any consideration about charging those tourists to access the museum?

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

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. Currently, the museum is free for everyone. It's by donation. I am sure many people, if not most people, don't donate anything, but as far as the history of those discussions, if you don't mind, I can hand it over to my deputy minister, Ms. Mueller.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Minister. Deputy Minister.

MS. MUELLER: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes, we have discussed, for a number of years now, the pros and cons of having a fee for outside NWT residents, and to date, the discussion has always been that it's a place where people can really learn about our territory, about the people, and the culture. To date, the feeling has been that donations give people an opportunity, if they wish to, donate what they can. They can, and if not, they can still come and enjoy without having a fee. The reason for that is, a fee often does present barriers for certain individuals or families from coming in and participating in the activities as much as they want. Thank you.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm happy to hear those conversations we're having. I think I'm kind of on the side that we should be charging. Can I get a sense, do we know what the donation total is on an annual basis?

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

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. I'd like to hand it back to Ms. Mueller.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Minister. Deputy Minister.

MS. MUELLER: Thank you, Madam Chair. It does fluctuate, but more and more, each year, we have more visitors going through the museum, and on average, it's around \$10,000 or \$11,000 that we do receive in donations, and we put that money back into our education programming. That's how we use those funds. Thank you.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. This is an issue I will look into further and have further conversations with whether we can either increase that donation amount or look what other museums are doing. I wanted to move onto the line item \$6,285,000 for Indigenous languages. Can I just confirm that this is all GNWT funding, or is this also federal funding in there?

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

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. Could the Member please clarify which page he's on?

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Page 37.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: If you don't mind, I'd like to hand it over to Mr. MacDonald.

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

MR. MACDONALD: Thank you, Madam Chair. If the Member wouldn't mind, just pointing me to that line item again? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Mr. MacDonald. Member for Yellowknife North.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm looking at the funding for Indigenous languages, \$6,285,000. I believe this is largely flow through money to Indigenous governments to run their programming. I know there's been a number of federal increases to Indigenous languages programming. I'm just wondering if this is all GNWT money or this includes the federal funding that exists for Indigenous languages.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Member for Yellowknife North. Mr. MacDonald.

MR. MACDONALD: Thank you, Madam Chair. I believe this is the territorial funding. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Mr. MacDonald. Member for Yellowknife North.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm glad to see we're spending \$6,285,000 on Indigenous languages. I believe Mr. Norn already asked some questions about how this was oversubscribed one year. I know there's more and more federal money on the table, and I believe every time we invest in this, it allows our Indigenous governments to leverage that additional funding for Indigenous languages. I guess my question to the Minister is: are there any plans to increase this amount?

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

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. The funding is provided by the federal government, pursuant to an agreement that is ending this month, actually, I guess, March 31, 2020. Initial discussions from what we can tell, it looks like there will likely be a one-year extension of the status quo. After that, or during that time, we will enter into negotiations. We will be looking for more money, obviously. We always do. We still have to figure out what the feds want to do. With the reorganization of federal departments, we're not quite sure what their direction is going to be. What they might like to do is fund directly to the Indigenous governments and not flow through the government, so that's an option as well. We're still in the very early stages of this. The bottom line is that we would like more money for Indigenous languages. I always appreciate it when the Members bring up this topic and discuss it because I think it's vital to so many people in the territory, and something that we need to focus on sooner than later. Thank you

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Minister. Further questions? Member for Yellowknife North.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate those comments, and the standing committee will be taking out the Official Languages Act, so I look forward to continued conversations. I, ultimately, believe that we don't necessarily need to be the flow through. If the feds are willing to fund the Indigenous governments directly, that's great.

I wanted to switch gears here and talk about the line items. Arts, organizations and operations funding and the NWT arts council. There's a number of fundings for arts here. Just, generally, do we have a sense for every dollar we invest in the arts, what the return on investment is?

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

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. Currently, we do not, and I can't speak for ITI because ITI is also involved in the arts, but that is something that we are looking at with ITI in the development of the new arts strategy. That's something I've always been critical of myself. I appreciate art. I appreciate artists. If we're doing it as an investment in the economy, are we getting a good bang for our buck? We're doing that work to find out. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate it, and I look forward to seeing that. I believe it is quite a high return on investment, especially up here, once again, if you get an artist to meet certain qualifications, they can go access Canadian Council for the Arts funding.

I just want to get a sense of how much of this arts funding is for artists in communities, because I believe that's really the market we need to look to develop.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Member for Yellowknife Centre. Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. I don't have a breakdown in front of me of the distribution of these funds, but that's definitely something we can get to Member. We might be able to get it by the end of the day. I know we have people watching and working furiously and sending us emails. We can get that done, and hopefully, I'll be able to have an answer for you later on. Thank you.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you. Are there further questions on this item? Member for Thebacha.

MS. MARTSELOS: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just want to reiterate what one of my colleagues said. I would appreciate that, I see the NWT Arts Council, the funding remains the same throughout, and also the Indigenous languages. When you're having flow-through money, I think it's extremely important that we increase them, because the communities are affected. We have a lot of very talented people in the communities, and I think that it's a positive thing. Almost every weekend there are different arts things that go on, even at the museum in Fort Smith. Languages are extremely important, and the cultural aspect of it, to Salt River and to the Metis Nation, and also to even the Francophones. I'd like to see, in future budgets, that these two line items are increased. Okay? I'm going to be accepting

them as they are now, of course, but I just want to make sure that you understand how important these are to the outside smaller communities and regions. I know that there's a lot of access to these two line items, especially in the community of Thebacha.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Member for Thebacha, did you have a question you wanted the Minister to answer? Okay. Thank you. Minister, would you like to respond?

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, and I appreciate the Member's comments. Just this upcoming weekend is the K'amba Carnival in Hay River, so we talk about culture and language and arts, and it's very close to home. I appreciate the Member's comments, and I would love to see increases across the board in all of the great things that we do. We'll have those discussions over the next year about how we're going to allocate our funds. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Minister. Member for Kam Lake.

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I have a couple of questions, and I think I'm going to start on language since we're there. The Minister had mentioned an influx of federal dollars available to Indigenous languages. Last year, in 2019, the federal government deemed 2019 the international year of Indigenous languages, and they opened up a federal funding pot of \$333,700,000 that they were going to distribute over five years. I'm wondering if our government was able to provide, or does provide, any support to Indigenous governments to access that federal funding. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Member for Kam Lake. Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. Our government has not accessed that, to date. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Minister. Member for Kam Lake.

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. My question was: do we provide support to Indigenous governments in any way possible, in any of our capacities, to be able to provide support for Indigenous governments to access that funding? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Member for Kam Lake. Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: To my deputy minister, Ms. Mueller.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Minister. Deputy Minister.

MS. MUELLER: Thank you, Madam Chair. In total for Indigenous languages and supporting Indigenous languages, we had, in 2019-2020, about \$20 million. It's supporting a variety of different initiatives, both in the schools and outside the schools. We do distribute approximately close to \$5 million to help support all the various Indigenous governments' language plans that they have, that they've developed, and they've done that in a five-year plan at a time. That's what we do. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Deputy Minister. Member for Kam Lake.

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. For my next question, I'm going to go back to the conversation about the NWT Arts Council. I know that there is an arts strategy currently in the works in conjunction with ITI, and I'm wondering when we can expect to see that. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Member for Kam Lake. Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. We hope to have that ready for tabling in the upcoming May-June session. Of course, prior to that, it will be making its way to committee for comments, feedback, et cetera. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Minister. Member for Kam Lake.

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. The next two line items I'd like to talk about are the Indigenous broadcasting and Indigenous scholarships lines, which seem to have disappeared from the budget. Is that because they have been moved to another place within the budget? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Member for Kam Lake. Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. I know that we still offer scholarships for Indigenous languages, and we have Indigenous language broadcasting money in the contributions section, instead of the grants section. There's been a bit of a reallocation. I believe these were program-specific, the ones from 2018-2019. I can get more details on that, though, for the Member, if that's okay, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Minister. Member for Kam Lake.

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much for that, Madam Chair. I'd appreciate that. I just want to make sure that we haven't gotten rid of our

Indigenous language scholarships. Speaking of which, I'm wondering if the Department of Education, Culture and Employment has any type of formal interpreter or translator program available, given our need for cultural resurgence within the Northwest Territories and for professional translators. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Member for Kam Lake. Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. We have a number of programs that we are undertaking. I might as well just hand it over to my deputy minister, I think. She's very involved with this one, and she might get a more detailed answer. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Minister. Deputy Minister.

