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The Honourable Frederick Blake Jr, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

Members of the Legislative Assembly

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---|------------|
| PRAYER | 887 |
| MINISTERS' STATEMENTS | 887 |
| 44-19(2) – Northwest Territories Housing Corporation Capital Delivery 2020-2021 (Chinna)..... | 887 |
| 45-19(2) – COVID-19 Health and Social Services System Response (Thom)..... | 888 |
| MEMBERS' STATEMENTS | 889 |
| Taltson Dam (Martselos)..... | 889 |
| Transportation Safety (Jacobson)..... | 890 |
| Addictions Counselling Services (Lafferty)..... | 890 |
| Supports for Northwest Territories Businesses (Cleveland)..... | 891 |
| Nursing Shortage (Semmler) | 891 |
| Digital Service (Johnson)..... | 892 |
| Mural by Walt Humphries (Green) | 892 |
| Internet Connectivity (O'Reilly)..... | 893 |
| Northwest Territories Commercial Fishery (Rocky Simpson)..... | 893 |
| Eulogy for Mrs. Adele Hardisty (Thompson) | 894 |
| ORAL QUESTIONS | 894 |
| TABLING OF DOCUMENTS | 894 |
| MOTIONS | 902 |
| 8-19(2) – Revocation of Appointment of the Honourable Member for Great Slave to the Executive Council (Norn) | 902 |
| SECOND READING OF BILLS | 903 |
| Bill 6 – An Act to Amend the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act | 903 |
| CONSIDERATION IN COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE OF BILLS AND OTHER MATTERS | 903 |
| REPORT OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE | 916 |
| ORDERS OF THE DAY | 916 |

YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**Friday, May 29, 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. Norm, 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 10:02 a.m.

Prayer

---Prayer

SPEAKER (Hon. Frederick Blake Jr): Item 2, Ministers' statements. Minister responsible for the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation.

Ministers' Statements

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 44-19(2):
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES HOUSING
CORPORATION CAPITAL DELIVERY 2020-2021

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Good morning, Mr. Speaker. The COVID-19 virus has affected economies all over the world. On our home ground, it has hit us hard: our communities, our businesses, and our people. We know that the public is ready to get the NWT economy moving again. There are very few sectors that translate investment so quickly and directly into tangible benefits for our communities than housing. Housing investment supports local and regional contractors, apprentices, building trades-helpers, homeowners, and households needing housing. The investment isn't fleeting; it leaves behind critical and important infrastructure that will provide a social benefit year-after-year.

Housing is an issue that is best addressed by being person-focused. Person-focused is how we approach the delivery of our programs, but it is also important in how we deliver infrastructure and capital projects. Our 2020-2021 housing capital investment plan will bring in much needed employment and apprenticeship opportunities. For many in our small communities, COVID-19 has left them in either economic hardship or economic uncertainty. As we try and get back to a semblance of normality, our goal when delivering our housing capital plan is to bring back some financial certainty and opportunities to our residents.

Mr. Speaker, the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation's 2020-2021 capital project delivery represents a total investment of over \$43.8 million

in the NWT. Approximately 90 percent of this amount is targeted for housing projects outside of Yellowknife, with the focus being on our smaller communities. It will include the construction of 89 units and repair projects for 160 owned public, market and Homeownership Entry Level Program housing units located throughout the NWT.

Highlights of our new construction include:

- 22 new and replacement units across the NWT, including: six market and public housing units in Behchoko; two market housing units in Hay River; four market housing units in Tulita; six public housing units in Deline; two public housing units in Fort Smith; two public housing units in Ulukhaktok;
- nine seniors units in Fort Good Hope;
- eight single occupancy public housing units in Yellowknife;
- four New Home Program units in Fort Resolution, Tulita, Deline, and Tuktoyaktuk;
- 45 market housing units for RCMP: six in Fort Smith; three in Norman Wells; 17 in Inuvik; seven in Fort Simpson; and 12 in Hay River.

This year's unit repairs also include a major energy project in Yellowknife for the conversion of oil-fired furnaces to biomass heating. We are undertaking this project with significant assistance from the federal government under the Low Carbon Economy Fund federal program.

The Northwest Territories Housing Corporation will be supplementing this \$43.8 million with a further \$3.6 million investment to deliver additional unit repairs by utilizing the internally funded \$5 million COVID-19 reserve. The aim of this additional investment is to bring on stream approximately 130 vacant housing units. Approximately 60 of these units are available for allocation in the short-term. Many of the remaining units will require some minor or major repair. When repaired, these units will be allocated for use within the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation's public housing, market, and home ownership programs. The introduction of these units, as well as the construction of new units, forms the basis of the housing response for

any subsequent waves of the COVID-19 virus and is also a step towards fulfilling our mandate commitment to increase the number of affordable homes and reduce core housing need. While we expect that the vast majority of the planned capital investment will be delivered in this fiscal year, some projects, such as those involving winter road and barge transportation, may require a two-year delivery.

The Northwest Territories Housing Corporation has a long history of supporting community businesses. In 2018-2019, 94 percent of our contracting opportunities were awarded to local and northern businesses, and we expect similar results for this last year. We have also worked closely with community leadership to obtain support to proceed with the majority of planned delivery for 2020-2021.