MS. MUELLER: Thank you, Madam Chair. There is a lot of different work that we are doing in supporting the revitalization of Indigenous languages. We very much know, and we hear from our Indigenous government partners, that, ultimately, we need to build up the cohort of translators and interpreters throughout the Northwest Territories, in all of our Indigenous languages, especially in light of so many of our proficient translators and interpreters right now are close to retirement.

With that in mind, though, we are in a place where we're trying to build not only people's interests, but, I would say, their beginning levels of proficiency, so that they have the foundation in order to be able to take a translator and interpreter type of program. We have been working with the University of Victoria, which has really exciting programs in Indigenous language revitalization, from entry-level certificates all the way to master's degree programs. They've been a good partner to us, and we continue to strengthen that partnership.

We also look to Aurora College as a partner to be able to deliver those programs, so kind of a three-way partnership between UVic, Aurora College, and our departments supporting that. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Deputy Minister. Member for Kam Lake.

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much for that, Madam Chair. I really appreciate that information, and I think it will be really interesting to be able to see how that program is doing and the graduates that come out of it over the course of this government. I think that's very exciting. I am wondering if the Minister would be willing to reflect on the significant increase in travel under the culture, heritage, and languages page, which went from actuals in 2018-2019 of \$177,000, to the main

estimates of \$368,000, and I'm wondering if the Minister can speak to how that will improve the cultural, heritage, and languages program, and how that is a benefit to the people of the Northwest Territories. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Member for Kam Lake. Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, that increase to travel was to support training opportunities for Indigenous governments. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Minister. Member for Kam Lake. Further comments on this section? Member for Hay River South.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. With respect to page 37, the arts council of \$700,000, also the contributions for the \$460,000 for the arts organizations operating funding and the support to northern performers, \$101,000. Are these funds totally subscribed, and how are they split up around the NWT? Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Member for Hay River South. Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. I would like to hand that to my deputy minister if you don't mind.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Minister. Deputy Minister.

MS. MUELLER: Thank you, Madam Chair. In response, looking at the arts council and the funding available, the \$700,000, that is done by application. Then, a committee goes through all those applicants. It is done twice a year so that people have an opportunity throughout the year to put in their applications. Then, all the funding is distributed based on the applications and the criteria as it was deemed appropriate by the arts council. As far as the other grants that we have, we really do distribute that by application. People apply, indicate what they would like the funding for, and the funding available is distributed. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Deputy Minister. Member for Hay River South.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I guess part of my question was: how was this spread across the NWT? The funding, is it located, say, mostly in Yellowknife? Is that where most of the applications come from, or is it equally distributed? Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Member for Hay River South. Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. We are working on gathering that information. To further answer the

Member's earlier question, these pots of money are all fully subscribed. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Minister. Member for Hay River South.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. We have \$1 million here, roughly. Is there any kind of full-time employment created? Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Member for Hay River South. Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. Part of the work we are doing with the new arts strategy will be to make sure that we are quantifying exactly what that is. I can hand it to my deputy minister. She might have some more detail. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Minister. Deputy Minister.

MS. MUELLER: Thank you very much. Just to give you an indication of the number of applicants from across the territories: in 1920, we received 120 applications through the NWT Arts Council from all over the North in a variety of different genres of arts. That included, out of that 120, 66 were individual artists applying for funding, and 54 applications were through organizations applying for funding. To go back to the question about whether it is distributed by region, no, the funding is available. It is by application. It is open to everybody in the Northwest Territories, individuals and organizations. That is then reviewed by the arts council, and then they are distributed, the grants. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Deputy Minister. Member for Hay River South.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. If I can get those numbers of exactly where the money lands after the applications are decided on? Next area I would like to talk about is the heritage centres. I think, in there, we are talking about emerging heritage centres. I think about Hay River with our little centre there. Does the department encourage the preservation of artifacts in the local and regional communities, and how so? Hay River, for instance, I will use that as an example. We have had people bringing in artifacts and different items, and we store them there. The funding that I see that you have allocated here is \$491,000, which doesn't appear to be a lot of money. Is that for Yellowknife, or is that for other organizations or communities, as well? Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Member for Hay River South. Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: That is distributed to heritage centres outside of Yellowknife. For example, Hay River received \$60,000 a year; I believe Norman Wells receives \$118,000; Fort Simpson, \$55,000; Fort Smith, \$198,000; and, actually, the Yellowknife Historical Society received \$60,000 of that. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Minister. Member for Hay River South.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I think part of our priorities is tourism and increasing tourism outside Yellowknife. Is the department going to look at increasing the amount of funds going to these regional centres? Again, I will use Hay River as an example. The heritage centre had applied for \$180,000, but that was through ITI. They got it knocked down to less than half. I am wondering if they can go to one pot and to the other, which might be this one, to get some more money, because I think there is a real opportunity there on the tourism side in the smaller communities, but we have to have something to give the tourists when they arrive. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Member for Hay River South. Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. We are definitely putting thought into that. Our mandate is very heavy on increasing tourism outside of Yellowknife, helping build up local tourism infrastructure. That isn't specifically through ECE, but we all work together. The arts strategy is also going to look at how we can build on the strengths in the different communities. The regional economic plans that I think are happening throughout the departments will also inform that.

In Hay River, there is a great facility. It is an old building, and it needs some capital work. It would be a shame to just see that place shut down because they didn't have that funding, because they see a lot of people come through those doors every year. I take the Member's point that we need to support those types of organizations that do drive tourism. When people leave and they tell their friends about Hay River, I am sure they always speak about the museum. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Minister. Member for Hay River South.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes. That is my concern, that building is old, not that old. I worked in there when I was 12 years old. Anyway, it does need work. There are a lot of good things in there. There is a lot of participation, a lot of volunteers. We have also expanded. The operation

has been expanded to include a part of the old Hay River hotel, which needs work, and more room, as well, for artifacts or for crafts and for those type of items. I would encourage your department and the Cabinet, as well, to look at how we can maybe provide more funding to the regions to expand. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Member for Hay River South. Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. There are always plans to do more. It often comes down to money. The government has been supportive of that centre. The Member mentioned the old Hay River hotel. That was donated by the GNWT. I believe there is a marine vessel that is making its way over to that museum at some point in the near future, as well. That came from the GNWT. We are contributing where we can, but I agree with the Member that it would be nice if we could do more to support those organizations. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Minister. Members, are there any further questions for this key activity, culture, heritage and languages? Seeing none, I am going to call the page. Education, Culture and Employment, culture, heritage and languages, operations expenditure summary, 2020-2021 Main Estimates, \$18,613,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, committee. Committee, we will now turn to page 40. Early childhood and school services, beginning on page 40 with an information item on page 44. Member for Kam Lake.

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. This time around, I might start at the bottom of the page. I have the same question in regard to travel here. I am wondering if the Minister would mind speaking to the changes in travel costs. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Member for Kam Lake. Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. Recently, we started working with the territorial support team, which is a group of professionals centred in Yellowknife. There are three positions right now, and they assist teachers in schools with instructions for children with higher needs. There is a speech pathologist, occupational therapist, and a mental health specialist, and they travel around the territory to the schools to do visits. They also offer remote support through telephone, email, et cetera, but that's what that increase is reflective of. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Minister. Member for Kam Lake.

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I am very supportive of this initiative, and I'm wondering if there are plans within Education, Culture and Employment's long-term strategy to expand this program to other regions of the Northwest Territories so that, for example, they have a team based out of Inuvik? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Member for Kam Lake. Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. That would be ideal. That is what we would hope for, that we could have these supports in every community, or every region, at least, but the fact is that it's expensive. The cost of travel would be dwarfed by the cost of having these people in all of these regions. I'm not sure if that answers the question. We would love to, but it's not feasible at this point. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Member for Kam Lake.

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Have the Department of Education and the Department of Health and Social Services sat down together and looked at the cost in regard to medical travel for these types of services, for students who are travelling outside of their home community to places like Yellowknife or to places like Edmonton to receive these types of services, to see if the cost can be offset by costs we're already putting out for medical travel? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you, Member for Kam Lake. Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. No, we haven't done that work. This is particularly a team to support the principals, teachers, program support teachers. It's an interesting thought, and we can look into it, but we haven't done that to date. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Member for Kam Lake.

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I'm going to move up to the line item for fees and payments. The line item for fees and payments has changed significantly over the years, in a positive direction. It's gone from \$2.475 to \$4.19 million. I'm wondering if the Minister can elaborate a little bit on that line item. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you, Member. Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. I'm guessing we bought something big. If you give me a moment, I

might be able to find out what that was. What that is, is a reallocation of funds from fees and payments to contract services, and those contract services are used to pay for the itinerant team, which is child and youth counsellors who travel to different communities. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Member for Kam Lake.

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much for that, Mr. Chair. I'm going to keep moving up the page, here, in the interest of time. My next question is in regard to inclusive schooling. Any of the educators I've spoken with across the Northwest Territories, or even within our school boards here in Yellowknife, have said that the need for funds for inclusive schooling is probably their greatest funding need, and I see that the line items are fairly status quo here for the inclusive schooling line. I'm wondering, given that our need for inclusive schooling continues to go up, and the supports required for students in the Northwest Territories continue to go up, how does the Department of Education, Culture and Employment feel that they will be able to meet the needs of students across the Northwest Territories with a status quo budget? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you, Member. Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. We have a line that says "inclusive schooling," but that doesn't mean that all of our efforts related to inclusive schooling are contained in that line item. We talked about the child and youth care counsellors; we talked about the territorial support team; what we're doing with education renewal and innovation. All of that is related to this idea of inclusive schooling. As well, the mandate talks about renewing the Education Act, doing work to review inclusive schooling and address some of the issues that have emerged over the years. Virtually everything we do in education in the JK to 12 system is to address inclusive schooling, because it's not just a thing; it's a way that we operate and it's a way of educating. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Member for Kam Lake.

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I notice, on this page, there are the NWTTA Professional Improvement dollars, as well. I am wondering if we will expect to see a review of the STIP days come out of the Department of education this year. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you, Member. Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. STIP, yes. The review that was legislated is scheduled to be

complete by the end of the calendar year. It's always an ongoing process of determining how this is working. I mean, each calendar year, or each school year, schools have to fit this into their schedule, and so we've been learning every year. Part of the education renewal and innovation report that just came out was a review of STIP, as well, so we've had that review after a few years, and we're going to have a final review at the end of this calendar year. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Member for Kam Lake.

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I appreciate that response. My next question is in regard to early learning and childcare. One of the priorities of the 19th Legislative Assembly was affordable childcare, accessible and affordable childcare, and I notice that the budget for early learning and childcare has come down a little bit. I'm just wondering if the Minister would speak to that, please. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you, Member. Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. That is due to a sunset of the Early Learning and Child Care Agreement with the Government of Canada. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Member for Kam Lake.

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. My last question, and I'll let someone else talk here for a bit: does the Department of Education, Culture and Employment do exit interviews with its teachers? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you, Member. Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. The department doesn't really employ teachers; the teachers are employed by the education councils and education authorities, but we do teacher surveys. Perhaps for more detail I can go to Mr. MacDonald.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Mr. MacDonald?

MR. MACDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes, just to build on what the Minister said, the teachers are employed by the various education bodies across the territory, so ECE does not participate in the hiring process or exit process for those individuals. However, we do conduct teacher surveys to help understand what types of issues are working for them, as well as where their challenges may be. In fact, in that recent education renewal and innovation evaluation, as well as in that STIP evaluation, there were teacher survey

components to that, so that we could help understand what some of the challenges were that our teachers were experiencing. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you, Mr. MacDonald. Next, we have the Member for Yellowknife Centre.

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I have a number of questions that relate to early learning and childcare. I understand that the three-year agreement of federal money to create new spaces and lower fees is just about ready to expire at the end of this month. Can the Minister say what was achieved in the first three years of this agreement? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you, Member. Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. That's a good question, and those are the kinds of questions that we have to answer every time we spend money, what was actually achieved by this. This is a difficult file, in many ways, because there are so many barriers to improving access and affordability. Some of those are the fact that it's difficult to find people to do this work, and so, you know, wage subsidies that are offered through this program help to retain employees for daycares who may have otherwise not continued to be employed. Is that concrete evidence? Perhaps we need to do a better job of evaluating this. I can go to my deputy minister for some more information. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Deputy Minister.

MS. MUELLER: Thank you very much. For this past three-year agreement, we really focused on trying to strengthen many of the programs that we had. For example, some of the initiatives were really around instructor training, trying to ensure that all of our licensed early childhood practitioners had opportunities for training in a variety of ways, in ways that they did not necessarily have before. We also focused on developing culturally appropriate materials, age-appropriate materials for all of our licensed centres, and ensuring that they had that consistently across all programs, which, normally, in the past, some of them would not have been able to have access to. We also really looked at, within this, to see what we could do to start the process of developing an early learning curriculum for our licensed program, so basically a foundation, to really look at what does it mean to have a quality program, and to try to engage all of our partners in that. Then, we also were able to continue with a yearly symposium on early learning and child development and were able to bring in licensed staff to be able to participate in that; so, really, a lot

of our focus was training and development. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you, Deputy Minister. Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, and I believe the Member's questions were more focused on our mandate and increasing the availability and affordability. A lot of what we have done is focused on quality and shoring up the foundation of our childcare, but, to the point of increasing it, affordability and availability, you know there is still obviously much work to be done. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Member for Yellowknife Centre.

MS. GREEN: Yes, thank you. Just to clarify, my questions were really about the three-year agreement that is coming to an end and how to point the way forward. My recollection of that agreement was that there was going to be more money for training, for scholarships, for wage subsidies and so on. Do you have any figures about the uptake on that, whether we have more trained people, we have a more stable workforce? Is there any kind of measurement that shows the value for that money spent? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you, Member. Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. If I could hand it to Mr. MacDonald?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you. Mr. MacDonald.

MR. MACDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just with respect to the Early Learning and Child Care Agreement, we have an action plan associated with that agreement, that is a bilateral action plan with the Government of Canada, and we are obligated to report annually on the actions within that plan. That is a good place to highlight some of the commitments that we made to Canada in order to obtain that funding for the Northwest Territories. I would probably add that, in terms of strategy, how we have tried to deploy that funding on an annual basis over that three-year period is to enhance the programs and services that we provide. For example, the early childhood program, which is our key subsidy program for licensed childcare centres, we have increased the rates, with the intent of course to help stabilize, to reduce fees for parents, and to help ensure that those programs are sustainable in the long term. As we move into the next phase of that bilateral agreement, we will have more data and more information at our disposal to enable us to make good choices around childcare. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you, Mr. MacDonald. Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. If the Member is looking for metrics of how many scholarships, what we have done, the numbers involved, we will definitely put that together. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Member for Yellowknife Centre.

MS. GREEN: Yes, thank you for those responses. I would like to see the annual report on the action plan. I don't recall that was ever shared with the Standing Committee on Social Development, and it would be useful to see it. I understand the point of shoring up the current programming. I am not sure I understand so much developing curriculum for childcare. What I hear most often is that people find it difficult to obtain childcare and they find it unaffordable when it is available. As the Minister knows, there are a number of communities in the Northwest Territories, about a third of them, that do not have any childcare. My question is: how will the next agreement address questions around availability and affordability of childcare? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you, Member. Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, and I take the Member's point that, in the previous three years, a lot of the work was focused not on necessarily increasing availability and affordability but on shoring up the foundations and using early childcare as a way to educate our youth and to prepare them for school. However, going forward, we are mandated to increase availability and to increase affordability, so we have a number of mandate items directly related to that. In the negotiations of the new agreement, we will be pursuing those as our priorities. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Member for Yellowknife Centre.

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you to the Minister for that. Can the Minister say what stage the negotiations are at and when he expects the new agreement to be in place? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you, Member. Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. I think it might have to do with the federal election, but it's a bit of a waiting game right now. It's not just us. All of the territories and provinces are waiting to hear back from the federal government about what their offer is and what we could be negotiating for. Thank you. I don't have a timeline for the Member. I am sorry.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Member for Yellowknife Centre.