Mr. Speaker, housing will be a key element of the economic recovery of this Territory. The construction, repair, and other contract work around housing brings in much needed income to the Northwest Territories, and to our smaller communities. This capital investment will support local and regional contractors, provide opportunities for apprentices and building trades, and ensures that a large portion of investment stays in the Northwest Territories. I look forward to seeing these new projects and opportunities for our people of the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Ministers' statements. Minister of Health and Social Services.

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 45-19(2):
COVID-19 HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES
SYSTEM RESPONSE

HON. DIANE THOM: Mr. Speaker, earlier, I spoke about our public health response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Today, I would like to highlight how our health and social services system is responding to this unprecedented challenge.

The Chief Public Health Officer is leading the public health response and providing subject matter expertise to the health and social services system and Government of the Northwest Territories on pandemic planning requirements. Our first step in responding to the threat of COVID-19 was to activate the Emergency Operations Center, or EOC, on March 11, 2020.

The EOC assesses risks, identifies mitigation measures, and coordinates the health and social services system response and recovery. It includes representatives from the Department of Health and Social Services, the health and social services authorities, the Department of Finance, and the Northwest Territories Emergency Measures

Operations, led by the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs.

Mr. Speaker, this early coordination of our Health and Social Services system response allowed for the necessary service adjustments to support the public health orders. This included reducing non-essential health services in order to ramp up testing, contact tracing, and care for those who may test positive for COVID-19. We also put in place measures to manage our Personal Protective Equipment inventory for front-line healthcare workers, and we are working closely with the Public Health Agency of Canada to secure our supply. To safeguard residents living in long-term care facilities, guidelines were implemented to reduce visits and to institute daily temperature checks and health screening. Service providers also implemented protocols in relation to the use of Personal Protective Equipment and enhanced disinfection practices well before we had any cases in the NWT.

Mr. Speaker, in order to meet the requirements for physical distancing and provide timelier access to care, our health system has expanded virtual care. This enables practitioners to meet with each other and with a patient over distance. It also reduces physical patient interactions in waiting rooms, with clinic staff, and with providers through the use of phone visits and video conferencing, as well as providing remote access to the electronic medical records. We have also accelerated Primary Health Care Reform in Yellowknife in order to support the roll out of virtual care and to maintain continuity of services while physician resources are redeployed to other parts of the system. We have now moved to an integrated care team model, which gives clients access to a dedicated primary care team rather than just a doctor. We are also testing some outreach approaches to provide primary care services to individuals being served by shelter organizations in Yellowknife.

Mr. Speaker, at the same time, the three health and social services authorities have been working diligently to address and prepare for the surge of transmission of the COVID-19 virus. This coordinated approach across the Northwest Territories healthcare system is crucial to ensure all resources are aligned in order to achieve the best possible outcomes for patients, staff, and the residents of our territory at various stages of this pandemic response.

This four-stage response plan is based on principles that acknowledge that the pandemic response is our government's primary priority, that all response activities are coordinated and all resources must be managed system-wide. It also focuses the response within the capabilities of our system: maximizing and mobilizing staff where

needed; moving patients to where care can be provided; redistributing supplies and equipment where and when needed; and the appropriate triaging of care, including centralizing hospitalizations in Yellowknife and Edmonton for patients with severe symptoms. This plan demonstrates a thorough and realistic approach to respond to COVID-19. The Health and Social Services Pandemic Response Plan is being shared with Members of the Legislative Assembly and will be made public as soon as possible.

Mr. Speaker, the safety of children and youth in our care has been central to our COVID response. We are taking every opportunity to improve the quality of our child and family services to positively impact outcomes for children and youth while working within public health measures. During the containment phase of the pandemic, most face-to-face visits were temporarily suspended. These temporary suspensions were in place to make sure children, families, and frontline workers are safe. Child and family services staff made use of virtual technology to keep children and their families connected with each other and with frontline workers. With the release of the Emerging Wisely Plan, we are now assessing how to safely, gradually introduce face-to-face visits once again.

We are offering one-time, short-term financial support to help families with their basic needs if they cannot get enough assistance from other programs, and we have extended support services for youth in care and young adults who are aging out of these services during the COVID-19 pandemic. We are also working with the Foster Family Coalition of the Northwest Territories to respond to the needs of our foster caregivers and to provide ongoing support and communication. We have established respite services for foster caregivers in the Northwest Territories to support them during the COVID-19 pandemic and have established clear protocols should a child in their care require testing or care for COVID-19.

Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to thank all of our front-line health and social services workers for their hard work and dedication to the people they serve. I recognize that there are many challenges ahead and know that you will continue to serve our residents as you always have, with professionalism, compassion, and commitment. Our health and social services have responded quickly and effectively to the COVID-19 challenge to date. I am confident that we are well prepared to respond should there be a surge in COVID-19 transmissions into the future. However, it remains critically important that we all remain vigilant in following the public health measures to limit the spread of COVID-19 and minimize the demand on our health and social services system. We are

stronger and healthier if we act together. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Ministers' statements. Item 3, Members' statements. Member for Thebacha.

Members' Statements

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON TALTSON DAM

MS. MARTSELOS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For my Member's statement, I am going to talk about the importance that the Taltson Hydroelectric Expansion Project continues to have for the economy of the NWT.

Mr. Speaker, in my response to the Commissioner's address the other day, I discussed the Taltson expansion as a key priority of mine for the 19th Legislative Assembly. However, this priority is not only my own as it is actually an official mandate item on the priorities list of the entire 19th Assembly. Therefore, it is incumbent on all of us in this House to ensure that this major infrastructure project gets built.