MS. GREEN: Yes, thank you. One of the discussions we had late in the last Assembly was about the possibility of rewriting the standards of space provided for childcare, in order to make it more accessible. As the Minister may recall, the standard for childcare space is akin to hospital space. It's a very high quality of space that is required. Not all communities have space available in that quality of building, so is there any development at all on the idea of making the space requirements for childcare more attainable? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you, Member. Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. If you'll indulge me, I will go back to the Member's previous comments about the Early Learning and Child Care Agreement annual report that is done by the department. That was tabled in the last Assembly, the last year of the last Assembly, so that should be readily available. In terms of the Member's present question, yes, we are doing that work of looking at the spaces available; what type of spaces we can use; you know, looking at whether or not we can use government infrastructure, looking at how, in conjunction with the Housing Corporation, homes can be used for spaces. We have to commit to ensuring that these spaces are safe. That is the primary goal. I would not say it's akin to hospital space, but there are high standards. That being said, we are always open to looking at those standards, re-evaluating those standards. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you, Minister. At this point, we will call a 10-minute recess or break.

---SHORT RECESS

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Members, I will now call the committee back to order. Next up, we have the Member for Nunakput.

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Education is very important across the North. Our education rates, our inclusive schooling needs across the territory, but over the course of this government's term, we will spend over \$70 million in forced growth for our UNW collective bargaining compared to our \$25 million that we have set aside for all of the 22 priorities that we put as 19 Members. It's only a third of what we're spending in the salaries of increases that are going to happen. You know, some of that money would have been much better and needed in early childhood and school services. Mr. Chair, it's more of a comment, but I think we

have to take a step back and take a good look at what we're doing here. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you, Member. Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you to the Member for the comment.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Member for Nunakput.

MR. JACOBSON: No. At least the Minister's hearing me loud and clear. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you, Member. The next will be the Member for Thebacha.

MS. MARTSELOS: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just want to ask a question to the Minister with regard to the territorial support team, and how many times they go into the communities. Because it's a territorial support team, I would like to know how many times they come to the community of Fort Smith?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you, Member. Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. It's on a referral basis, so it's not scheduled visits. It's based on the needs of the community. For some detail, I can go to the deputy minister. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Deputy Minister.

MS. MUELLER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The territorial team is available to all schools and all education bodies. It is based on referrals. What they do is they indicate through their superintendent a particular child that they would like to have help and support with. Often, it's initiated by the principal, and the program support teacher, and the classroom teacher. That support comes in a variety of ways. If the team is needed onsite, they'll go onsite. Often, they're helping through video conferencing and through teleconferencing as well, so that's daily. They might have multiple meetings with different schools, talking about different supports for various students. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you, Deputy Minister. Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Member for Thebacha.

MS. MARTSELOS: I guess a territorial support team, they're very hard to find qualified people like psychologists and a whole team to go into, to have

a team in every community which is ideal and that will never happen, but if the territorial support team is only done by referral, I think there should be a more organized group. The group should actually be doing every month or every two months, at least, into the community. When they're not there, I'm just wondering if the special needs children, the autism and all the special needs that we have at schools, are being financially looked after in a different way.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you, Member. Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. I appreciate what the Member is saying. It would be nice if we had the resources to send the team out to the regions on a regular basis, but the fact is, they just don't have the time. We don't have enough people. This is intended to augment what's already going on in the community, not to replace that. It's not the only service that these students would be getting. It's valuable. For the students who need it, it's very, very valuable for the students, the parents, and the teachers. I would love to do what the Member is asking and get them out into the different communities on a regular basis, but the fact is that we just don't have the power to do that, the number of people that we would need to do that. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Member for Thebacha.

MS. MARTSELOS: I'd like to ask the Minister: how could you call this a territorial support team if they're not able to go into the communities?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you, Member. Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. The territorial support team does go into the communities. They don't travel there on a regular basis. There are referrals. Based on those referrals, I believe there's been 42 in the last year, so there's been nine from the Beaufort Delta; there's been four in the Sahtu; the Deh Cho, Tlicho. They've been all over the entire territory. The largest number is in Yellowknife, but that's just because of the size of the population, but they do travel to every region. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Member for Thebacha.

MS. MARTSELOS: I have a question. We had a recent Auditor General's report, and I want to make sure that there's going to be enough financial allocation to fill those gaps at the DA level, so we could address some of those concerns in the Auditor General's report?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you, Member. Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. I agree. I want to make sure that we have the resources available to do that. Everyone knows what our fiscal situation is. Everyone knows how much is being committed to new initiatives. What the report of the auditor general says, and what the priorities of this Assembly say, and what the mandate of this government says is all the same thing essentially. It's mandating us to do what we do. The Department of Education, Culture and Employment is supposed to be increasing educational outcomes. It's supposed to be increasing early developmental index scores. Those are the things that we're supposed to do. Everything that we do is focused on that.

Sometimes it's not a matter of throwing money at it. It would make it easier, probably. If we don't have the money, we need to focus on making the kind of changes that are going to have the biggest impact. A lot of that is focusing on early childhood education so that we don't run into a lot of the problems that we're running into. We have to review the policies that we have. We have to review how we administer and how we dictate what inclusive schooling means and what it is. All those things don't necessarily take a lot of money although they do take money, but given the fact that we don't have the kind of money that I would love to see in education, we're going to have to do the best with what we can. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Member for Thebacha.

MS. MARTSELOS: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I also want to talk a little bit about inclusive schooling. When the junior kindergarten came into play, there were gaps because of junior kindergarten, and inclusive schooling isn't back to where it used to be. There were a lot of extracurricular activities that were taken away from both schools in Fort Smith, and there is still a financial gap because of junior kindergarten. All our funds, all excessive funds, were always given to the junior kindergarten program, and there have been some financial gaps. I wonder when those gaps are going to be closed. I do all of my volunteer work at both schools; I always did, since 1995. You know, I support both schools and I support the education system, and I just feel that there are some gaps that have to be filled.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you, Member. Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. Junior kindergarten is funded the same way that every other grade in a school is funded, so there should be no financial gaps. There are more students, there are more classes, but there is more money that is flowing the same way as if that was

additional students in grade one, or if you had to open up a second grade one class. It's the same type of money. That being said, I know that schools are often tight for cash. You know, you talk to some principals, and they say they have to determine whether they are going to buy these supplies, these books, maybe, that the class might need, or they're going to buy toilet paper. You know, those are tough decisions.

The way that we flow money, the way that education councils flow money to schools, is another thing that we're looking at. The funding formula in the mandate says that we are committed to looking at that and figuring out if it's working. You know, we provide \$155 million to the education councils. Is that money being spent in the best possible way? I know that, when it reaches the schools, the people on the ground, they know what to do with that money. They know where those gaps are, and they know how to fill those holes; but we have to make sure that all the money that needs to get there is getting there. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Member for Thebacha.

MS. MARTSELOS: I just have one final comment, and that has to do, again, with the territorial support team. If they're not doing regular territorial support team referrals to the communities on a regular basis, that is also a gap that I see. I think that, if it is a territorial support team and they are stationed here in Yellowknife, they should be making regular visits to the schools and to all the communities so that they have access to the territorial support team, even without referral. Everybody needs a team like that. You know, to have a qualified team like that, it supposedly should be at the disposal of all the citizens of the Northwest Territories, and I hope there is a way that we can make sure that, with future needs, and especially with the special needs children, we all have the same access. Thank you, Mr. Chair. That's all I have to say. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you, Member. Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. The team does get out to communities. It does engage with students from all over the territory, in person; well, rather it engages with the principals and the teachers in person, by phone, over video chat. It's not just based in Yellowknife. What I'm saying is they don't do regular scheduled visits; it's not like, the third Wednesday of every month, they're in this community. The team doesn't work like that. It's referral-based, and these referrals are for assistance with students who have the highest needs in the territory. You know, a lot of students have needs. There is always a wide variety. These

are the students with the highest needs, who the teachers and the principals have not been able to find a way to teach effectively, for a variety of reasons.