Mr. Speaker, we must also consider that, given the economic fallout from COVID-19, the Government of the Northwest Territories should be more interested than ever to pursue this project in order to help spur economic growth and ultimately the reduced power rates for the people of the NWT. This pandemic has caused a serious downturn in our economy, so it is extremely important that we stay the course with this hydro expansion as it will be vital in our economic recovery for the long term.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, I want to add that I find it very concerning that several Members in this House have repeatedly talked down toward this project and hopefully wish that it will never get built. It seems like nearly every time I mention the Taltson expansion, people get defensive and shoot down the idea right away. Well, that should not be happening anymore because we MLAs have already decided as a group at the beginning of the Assembly that this project would be pursued and go forward during the life of the 19th Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, as I have said in previous statements, this project has the capacity to nearly double the NWT's current hydro capacity output and would help save our territory's power needs for years to come. This hydro expansion would provide the NWT with more renewable energy, create job opportunities, and will set the pace for a vibrant economy in the future. This has to remain a priority in order to secure any significant long-term investments to the NWT. We need this infrastructure if we want to sustain and grow our

territory's economic development, especially during a time of economic recovery as we are now in. I will have questions for the Minister of Infrastructure later. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON TRANSPORTATION SAFETY

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In February 2018, a former Member, Wally Schumann, Minister of Infrastructure at the time, gave a statement of planned improvements, he said, in airport runways across the territory. There are many studies that have been done across the NWT for subsurface and drainage problems that we have in our small communities. Mr. Speaker, Sachs Harbour has a problem. We cannot land King Air 350s for medevac service. The only planes that can come in are Twin Otters now, with tundra tires, because of the saturation in the airport runway. I worry for my constituents. The Minister pointed out that day that the work was going to be done, and it still has not been done.

In February this year, Mr. Speaker, the current Minister of Infrastructure gave an update to airports which pointed out GNWT's intention to fix the airport drainage problem in Sachs Harbour. Minister Nokleby pointed out that many communities across the North have essential services to this region and maintenance and improvement activities are particularly important to ensure effective travel. "This work," she noted, "will increase the resiliency of these airports to the effects of climate change."

Mr. Speaker, my question to the Minister today is simple: why hasn't the work been done? When is it going to get done? Let me know why.

Mr. Speaker, why is it so important? Last week, I had spoken with our Aklak Air local carrier that flies into the community. It's costing them \$58,000 to bring in a Twin Otter with tundra tires, with an aircrew, per month on them, when our government is supposed to be giving a runway that is accepting to land any aircraft. By the government's own admission, maintenance and work is essential to operations in the airfield. I am concerned. The safety of my constituents is a priority: no medevac planes. When are you going to get your mail? When are you going to get your food in regard to it because Aklak Air does not have a Twin Otter right now? What is happening? I don't know. I am waiting for a call from the president of Aklak Air.

Mr. Speaker, I am concerned, as MLA for Nunakput, hearing about this problem and prefer my constituents, being advised by the Minister's problems or delays. I want to remind the Minister in

the House for keeping Regular MLAs informed in ongoing projects in our constituencies. Mr. Speaker, I will have questions for the Minister at the appropriate time. Thank you, sir.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON ADDICTIONS COUNSELLING SERVICES

MR. LAFFERTY: Masi, Mr. Speaker. Over the last few months, there have been so many deaths in the Monfwi riding. Most of them involved alcohol or other drugs. My constituents are very concerned about the well-known fact that our people are passing away one by one, all because of addictions.

Mr. Speaker, the last treatment facility in the Northwest Territories shut down in 2013. Almost immediately, the people of the Northwest Territories began requesting, again and again and again, a treatment facility to be reopened up in the territory. That has obviously fallen on deaf ears for all these years.

Mr. Speaker, let me paint a picture for you. The last Tlicho citizen who passed away tried his best to deal with his addiction issues. Yes, he did. He worked very hard on himself, signed up for and got accepted in the Fresh Start program in Calgary. Upon his return home, there was no follow-up or after-care program. He was homeless, ended up back on the streets in Yellowknife, and back, of course, to the bottle. His sister did a radio interview following her brother's unfortunate passing. She mentioned her own journey, going back to 1995. She completed her own treatment program in the South, returned home to Behchoko, and immediately had to move to Yellowknife, Mr. Speaker, because there were no after-care programs or support services in Behchoko.

As you can see, addiction is affecting entire families and communities. Sadly, this is a familiar story to far too many. Our people deserve better, and most certainly deserve better from ourselves as the 19th Assembly Members. When will enough be enough, Mr. Speaker? I will have questions at the appropriate time for the appropriate Minister. Masi.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON SUPPORTS FOR NORTHWEST TERRITORIES BUSINESSES

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The International Monetary Fund is calling the pandemic's devastation of the global economy "the

great lockdown." Its impacts are predicted to be worse than both the 2009 great recession and the Great Depression of the 1930s. According to the Conference Board of Canada, Canada's economic contraction during the second quarter of 2020 is estimated to be a staggering 25 percent due to COVID-19 shutdowns. The Conference Board is at least optimistic that a rebound will start later in the year, but by this time many businesses and the jobs they bring will be beyond devastated.