I take the Member's point that we need assistance across the territory. This is a very specialized team that deals with a relatively small number of students throughout the territory, and I'm not sure if making regularly scheduled visits around is the best use of their time. Again, I wish that we had speech pathologists in all the regions. It's very valuable; but the fact is we don't, and so we're targeting certain cases with this team. I take the Member's point, and I thank her for her passion.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Next on the list is the Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. I have a couple of areas I'd like to explore. One is early learning childcare. The funding shown on page 41 actually looks like it's declining over time. The backdrop to this is that the early development instrument results were released in 2018, and they actually showed an increase in the vulnerability of our youngest students, children up to age five, which is not a good place to be. I know the former Premier got some, maybe, headlines that he really didn't want to get for talking about that in the media. In every single study I've ever seen about investment in early childhood development, big payoffs, 7 to 1, 10 to 1. TD Bank, I know, did a study on this. What is happening here with declining funding in this area of the budget? The results are things are getting worse, and how are we going to fix this? That's my question for the Minister. Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you, Member. Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. In the early years of the agreement, money could be carried over, and so it shows up in here as more money at certain times. Then we have the decrease in the early childhood development and learning agreement due to the fact that it's sunseting. Those are the issues with that. I agree; investments in early childhood are the best bang for your buck you can get, probably across any department. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. Well, this should make for some very interesting discussions when it comes to the supplementary appropriation in May-June, where we're going to try to get the biggest bang for our bucks. It's wonderful that the Minister and I are on the same page on this, and I

look forward to more money in the supp for this particular investment. I want to go, though, to the funding formula for schools. I think that the Minister, even today, has said that that's something that is going to be reviewed. I'm just wondering if he can give us a little bit more explanation of how and when that's going to take place. Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you, Member. Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: The evaluation of the funding formula will take place in the coming years. We just put this mandate out, and committee knows there has been a lot of back and forth. The policy shops and all the departments have been going full-tilt and haven't necessarily had a chance to lay out our plan for the next four years. That's what we're working on. We know what we want to do. How exactly we're going to do it, that's still being worked out, so I don't have the details of this funding formula, but it's going to take engagement, obviously. I have my own concerns with this. As a Member for four years, I heard a lot about this. As I travel around the territory, too, I visit a school; everywhere I go, I visit the schools. You talk to the people who have to administer this funding, and you see the gaps that the previous Member mentioned.

There are some things that appear obvious, and so we have a good idea of where we need to start. I could go on about what we could possibly do, but, to the Member's point, I don't have a framework that we are going to evaluate the framework by at this point, and I don't have a concrete timeline, although that work is going to begin as soon as we are done with this whole process and we have a concrete plan to move forward. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. I want to thank the Minister for his honesty in all of that and forthrightness. I do have some ideas, though, that I will pitch his way. There was a collaborative approach taken with the NWTAC for the municipal funding gap review. There was a working group. They looked at the issue. They looked at some alternatives. It included people from MACA, as well. One of the principles that they said was that no community should lose funding as a result of this. I think that is a good thing. I think that is something you might want to think about as a principle for looking at the rejigging of the school funding formula, that no school should maybe lose money, so it's really about building all of our schools together. I trust that the Minister is going to do this in a collaborative fashion.

I guess the two things that I have heard in the short time that I have been here that are really problematic: one, inclusive schooling, that it should be more of a needs-based approach in terms of not just based on total enrolment; you really have to look at the needs of the kids in any particular school, in any particular district, to understand what it is that they need to help with and build inclusive schooling. That is one thing I have heard, and then, secondly: where there is a drop in enrolment from one year to the next, that can cause kind of a dramatic change in funding for a school authority, and it's kind of hard to make those sudden adjustments in terms of staffing and so on. I am aware that there are a couple of jurisdictions, I think in Manitoba and Ontario, where, even if there is a drastic change in enrolment, it's a phased-in approach to changing the formula so that a school board's funding doesn't go precipitously like this. Are those the kinds of things, though, that the department is going to look at in reviewing the school funding formula? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you, Member. Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. I will say the department has done some preliminary work on this already, on the funding formula. We are going to have to work together, talk about collaborative fashions, the education leaders, the chairs of the authorities in all of the different communities. There has been a lot of interest from Indigenous governments on this, as well, not just the funding formula but the act and how the renewal or the modernization of the act will relate to Indigenous governments and their involvement. If they are going to have a greater involvement, direct involvement, then they are going to be interested in this funding, so we need to engage with everyone.

I have either made an offer or the committee has asked for a briefing on the funding formula, and I am happy to do that. I am not sure if I have signed the official letter yet, but I am always happy to provide briefings. The Member mentioned a few different ideas, and I think I have probably discussed them in this House with everyone so far. There are a lot of good ideas out there. Do we need to fund schools based on enrolment, or do we need to fund schools based on the outcomes we want to see? It's an interesting concept. It might be too expensive of a concept for us, but it's something that we are looking into. I am not just going to close the door on anything just because it might be too expensive. We are going to look into everything we can. I mean, I could go on and on, but I appreciate all of the comments that we are getting from everyone and everyone I speak to because everyone is affected by the education system and they all want to have their say, and I am happy to hear it. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. Yes, I appreciate the Minister's comments, and I am sure he will be happy to do this, but can he make a commitment to come to standing committee to talk about this? I know he is going to brief us, brief committee, on the funding formula itself, but in terms of a process of reviewing and changing, is he willing to come to committee and seek committee's input into designing that process? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you, Member. Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, and of course maybe we can do it all at once because I haven't had a chance to get in front of committee once yet, so, next time I get an opportunity, I will make the most of it. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Next up is the Member for Yellowknife North.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. My question is: there are a number of Jordan's Principles initiatives that would fall under these areas. Can I just clarify whether there is any Jordan's Principle money in this budget?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you, Member. Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. No, there is not.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Member.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I guess my concern is that, in a number of regions, I believe Jordan's Principle funding is essentially propping up our education or early childhood systems, whether it's speech therapists or educational supports. Do we presently track how much Jordan's Principle money is entering our system?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you, Member. Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. Yes, we do. We track the funding amount entering each education council's or authority's region as well as the number of positions that that money is being used to fund. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Member.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. May I have the total amount right now flowing to our education authorities?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you, Member. Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. For the 2019-2020 school year as of December 2019, the combined amount received by education authorities in the territory was \$15,960,616, and there were 173.26 positions created using that money. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Member for Yellowknife North.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I sometimes wish that I could have a federal Minister in front of me. The fact that there is \$15 million and a lot of positions presently being funded by our federal government, do we have a sense of the stability of that funding? I know this is a question a federal Minister would have to answer, but is Jordan's Principle's funding going to disappear anytime? That is a huge amount flowing directly to our schools.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you, Member. Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. I think the indications from the federal government is that this is funding that they would like to see entrenched. Perhaps I can hand it over to Mr. MacDonald, who might have some more information.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Mr. MacDonald.

MR. MACDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes, federal funding is actually divided into two separate programs, both delivered through Indigenous Services Canada. One program is the better known. It's Jordan's Principle, and that program is funded based on a Human Rights Tribunal decision, so the federal government has a long-term policy and funding commitment for Jordan's Principle. The second program is known as Children First, and it's basically a similar program, designed for Inuit children who need those same services. That program does not have the same degree of permanence to it at this time, as far as we are aware. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you, Mr. MacDonald. Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Member for Yellowknife North.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I guess I kind of want to save myself time asking every department that has Jordan's Principle funding applying to it and flowing through it. Once again, I

know this is a federal government initiative, but perhaps, I am looking at the Minister of Finance, we could have a breakdown of the total Jordan's Principle funding that is existing within the GNWT right now?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you, Member. Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. I can work with the Minister of Finance to figure that out. The amount that exists in the department of Education, Culture and Employment is zero because this is money that is applied for by the education councils, not by us. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Member for Yellowknife North.

MR. JOHNSON: Yes, thank you, and I recognize that, and that is the complication of me asking these questions. You have committed to reviewing the funding formula, but, to me, the conversation about the funding formula really is not complete without recognition that there are millions of dollars in the system that is not ours. I think that figure is extremely important to all conversations going forward. Moving on, I wanted to Northern Distance Learning. I understand we are in phase 3 right now. Are we meeting our expansion goals, and can you give me an idea of what communities are next?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you, Member. Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. Yes, we are meeting the goal we set out three years ago now. We will be expanding in the coming year to 20 communities. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Member for Yellowknife North.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you. I am happy to hear that is on track, and I look forward to further expansion. My next question is: the Education Act will be coming forward in the life of this Assembly. I am glad we are going to have the conversation about the funding formula. Can I just confirm that the scope of the Education Act amendments will include allowing us to devolve education to Indigenous governments should it be desired?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you, Member. Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. I think this would likely be more of a repeal-and-replace than a few amendments here and there. One of the main considerations is the fact that the Member just referenced that we need a piece of legislation that allows Indigenous governments to devolve the

authorities that they have that our legislation currently doesn't allow. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Next up is the Member for Tu Nedhe-Willideh.