As I said yesterday, NWT businesses need aggressive, innovative stimulus programs and an influx of cash to start the long journey of regeneration of our northern economy. Today, I urge Cabinet to do more for northern business. I understand the GNWT has chosen to complement the federal government's COVID business relief measures. While this makes sense, it also makes it difficult for NWT business owners to know exactly what programs are available. Some of the federal programs available to NWT businesses include:

- the temporary wage subsidy for small employers and the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy;
- the Canada Emergency Business Account;
- the Canada Emergency Commercial Rent Assistance;
- the Small and Medium-Sized Enterprise Loan and Guarantee Program; and
- support for jobs and businesses coping with the economic impacts of COVID-19 through CanNor and Community Futures.

The GNWT has paired a waiver of transportation fees until the end of June for the Deh Cho Bridge tolls, truck permits, and airport landing fees; improved payment terms by the GNWT for government vendors; a due-date extension for WSCC employer premiums; a waiver of airport fees for all businesses at NWT airports, including leases, licences, and concession fees; and the buy-back of unopened liquor from licenced establishments. I don't claim that this is a full list of supports currently available, because I cannot find a list on the GNWT website. This list was built by tuning into the Prime Minister's daily federal updates. I strongly urge the government to pull this information together and make it easily visible and accessible for NWT business operators.

I must echo my colleague from Yellowknife Centre, who asked why the GNWT isn't making grant money available to NWT businesses through the BDIC's \$30-million surplus. Many business owners simply cannot afford to take on more debt, no matter how favourable the terms of the loan. I

would like to see the GNWT take an inventory of business supports being offered by other Canadian jurisdictions to inspire more innovative and impactful recovery supports. For example, the Alberta government subsidizes WCB to cover 50 percent of employer premiums for 2020 and deferred premium payments until 2021. Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

---Unanimous consent granted

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate that the GNWT may not be in a position to afford a subsidy of this \$350-million magnitude, but it could perhaps offset some employer premium costs, improving the WSCC's current offer. The current business supports offered by the GNWT are not enough, and the GNWT must do more now. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON NURSING SHORTAGE

MS. SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to discuss the nursing shortage in the NWT and how our hiring process is working against us. As someone who is very familiar with the hiring practice in this area as well as the difficulty in staffing healthcare professionals, we need to look at how we do things. In my experience, it's more beneficial to be hired as a locum than it is to sign on as indeterminate. There are also times where staff choose not to extend terms or do not want to take on an indeterminate position, and instead choose to become a locum or work short-term casual contracts because they get more perks. As a locum, you can pick and choose when you want to work in the NWT, as we are always short. You get your flights paid back and forth from your home residence anywhere in Canada to your place of work. When signing on as a locum, you are guaranteed full-time shifts during your contracts, as well as overtime. You are entitled to the Northern Residency Allowance on top of your hourly pay, and evening and weekend shift premiums, if you are a shift worker, just as terms and indeterminate employees.

From my understanding, recent changes to the collective agreement made terms no more than 24 months, at which you then have to become indeterminate, because you lose your removal allowance. This previously used to be up to 48 months. Why would we not want them to stay longer?

Then there are the job sharers, where they can be six weeks, eight weeks, some might be longer, who work half-time in term or indeterminate positions, who also get their flights to and from their home covered. When in Inuvik, they get residence and put in hotels and pay a lower-market rent. Terms have to rent privately and remain in the community, just as indeterminates would. The only difference is they get 100 percent removal when they fulfil their contract. The staff who sign on indeterminate pay market rent. They don't get any travel. They often are stressed when it comes time for summer/spring break, Christmas break; that's because they are essential staff. They may not get vacation if short-staffed, or at least what they wish for, for vacation, if casuals cannot be confirmed.

Mr. Speaker, there needs to be a better way to have indeterminate staffing more appealing, as this would not only provide a stable workforce, but a better continuum of care for our residents. I will have questions for the Minister of Finance. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON DIGITAL SERVICE

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I believe this Assembly needs to take drastic steps to become a more open and transparent and digital government. I would like to thank the last Assembly for all their work on the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act. I believe that ATIPP Act is truly one of the best in the country, yet it is still not in force and, during this pandemic, I have heard no shortage of complaints from both media and the public that not enough information and data is available.

Mr. Speaker, the Information and Privacy Commissioner presented her annual report to the Standing Committee on Government Operations this week. She acknowledges that the new ATIPP Act is great but is concerned that not one single GNWT department is capable of implementing it.

I believe there is a culture across the GNWT of using ATIPP as a shield, whereas, when media makes a request, they say, "Go through ATIPP," as a way to defer the story. The Information and Privacy Commissioner said proactive disclosure would lower her office's workload by as much as 50 percent; similarly for departments, as well. However, there are many steps to getting to proactive disclosure. The first and most important is proper records management, and, Mr. Speaker, I believe the records management and the data collection across the GNWT is severely lacking.

One way to start tackling this problem is through a pilot project. The federal government has a pilot project called "Open by Default." I believe we need a similar project. This would essentially mean opening up departments' working documents, their version of DIMS, to the public. I think a very easy start would be Education, Culture and Employment, perhaps the Prince of Wales. I assume our archivists' records are in good keeping.

Mr. Speaker, in our previous government, we had a Minister responsible for transparency. We no longer have that portfolio. I believe the policy that was created by that Minister is a good start. However, the implementation is severely lacking. Given the way that this government had adapted to COVID-19, the GNWT must take large steps to become a digital and open government, and I believe that that must be a priority going forward.

Mr. Speaker, I believe the first step along this is to make a clear Minister responsible for open government, and I believe a clear department to have the authority to clean up the records across the GNWT. Mr. Speaker, I will have questions for the Premier of whether she is willing to create such a position and make sure we actually do some implementation work on becoming a digital government. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON MURAL BY WALT HUMPHRIES

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Almost 30 years ago, an artist who now lives in my constituency spent two months painting a giant mural for the Stanton Territorial Hospital. The picture shows a variety of people standing on the shore of Frame Lake looking across at what was then the new hospital. It's a favorite of many staff and patients who describe it as comforting. The mural stood on the edge of the hospital parking lot until construction of yet another new hospital began four years ago. It was taken away for safe keeping, then this spring, it reappeared as the snow melted, lying face up on a gravel pile.

A former Stanton employee has said when the mural was first removed, it was standing up in a safe location. He believes the mural was moved again last because of the work being done on the old hospital. Having the picture lying down had the potential to create water damage to it and fade the painting's colours.

Mr. Speaker, Walt Humphries was understandably furious that his art and his efforts are held in such low esteem by the government. After a week of

behind the scenes efforts to have government acknowledge its responsibility to rescue the mural and store it properly, public pressure has prompted the Department of Infrastructure to move the mural inside until plans are finalized to put it back up on the Stanton campus.

Mr. Speaker, a similar situation exists in Hay River. The old HH Williams Hospital had a well-known mural inside. I understand plans are being made to relocate it prior to demolishing that building.

Mr. Speaker, these situations raise questions about the chain of custody for artwork. Who is responsible for the care, maintenance, and appropriate storage of the art that the government acquires? I will have questions for the Minister of either Infrastructure or Education, Culture and Employment. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON INTERNET CONNECTIVITY

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. This is a statement I made in the House in August 2019, and it rings even truer today as we have all seen the limitations and shortcomings with Internet connectivity during the pandemic. Today, a fibre optic line runs from Alberta to Inuvik. The project, completed in 2017, cost about \$95 million and \$3 million to operate each year. That fibre link was funded on the understanding that benefits would be shared down the Mackenzie Valley.

Let's go back to the record, Mr. Speaker. As early as 2011, the then Minister of Health was promoting "a very ambitious plan...that would provide a fibre optic link to all the communities...there would be cell phone, Internet, TV, all those systems in the community." When the budget proposal was reviewed in 2015, the Finance Minister was asked if the proposal was "getting a fibre optic link right to the homes." He said, "The intention is to have a clear point of presence in all the communities." The March 2017 news release announcing completion of the line said that the residents and businesses would now have a hook-up point "located in Fort Simpson, Wrigley, Tulita, Norman Wells, Fort Good Hope, Inuvik, and in High Level." This Finance Minister's September 2017 statement in this House said, "The completion of the nearly 1,200 kilometre fibre link brings affordable, high-speed, telecommunications to six communities along the Mackenzie Valley, including Inuvik." I'm sorry, that was the last Finance Minister.

Unfortunately, for communities along this route, none of the magical promises have come true. The fibre line hook-up point is not in all the communities.

For Fort Simpson, Wrigley, Tulita, Norman Wells, and Fort Good Hope, the fibre line runs past the communities. As I understand it, it will cost \$1 million plus to run the line into these communities. Without that money, the line might as well not be there at all.

This is serious. The Members of this House approved millions of dollars in expenditures of public funds because the government promised the project would deliver services in these communities, not pass by them. The justification of improved Internet service for these communities was repeatedly used in approving these expenditures. At the same time, numerous predictions were also made of new large revenue streams to help offset the costs of the project. Mr. Speaker, I see unanimous consent to conclude my statement?

---Unanimous consent granted

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. Later today, I will have questions for the Minister of Finance as to why the anticipated improvements to community Internet services along the fibre link have yet to happen and how we are going to improve Internet access and reliability in all NWT communities. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. Members' statements. Item 4, recognition of visitors in the gallery. Go back to Members' statements. Member for Hay River South.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON NORTHWEST TERRITORIES COMMERCIAL FISHERY

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I apologize. Today, I am recycling one of my earlier statements on the NWT commercial fishing industry. On September 21, 2018, the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard announced the establishment of a ministerial advisory panel to examine alternate governance and ownership models for the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation which better reflect the environment and market conditions in today's industry. The panel was directed to explore models that support collaboration and cooperation amongst fishers and involve them in decision making.

Mr. Speaker, the report also stressed a change in governance of FFMC by, and I quote, "Increase fisher participation in FFMC by drawing board members from fishers and fisher organizations. Fisher board members should be chosen to reflect the regional geographic diversity of FFMC operations and the demographic pattern of Indigenous participation in the fishery."

Mr. Speaker, after our government received this document, and I am assuming it was never read as the decision was made to do the exact opposite, this government removed the representative who was a fisher and replaced him with a GNWT bureaucrat. We need a fisher from the NWT sitting on the board of FFMC, and when I say "NWT" I do not mean transient Alberta fishers.

Mr. Speaker, this government talks about building relationships and working in partnership with our home-grown industries. In actuality, what is happening is that we are dictating to them and saying that we know better. We do know better when it comes to slowing a process down or not providing timely decisions or delivery of projects. That is an area we excel. When it comes to the industry itself, it is the fishers that know best. It is the fishers who are putting their lives on the line.