MR. NORN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just going to add some questions to carry on from what my colleague from Yellowknife North mentioned about Jordan's Principle. I think there are two or three some of the schools already that are affected by this. I think it is really important. It kind of runs in parallel with a lot of the DEA work that is going on. My question I had for this was: how is this federal program going to affect the overall budget going forward? I know it's a pretty broad question, but is this going to be one of those programs that is going to run alongside it? Is it going to be for the better of the overall budget for education going forward? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you, Member. Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. Our budget is going to continue to be our budget. Then there is this supplementary funding coming from the federal government. In the long term, like the previous Member stated, we do have to consider this. Is there a need for these 173 positions? If there is, why aren't they being funded from within the department? Why isn't that part of our funding formula? These are big conversations we have to have.

Some of the schools I have been to have an amazingly high amount of Jordan's Principle workers there, whether they are support assistants or teachers. You talk to the teachers in those schools, and they say they can't run their class without those assistants because there are students who just need somebody with them, not to take them out of the class, but just to give them a little more attention. Without those additional adult bodies in the room, classes become a little more disruptive, and it is hard for anyone to learn. It is going to be a major discussion over the coming years for sure. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Member for Tu Nedhe-Willideh.

MR. NORN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you to the Minister for his response. I did hear the word "entrenched" going forward. To me, that sounds like at some point the Minister one of his colleagues will be lobbying for more federal funding for this program. Is that what I'm hearing? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you, Member. Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. Absolutely. This has become vital. I think the feds see a need for it, and I can't speak for them. I can't say if it is entrenched. We could have a new government, and they could get drastically slashed. When I speak with the appropriate ministers, I will definitely be speaking to the value of this. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Member for Tu Nedhe-Willideh.

MR. NORN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I have nothing further.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you. If there are no further questions, please turn to page 41. Education, Culture and Employment, early childhood and school services, operations expenditure summary, 2020-2021 Main Estimates, \$202,806,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you. Next item will be income security beginning on page 45, with information item on page 48. Questions. Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would like to, with the chair's indulgence, bring in Mr. Saturnino for these next two sections. Mr. MacDonald may take his leave into the witness room, I guess.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): That is fine. Please proceed. Bring in the witness. Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. Making his first appearance at the witness table, Mr. Saturnino.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Questions. Member for Yellowknife North.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. It took me some time to realize that income assistance and income security are two different terms. My questions are in relation to Income Assistance. My question right now is: Income Assistance is a great program, but one of the issues I consistently have with my constituents is that they don't have a phone and they don't have the Internet, which doesn't allow them to look for jobs. Often, if they don't have a phone, they miss their appointments, which then means they miss their Income Assistance cheque. Then, it kind of spirals. They lose their housing, and we end up having people in poverty. My question to the Minister is: Is there a possibility of adding a communications allowance into the Income Assistance program and what that would cost?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you, Member. Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. I appreciate where the Member is coming from. In our modern world, everyone has cellphones. Everyone uses the Internet. It has become sort of a necessity of life. It has been recognized as such by multiple organizations. We do allow clients to use phones and the internet in the Income Assistance office. In this budget, though, we aren't contemplating adding a phone or Internet allowance. There has been some work done on that. Just looking at a basic phone plan and a basic Internet plan on your phone, we are pushing, I think, an additional \$2 million or so is what it would cost. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Member for Yellowknife North.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I look forward to having further conversations of this. I appreciate getting that number of \$2 million. I see that Income Assistance, we all know, is increasingly going up. It went up \$2 million from the last part. I think one of my beliefs here, perhaps we can have this conversation later, is that if you actually give a person a phone and the internet, they are more likely to get a job. They are more likely to be able to get in contact with the numerous services they are interacting with. We have seen through Integrated Case Management that often our most vulnerable clients not having a phone is one of the biggest issues that causes the spiral into poverty. In that analysis, has the Minister looked into whether providing people with a phone or the internet would actually save us any money?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you, Member. Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: No, I haven't looked into that. It would be difficult to sort of extrapolate that from other jurisdictions, to say, "This has worked in other jurisdictions, so it will also work in the territory." We are vastly different from most places that would do this type of research. I have been very open with the Members that I want to have an Income Assistance program that helps people get back into the job market. A lot of people on Income Assistance, they are in and out. Some, there are additional barriers that keep them out of that job market. What are those and how can we assist them to get into that job market? If this is something that shows some merit, maybe was can look further into it. Again, there are a lot of asks, especially in ECE. We can't pay for everything that we would like. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Member for Yellowknife North.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I look forward to having these conversations, and I think it just seems common sense that not having a phone

is a barrier to getting a job, so maybe we could look into this more. My next question is, in regard to Income Assistance, for the \$34 million we spend a year, how much do we spend in administration? That would be the staff and the people to actually provide money to the end users.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you, Member. Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. We can't parse out Income Assistance from the entire Income Security program. Income Assistance is about, I'd have to look at the exact number, here, \$32 million, but the client service officers who distribute Income Assistance also deal with the Senior Home Heating Subsidy and a number of other programs. So, of the total of \$52 million that is spent on those programs, \$6.5 million is spent on administration. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Member for Yellowknife North.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. You will hear me over the next four years make multiple pitches for a guaranteed liveable income. I think one of the strongest arguments is the fact that \$6.5 million of this \$32 million, depending on which numbers we're talking about, exactly, is spent in administration costs. I'll leave that debate for another time. One of my other concerns with Income Assistance is it often requires people coming into the offices. There is a lot of paperwork involved. I believe this is in the mandate and there is some work being done on single-window service. Are there presently efforts in the department to move more of Income Assistance applications online?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you, Member. Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. At this point, we haven't done that work. A lot of times, people are bringing in pay stubs, they're bringing in things from the bank, and those are being brought in for verification. It isn't something that really lends itself, but that being said, I'll look into what other jurisdictions are doing and see if there are efficiencies to be found in that way. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Member for Yellowknife North.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate the Minister's commitment to look into that and see what other jurisdictions are doing. Ultimately, I think one of the beautiful things about it is, if we create these online service portals, and we're seeing this done for more and more departments, then in certain cases you don't need the administrative staff. They essentially are replaced by the internet,

which then means we have more money to provide people the actual Income Assistance, and, you know, perhaps a phone. I think there is a strong, once again, cost-savings argument to creating an online portal for Income Assistance. I'll just leave that as a comment.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you, Member. Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. Online portals aren't free. I mean, there are always costs associated with them. I've seen them in the previous government, and honestly, if we had an online portal, it would free up time for our client service officers who, I think, are all overworked and who would probably appreciate being able to have the time to do what they're supposed to be doing and not be running themselves ragged. I don't know if it would result in any savings in wages. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Member for Yellowknife North.

MR. JOHNSON: No, thank you, sir.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you. Member for Tu Nedhe-Willideh.

MR. NORN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just looking at two line items here, and a quick comment, then some questions. I'm looking at the Senior Citizen Supplementary Benefit and Senior Home Heating Subsidy, those two line items. There's not a whole lot of change in there. I want to make some comments on our mandate, with our mandate item to enable seniors to age in place with dignity. We had a couple of commitments, and that's to increase the Senior Home Heating Subsidy and to create a separate Income Assistance program for seniors or persons with disabilities, in our mandate. I would like to ask the Minister what is his vision or plan going forward to increase these numbers and/or how would it look in the next budget moving forward? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you, Member. Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. Right now, the Senior Home Heating Subsidy, I think a lot of people see it as covering 100 percent of the costs. The fact is that it is intended to cover about 74 percent of the average cost of heating a home, an average home, in a particular region; and so each region is different. What we are proposing and what we are going to do is increase that 74 percent to 80 percent. It's not 100 percent, but it is a larger increase.

One of the issues that I find people run into that, you know, this was a cold winter, especially up in

the Beaufort-Delta, and seniors, they spend all of their heating money by February, and then, if they want a fill-up, each fill-up is a minimum of \$300, and they don't have that \$300. One of the options is looking at, if it is a subsidy and there is an expected contribution, perhaps every fill-up, there is a contribution from the senior. So, you know, instead of having a \$300 contribution all at once at the end, maybe a few of them in a row, you make small contributions throughout the year so that you can extend that. There are administrative issues surrounding that, but that's just one of the options.