Mr. Speaker, I need to know and the fishers need to know that the approximately \$9 million to be spent on a fish plant in Hay River is based on sound and factual data. If we ever expect to maximize financial returns to the fishers for their product they deliver, we need their support and their participation at all levels of the business case. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON EULOGY FOR MRS. ADELE HARDISTY

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I raise in the House today the passing of Adele Hardisty, aka George Hardisty's wife. She was born April 15, 1925, to her loving parents, Marie and Jean Baptiste Antseti. Adele was raised near and around Fish Lake, living a nomadic life. Adele had three beautiful sisters and brother who passed at a young age.

Adele and George Hardisty were married down by the river on a mission boat that was passing through going up North. Together, they raised eight beautiful children: Gabe, Henry, Ethel, Nellie Jane, Violet, Shirley, Walter, Troy, and lost two children at a very young age. Adele and George raised two of their grandchildren, Melissa and Mical.

Adele was very involved in Fort Simpson and throughout the Deh Cho. She sat on the Wrigley Band Council and participated in various native women's meetings. She was a resourceful person for workshops on native language for the Department of Education, Culture and Employment. People remember when she did the community reports for the CBC Radio in South Slavey.

Adele was an excellent bread maker and jam maker. She always had the best goods available when you went to visit her. Her door was always open, and she always welcomed you with a great big smile. She would invite you to sit at her table and would make sure that you were well fed. If you did not find her sitting at her table, you would find her in the backyard, working on her hides. She was known to have the best system set up for tanning hides, and her son, Henry, would always say that she always had the best-smelling perfume.

Adele was blessed with 21 grandchildren and one great, great-grandchild. She always had a way of making each grandchild feel special by giving them a nickname and a song. Adele made sure she prepared the family for her passing. The family wanted her to know that they will be all right. She raised an amazing, crazy family. We will all miss her immensely. For now, rest in peace. We are sure George is happy to have his amazing wife with him.

The Hardisty family would like to thank everybody for their loving support and prayers during their time of sorrow. As well, they would like to thank all the staff at the Fort Simpson Long Term Care Facility for all the support and love they offered Adele during her stay. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Nahendeh. Members' statements. Item 4, recognition of visitors in the gallery. Item 5, returns to oral questions. Item 6, acknowledgements. Item 7, oral questions. Member for Nunakput.

Oral Questions

QUESTION 254-19(2): TRANSPORTATION SAFETY

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My Member's statement today was for the Minister of Infrastructure regarding safety of my constituents in Sachs Harbour and the runway and making sure that they are getting service for their food and mail. Mr. Speaker, the maintenance plan work for Sachs Harbour was in 2018, and then this February, it was announced again. Is this additional work? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Nunakput. Minister of Infrastructure.

HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are currently working on the drainage issue on the runway in Sachs Harbour. The snow is being removed to clear the packed snow from the edges of the runway. We did experience some maintenance issues and have sent a mechanic and parts to resolve the situation. I am not sure at this time if this work is part of the original plan for the airport or the runway. However, I would say, if this

is causing the problem that it's causing right now, it's a good chance that this has been an ongoing issue for years; it would not have just started at this point. I would hope that it is in the plan to be addressed in Sachs Harbour. I will commit, Mr. Speaker, to get back to the Member and confirm that it is in the plan, and if it is not in the plan, it will be added to the plan. Thank you.

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Madam Minister, for that reply. I really look forward to that because the safety of my constituents is a priority. Like I said earlier in my statement, we cannot land a King Air 350 for the medevac plane. That is what they use in the delta. They are using a Twin Otter, which is being brought in. Safety is the biggest thing for myself and making sure the service is being provided. Mr. Speaker, that being said, the work was not done in 2018. I know that was not the Minister of the day, but what is the cause of the delay?

HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY: Without having been the Minister in 2018, I am not sure what the cause has been for the delay. I agree wholeheartedly with the Member that the safety and well-being of the people of Sachs Harbour is of critical importance. I commit to looking into it after we get out of session today, that we are currently in now, looking into whether or not the situation with the medevacs has been impeded. It is my understanding that we are working with my colleagues at Health and Social Services to ensure that we do have that reply and the medevac services maintained. It's my understanding we may be using a more expensive aircraft as a result, so obviously, as a good fiscal planner, I would like to see that rectified as soon as possible.

MR. JACOBSON: I thank you, again, Madam Minister, for that. I just want to make sure that if and when the work is scheduled to take place this summer or as soon as possible for the drainage of both sides of the runway, to make sure that we get that done this summer for a priority, in putting Sachs Harbour as a priority on the Minister's table, to get it done this summer.

HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY: Yes, the plan is to do the work on the runway this summer. I have not been made aware of any issues regarding COVID-19 impacts to delay this project, so my department will be planning to do so. We have sent a GNWT charter with a mechanic there at this point and parts to fix the issue that we have been having. We are sending the excavator there to fix the issue at this point, to get it so that it's working for now, and then we will take care of the permanent solutions this summer.