The other initiative the Member mentioned was creating -- sorry, one second, here. I want to get the wording right. I guess it was the position or the stream of Income Assistance for seniors, I believe. There is work under way to figure out how we can do that. There is no point in having seniors who have aged out of the workforce reporting their income every single month. I know seniors on Income Assistance who have difficulty getting out of the house. They have medical issues that keep them homebound, and it's difficult for them just to do that basic reporting. Even if you payroll them, it's still a big issue to get out of there every three or six or 12 months. The idea is to treat those people who are collecting Income Assistance differently from the people who are able-bodied and who have fallen on hard times. They are two completely different populations, and there is no point in having them lumped together in a single program, and so the idea is to separate those programs so that it serves those distinct populations better. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Member for Tu Nedhe-Willideh.

MR. NORN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you to the Minister for that response, as well. I guess I had a quick comment. I was just doing some research here, just earlier, on the NWT statistics on some age demographics, and it looks like we're going to start to see an influx of people retiring. I'm just wondering: are we going to expect to see an increase with these two line items that I just mentioned, moving forward? I have a feeling that we're going to be seeing an increase in applications for these programs. Mahsi cho, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you, Member. Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. It's hard to predict a lot of these programs, but I think that, if you look at the statistics of the number of people who are getting to a certain age, more people are going to become eligible for the programs, and hence there is going to be more uptake. That's certainly what we've seen. You know, there are also fuel prices. While these aren't tied to fuel prices, necessarily, if a senior runs out of fuel, we don't just

leave them hanging. If they've used their entire benefit and they still are eligible for Income Assistance, we'll help them out so that their house doesn't freeze in the middle of February in minus 40. Right? And so those types of costs also grow, and those are based on the fuel cost. If the price of fuel doubles, they're going to run out more quickly and we're going to be providing more of that additional assistance, as well. Unfortunately, like most of these types of programs in the territory, I imagine that costs will go up. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

MR. NORN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you again for that response. Helping elders in the middle of winter like that sounds good to me. That sounds dignified. I'd like to hear more of that and hear that from other departments. That's just a comment, and that's all I have to say. Mahsi cho.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you, Member. Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. Again, I'll bring this back to what I've been saying and what everyone has been saying here, that it would be great if we could increase all of these programs and do all of these things we want to do, but we have to focus on the priorities of the Assembly and the mandate. There are a lot of great ideas and wonderful things that I would like to see done in Income Assistance, but they all cost money, and so I want to temper everyone's expectations. While I am open to discussing everything and changing what we can do, changing our mentality, it all costs money, and so I am not guaranteeing it's all going to get done or even any of it is going to get done. However, if we can do things better, that is what I want to do, and I want to work with the Members to do that. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Member for Thebacha.

MS. MARTSELOS: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I want to ask a question on the student financial assistance. For the 2018-2019 actuals to now, there has been an increase. Does that mean there are more students enrolled, or does it mean an increase in student financial assistance?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you, Member. Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. The budget has remained the same, but there are more students projected to access it, so we budgeted it higher than we needed to, I guess, in the last round, so there were fewer students accessing it. Going forward, hopefully, we have more students accessing it.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Member for Thebacha.

MS. MARTSELOS: I just want to make sure that all students who want to take post-secondary education have access. I am saying that because we had a problem just before Christmas with regard to the new aviation program that was being held in Fort Smith. In the end, I want to make sure that post-secondary education includes pilots, that it does not necessarily have to all be associated with Aurora College or University of Alberta or anywhere else in Canada, and I want to make sure that access is important for all students of the Northwest Territories and there is no distinguishment of where they are going to school. That is all I am asking.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you, Member. Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. The way that SFA determines whether or not a school is eligible is based on a master list. You can access it. It's a federal list of accredited universities. It's accessible through the SFA website. If you go on there, you can search for a school and, if it's on that list, then, if it is a program leading to a licence, certificate, diploma, bachelors, masters, et cetera, then it's an eligible school. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Member for Thebacha.

MS. MARTSELOS: I don't have any other questions. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you. Any further questions on income security? There are no further questions. Please turn to page 46, Education, Culture and Employment, income security, operations expenditure summary, 2020-2021 Main Estimates, \$54,359,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you. The next section is labour development and advanced education, beginning on page 49 with information items on pages 53 to 60. Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: [Microphone turned off]

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): We can't hear you. I guess it sounds like it's dinner time, according to Ms. Chinna, so we will break for five minutes. We will have a recess for about 20 minutes. Thank you.

---SHORT RECESS

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): I'd like to call committee back to order. We are reviewing the budget for the Department of Education, Culture

and Employment. Key activity, labour development and advanced education. Does anyone have any questions on this key activity? Member for Hay River South.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm on page 51, and trades and occupations wage subsidy. I see in 2018-2019, it was 655, and it got bumped up to almost double next year. What was the reason for that? Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Member for Hay River South. Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. There was no change in the budget. Just the actuals were low that year because it was undersubscribed. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Minister. Member for Hay River South.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I guess I should have looked at it. I didn't have my glasses on. With respect to the trades subsidy of \$1,072,000, is that allocated by region or by need? Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Member for Hay River South. Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. I'm going to hand this over to Mr. Saturnino who can, perhaps, provide a bit more detail. Thank you.

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

MR. SATURNINO: Thank you, Madam Chair. The trades and occupations wage subsidy is allocated at a regional level, and it's based on the number of apprentices distributed throughout the regions. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Mr. Saturnino. Member for Hay River South.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. If the wage subsidy program is not used up, what happens to the funds that are sitting there? Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Member for Hay River South. Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. Just to be clear, the fund is distributed on a needs basis, basically first come, first served. It's not allocated per region, say a quarter or a fifth to each region. It's just first come, first served and needs. The funds that aren't allocated, they do not get spent, basically; they go back to the general coffers, just like any other budget line that is not fully spent. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Minister. Member for Hay River South.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. One of the problems that I guess I found with the trades programs or with the trades, I guess, in itself, is that we do not have enough tradespeople to provide the ticket for which the apprentices can work under. Is there any intent or any interest in your department looking at other methods to make this happen? For instance, my understanding is that you have to have somebody on payroll, which to me means you pay somebody one dollar a year remuneration and that should be sufficient; would that be an option? Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Member for Hay River South. Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. I am very familiar with this. I have had constituent businesses who have brought this issue to my attention time and time again, and I have had discussions with the department about what we can do to address this issue. Questions earlier in the House today reminded me of this. You know, dental hygienists can't perform their work because there are no dentists around. Similarly, apprentices can't get their hours and can't move to journeypersons because there are no journeypersons around. We have discussed some different approaches, and, in the mandate, we have an item in there that somewhat speaks to it in broad terms, that we are looking at ways to allow apprentices to get those hours without having that constant supervision of a journeyman around, whatever that might look like. That is not a fully formed plan yet, but the concept is there to address this exact need the Member is speaking about. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Minister. Member for Hay River South.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I guess my understanding is the ratio is kind of two apprentices per journeyperson. Is that the ratio that is allowed right now? Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Member for Hay River South. Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Correct, thank you.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. Are you considering changing that ratio, as well, to, say, maybe three or four or five apprentices per journeyperson? Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Member for Hay River South. Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. That flexibility is available. We can do that, from my understanding, without a change to the regulations or any acts, and so again that is the type of initiative we might be looking at. We need to be flexible. We have journeymen retiring at an accelerating rate, it seems like, and we have not been doing what we need to do to replace them over the past number of years. All across Canada, we are facing a shortage in skilled labour, and, just like anything else, the North is an extreme example of that. This is at the front of my mind. We are not going to build local economies, we are not going to keep money in the North unless we can increase the number of apprentices and journeypersons, and I am fully committed to doing my best to making that happen. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Minister. Member for Hay River South.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. Earlier today, I raised the issue of only year one and year two of apprenticeships being covered, and I have read somewhere where it said that in years three and four, government expected that these apprentices would basically pay their own way. I can tell you right now that that is not the case. With the economy the way it is, a lot of small employers, if they have apprentices working, they will keep them on if they know they are getting that subsidy; they will keep them on, even if they do not have enough work, and maybe have them do other things. The subsidy is very, very important, and I think you need to know that, and I think it should be expanded to years three and four. I think it might have been like that before. I am not sure, but I would urge your department to look at, at least consider, in year three and possibly year four because it's like anything else. It's like going to university. You go for four years. When you come out, you still don't know anything, and, if you think you know it, then you don't know anything. It's the same in this case, as well. I think it's important that we give the apprentices every opportunity to succeed, and it's important that we also make sure that the employers who are taking a chance on them are provided that same opportunity. I am not sure if there is a question in there, but they can comment. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Member for Hay River South. Minister, do you want to respond?