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

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just again, the Minister's assurance she will keep me informed so I can keep my constituents and my leadership in Sachs Harbour informed on what's the plan when they do come up with one, to make sure it's sent to me and my local leadership. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY: Yes, I commit to keeping the Member informed, and I am sure the Member will let me know if I am not. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 255-19(2):
TALTSON PROJECT

MS. MARTSELOS: Mr. Speaker, the COVID-19 global pandemic has created a lot of uncertainty and delays for much of our daily life. My question is: does the Department of Infrastructure still consider this project as a priority for the 19th Assembly, the Taltson expansion? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Thebacha. Minister of Infrastructure.

HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, the Taltson energy expansion project does remain a priority of not only Infrastructure but of the 19th Legislative Assembly as decided upon by all of us in October last year. The GNWT has been successful in obtaining \$18 million in grant funding from Canada and continues to pursue the advancement of the project in terms of examining options for the commercial structure, defining our Indigenous partnerships, and completing technical design and environmental baseline work in order to prepare for a regulatory application.

MS. MARTSELOS: Given the economic fallout that the COVID-19 has created for our economy, this type of project is more important than ever to help spur economic growth. Can the Minister tell us whether any aspect of this project has been changed or has been delayed since the start of the 19th Legislative Assembly?

HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY: All work on this important project does continue. The COVID-19 situation may impact the nature of engagement around the project, and that is something that we are going to have to figure out as a government as a whole: how do we do engagement at a time when we cannot necessarily meet in person and, if not, we would be in violation of the CPHO? We are just currently working on establishing the appropriate safety protocols and measures so that we can continue with the Indigenous engagement and the stakeholder engagement that we have promised to do. I just wanted to reiterate that I will be creating a

unit within the Department of Infrastructure to take on the engagement process better.

MS. MARTSELOS: Can the Minister explain what the current stage that the Taltson hydro expansion is in and what comes next?

HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY: Currently, we are in the feasibility stage of the project, so our focus remains on examining the potential commercial structures, signing an MOU with our Indigenous partners, and working closely with the Canadian infrastructure bank to build a preliminary business case for this project. Technical work is focused on transmission-line routing options and costs. Strong Indigenous partnerships are imperative to the success of this project. I recently met with the YKDFN leadership to hear their thoughts on how they would like to be involved in this project. I look forward to meeting with other Indigenous partners who will be involved in this project. I have heard not directly from the band but that Lutselk'e is also very concerned about engagement on this project, so I commit to doing that better. I am also currently working with, like I said before, my deputy minister on the establishment of an Indigenous engagement community relations unit within the Department of Infrastructure to ensure that we do have strong relationships with our partners going forward, so that we have the right people around the table when we're talking about Taltson.

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

MS. MARTSELOS: Mr. Speaker, can the Minister provide a timeline for when the people of the NWT can expect this project to be built and operational? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY: This is a long-term project with many steps ahead of us. Our current focus is to establish the partnership relationships and agreements, finalize the preferred route for the project, and then prepare the regulatory applications. We have the federal funding in support of all of that work. Regulatory applications could be ready as early as next year, pending a complete field season this summer, so there potentially could be some impacts there if we can't get the engagement part done before the summer work starts. Following completion of an environmental assessment and regulatory permitting process, construction of the project will take about four or five years. We do think that operations at the facility could start as early as 2030. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 256-19(2):
FRESHWATER FISH MARKETING
CORPORATION

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have questions for the Minister of ITI. I have asked the Minister previously, and again I ask, if she has read the report from the ministerial advisory panel which examined alternate governance and ownership models for the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Hay River South. Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment.

HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do have a copy of the advisory panel documents, the report, and I will review. It is an exciting time, especially if this does evolve into being a harvester-led-and-owned entity. We are very excited for this project to move forward, and there is no anticipation that we would not; we're just trying to figure out how that's going to go. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: One important recommendation from the panel is the inclusion of fishers' participation in FFMC by drawing board members from fishers and fisher organizations. This government appointed a bureaucrat to the board. I ask the Minister if she will commit to reviewing this appointment and consider appointing a northern fisher to the board.

HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY: Thank you to the Member for the question. The department of fisheries and oceans is reviewing the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation and how harvesters will have more of an equity stake. The role of FFMC is critical to the Northwest Territories and how this transition to a federated cooperative will impact fishers across Great Slave Lake. It is quite possible that the FFMC becomes a cooperative entity and that the current board would dissolve. The new federated cooperative entity would be represented by fishers; however, in the meantime, until that happens, I do commit to the Member at looking at this appointment.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: I appreciate that answer. The next one is: what is the Minister's department doing to financially assist the NWT fishers, beyond the current programs, who are impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic?

HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY: For the 2020 fiscal year, the department will provide additional freight payments for the remote locations to support the strategic goals outlined in the strategy for revitalizing the Great Slave Lake commercial fishery of 10 cents per pound for zones 2 and 3 and

20 cents per pound for zones 4 and 5, which, in turn, will increase cash liquidity to fishers for seasonal start-up activities. The regional office has been having conference calls with the fishers every two weeks. Discussions have been held to provide updates on the status of FFMC, the status of ITI programs, and new safety programs. We haven't received any concerns about the lack of funding support, but I ask staff to confirm on the next call on Thursday with the fishers that that's the case. If not, I commit to coming back to the Member and having a discussion with him about those concerns.