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Sure. Similar to the comments I made earlier today in the House, I am open to looking at that because I get calls from businesses all the time who are just doing their best to stay open and keep people employed, and sometimes this subsidy or the little bit of help they can get makes the difference between having to lay

someone off and helping someone get to that next year, so we will do what we can. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Minister. Next on my list, I have the Member for Kam Lake.

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I have a few questions. My first is for the apprenticeship and occupational certification line. How many apprenticeships are currently involved in the program? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Member for Kam Lake. Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: There are 320. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Minister. Member for Kam Lake.

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. On page 51, under "grants," there is "workforce development agreement," and under "contributions," there is also, the bottom line, "workforce development agreement." I am wondering if the Minister can speak to the differences between these two line items and why one is going up and the other is going down? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Member for Kam Lake. Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. If you don't mind, I would like to let Mr. Saturnino answer that.

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

MR. SATURNINO: Thank you, Madam Chair. The workforce development agreement is a federal labour market agreement that we signed with Canada, and what you are seeing here are two distinct line items, one that funds individuals who access the program and also employers and the other that funds organizations. Essentially, unlike the territorial budget lines, in this particular area, we can spend in either area, as long as we do not go over the maximum. So, if the demand is for the grants, we can exceed the amount as long as we are not exceeding the total, and so we have that flexibility under our federal labour market agreement. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Mr. Saturnino. Member for Kam Lake.

MS. CLEVELAND: Okay, so, just so that I understand, the difference is whether we are funding an organization or an individual, a specific individual, or an employer, but we can shuffle money between the two as long as they are

consistently going for workforce development. Is that correct?

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

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: That is correct.

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

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. My next question is in regard to Aurora College. I am wondering if the Minister can tell us both the number of graduates from last year and the number of students? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Member for Kam Lake. Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. If you will just give me a moment, I have to pull up that information. In 2018-2019, we had 486 full-time students and 1,523 part-time students enrolled. I will get you the graduation numbers shortly.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Minister. Member for Kam Lake.

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I am going to work my way down to the literacy funding line item. Is that federal grant money, or is that GNWT money, just so that I am reading this right? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Member for Kam Lake. Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. It is territorial.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Minister. Member for Kam Lake.

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I have noticed that, over time, this funding between 2018-2019 actuals to the main estimates for this year seems to be going down to the tune of approximately a half million dollars. Is this a trend that we can expect to continue to see over the life of this Assembly? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Member for Kam Lake. Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. I believe that there hasn't been a change in the budget, necessarily, but there were unbudgeted contributions that are now budgeted for. Those are to Dechinta and College nordique. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Minister. Member for Kam Lake.

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. On page 50, the fourth line item up from the bottom says "interest." I am wondering if the Minister can speak to what this line item is. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Member for Kam Lake. Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. That is quite specific. Perhaps I should pass it over to the assistant deputy minister for corporate services.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Minister. Assistant Deputy Minister.

MR. SHANNON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I don't have that information in front of me right now, but we can certainly track that down and get it for the Member. Thank you.

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

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. That was my last question for those pages. I am just curious as to: we don't see too many line items that say "interest" within the budget. I am just wondering what we are paying interest on. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Member for Kam Lake. Are there any further questions on this page? Member for Thebacha.

MS. MARTSELLOS: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just want to make a comment and one question on Aurora College. I come, of course, from Fort Smith and the constituency of Thebacha. We are very proud of Aurora College and the campus of Fort Smith. We have a lot of incredible staff there who are very qualified who do have doctorate degrees and have a wide variety of academics who come to that college. It is not filled to capacity. The intake is extremely important to the community of Fort Smith. Aurora College has been there; that is where it started in 1969. I just want to make sure that you consider doing probably a more media and better job at making sure that the intake in those programs are looked at in a more positive way. Maybe it is because of all the talk of the polytech, that is why some of the programs have been lacking. I don't know. I know that as an MLA for Thebacha and supporting the staff and the students of that college, I would like to see more emphasis placed on the intake into the programs and utilize those beautiful facilities that we have in Fort Smith. I want you to consider that. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Member for Thebacha. Minister, would you like to respond?

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. I appreciate the Member's comments. She has been a very passionate supporter of Aurora College, as I hope everyone is. It is an institution that has reached into almost every community in the territory and has the potential to help the territory move forward into a new, prosperous future. The intake has been an issue, obviously. I know the former Member for Thebacha used to teach at that college. He said that, years ago, he'd have 30 students in his class, and he saw it dwindle year after year after year. I know people who had been there 10 years ago. They said the campus was much livelier. It is a beautiful campus. It has great student spaces. We need to get more students through those doors.

One of the things I really want to do and work with the college on is just promoting the college in general. I never knew what the inside of that college looked like. I didn't know the great facilities they had. I didn't know the quality of education you could receive there. I grew up three hours from the college. We need to do a better job getting out there and showing everyone what we have to offer and fill up those classes both in Fort Smith and in Inuvik. There are a lot of issues why we can't do that sometimes. I know I toured the college with MLA Semmler in Inuvik. There were issues about students having the proper prerequisites to get into the course and the supports needed to stay in the course. It is more than just promoting it or getting the word out. It is going to take a government-wide approach, really, a territorial approach. We need everyone to buy into education and everyone to be as passionate about the college as the MLA for Thebacha is. I am working on that. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Minister. Any further question on this page, labour development and advanced education? Seeing none, I am going to call the page. Education, Culture and Employment, labour development and advanced education, operations expenditure summary, 2020-2021 Main Estimates, \$54,431,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Members. At this point, we are going to go back to the department summary on page 29. Are there any questions on the department summary? Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. To answer the Member for Kam Lake's question, there were 112 graduations at the college. There are also completions, which aren't graduations. I will get those numbers for the Member by tomorrow. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you for that information. Are there any comments on this page? Are we ready to complete this department? Mr. Norn.

COMMITTEE MOTION 4-19(2):
TABLED DOCUMENT 30-19(2): MAIN
ESTIMATES 2020-2021 – EDUCATION,
CULTURE AND EMPLOYMENT - DEFERRAL OF
FURTHER CONSIDERATION OF THE
ESTIMATES FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION, CULTURE AND EMPLOYMENT,
CARRIED

MR. NORN: Thank you, Madam Chair. I move that this committee defer further consideration of the estimates for the Department of Education, Culture and Employment at this time. Mahsi cho, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Mr. Norn. The motion is being distributed. The motion is in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

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

---Carried

Thank you, Minister, for answering our questions today. Thank you to your witnesses. Sergeant-at-Arms, please escort the witnesses from the Chamber. What is the wish of committee?

MR. NORN: Thank you, Madam Chair. I move that the chair rise and report progress. Mahsi cho.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you. Mr. Norn has suggested that we rise and report progress. The motion is in order. The motion is non-debatable. All those in favour? All those opposed. The motion is carried.

---Carried

I will rise and report progress.

SPEAKER (HON. FREDERICK BLAKE JR): May I have the report of Committee of the Whole? Member for Yellowknife Centre.

Report of Committee of the Whole

MS. GREEN: Mr. Speaker, your committee has been considering Tabled Document 30-19(2), Main Estimates 2020-2021, and Tabled Document 43-19(2), Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 1, 2020-2021. We would like to report progress on Tabled Document 30-19(2) with two motions carried.

Mr. Speaker, I move that the report of the Committee of the Whole be concurred with.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. Do we have a seconder? Member for Nunakput. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried.

---Carried

Item 23, third reading of bills. Mr. Clerk, orders of the day.

Orders of the Day

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer): Orders of the day for Wednesday, March 4, 2020, at 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. Replies to the Budget Address (Day 7 of 7)
7. Acknowledgements
8. Oral Questions
9. Written Questions
10. Returns to Written Questions
11. Replies to the Commissioner's Address
12. Petitions
13. Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills
14. Reports of Standing and Special Committees
15. Tabling of Documents
16. Notices of Motion
17. Motions
18. Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills
19. First Reading of Bills
20. Second Reading of Bills
21. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters
 - Tabled Document 30-19(2), Main Estimates 2020-2021

- Tabled Document 43-19(2), Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 1, 2020-2021

22. Report of Committee of the Whole

23. Third Reading of Bills

24. Orders of the Day

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. This House stands adjourned until Wednesday, March 4, 2020, at 1:30 p.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 7:05 p.m.