I also want to say that I've recently, myself, met with a local fisher, so I have also been taking some time to at least continue to hear and engage with that industry so that I know what's going on, so that when we are moving forward with the fish plant, I am more informed.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, for the \$9 million question: what is the status of the proposed fishing plant for Hay River, and will the Minister commit to providing me with a briefing on this project? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY: The department is finalizing a processing footprint for the proposed new plant to bring it within budget. Proposed processing volumes have been reduced, and plant size reduced to approximately 10,000 square feet. As the Member will remember, the proposals received were well over the budget of money allocated. The region is working with Infrastructure on this project, and it is hoped that Infrastructure will be finalizing a tender delivery process this summer with an award this fall. I do commit to having a more fulsome discussion and briefing with the Member and anyone else that he would like to bring from his business community. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Oral questions. Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes.

QUESTION 257-19(2):
HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS COLLECTIVE
AGREEMENT

MS. SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Minister of Finance, where the human resources department falls under. Can the Minister confirm or explain if term contracts cannot be extended up to 48 months any longer, where this could ensure a longer commitment from some of our healthcare professionals? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes. Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, Mr. Speaker, the new collective agreement now has 24 months as the benchmark and no longer 48 months. Thank you.

MS. SEMMLER: Knowing, within my past experience, looking through the collective agreement, when somebody is here for up to 48 months, they get 100 percent removal. If they choose to stay on past that and sign on as an indeterminate, then there is a removal, and this is what staff look at: the years that you stay within the government, you get so much percentage of removal. When it used to be up to 48 months, if they decided they loved the place that they're living, they would comfortably move into an indeterminate. Can the Minister explain to me why this change was made?

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: I will say I listened quite intently, and I am well familiar that the Member has a lot of experience in terms of hiring in an area that is under a lot of stress, in terms of hiring healthcare workers. I'm not in a position right now to explain the details of how the collective agreement was negotiated on this particular point, but I certainly intend to inform myself on it. I will reach out to the Member and to a relevant committee if they're interested. The Member is probably still aware, and the House is likely still aware, that, earlier, I had made a commitment that the Department of Finance and human resources is going to be working and is working with Health and Social Services to improve recruitment and retention of healthcare workers. It certainly sounds like there is some interesting experience and very relevant experience that I would like to draw from the Member on.

MS. SEMMLER: As the Minister alluded to, one of our priorities of this government is to increase resident healthcare staff by 20 percent. I would like to know if there is some sort of plan that is in place in human resources to fix the system to make it more appealing to indeterminate employees rather than locums and terms, especially in our highly-needed healthcare profession.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: I certainly can confirm that human resources has already begun working with Health and Social Services, that they are already underway in terms of developing their plan. I'll correct myself later if I'm wrong, but I believe there was an intention to move forward this summer. Again, now, with COVID-19, that may have changed somewhat, but the Department of Finance and human resources has been quite actively involved in the fact that we've had to staff up in the Health and Social Services Department. I

will certainly commit to getting the details on those plans back to the Member and back to this House as quickly as possible.

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

QUESTION 258-19(2):
SUPPORT FOR SMALL BUSINESSES

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions today are for the Premier because I believe that the kind of response required by the GNWT to support small business will take a Cabinet collaboration. Mr. Speaker, can I have the Premier's commitment that she will instruct her Cabinet Ministers to bring forward innovative suggestions on how more funding and support can be made available to NWT businesses as a result of COVID-19? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Kam Lake. Honourable Premier.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Absolutely. We are already taking some movement in that way. It is one of the primary reasons that Minister Nokleby actually proposed the business advisory council. The important thing, though, Mr. Speaker, is that we have to make sure that our compensations for businesses complement the federal government's and not overlap, and that is a fine dance that we have been doing all the time. Constantly, in my first Ministers' conferences, I keep talking about flexibility. The federal government seems to say, "This is for this. This is for that." We have businesses keep falling through the cracks all the time, so I have been asking for flexibility within that. However, absolutely, we are already on that.

MS. CLEVELAND: I completely agree with the Premier that we do have to demand flexibility from the federal government, but in that, I believe that we also need to make up for that here in the Northwest Territories because our businesses simply can't afford to wait until the federal government is able to kind of work with our entire country to then give our northern businesses what they need to survive. Does the Premier see us in the Northwest Territories being able to provide an influx of cash, as a government, to businesses within the Northwest Territories, ahead of waiting for the federal government?

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: The Government of the Northwest Territories has already provided some economic relief. The relief packages that we have put out there are available on our GNWT website. If not, let me know, and I will get back to you on that. We are trying to keep up as well as possible. The whole idea, though, is we need a

coordinated approach. Like I said before, if we keep running to the federal government -- which happened at the beginning. First, it was tourism. I am trying to remember the order. First, it was tourism. Then it was Chamber of Mines, and it kept going. It's confusing for the federal government. That is why we are talking about having a plan that will actually come forward and say, "These are all of our needs, both social and economic." It's a better presentation to the federal government, and it makes us look more professional as the GNWT.

MS. CLEVELAND: As a government, we have incurred many expenses because of COVID-19, and we have incurred these expenses hoping that the federal government will down the road reimburse us for all of these. I am wondering: does the territorial government kind of have a limit of how much COVID debt they are willing to take on or they can take on, and is small business and money to small business included in that plan? Thank you.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Absolutely. We are not waiting for the federal government to help businesses and residents of the Northwest Territories. However, we are advocating all the time. I have to give credit to the federal government for what they have done. It's not fair to stand here and blame the federal government. They are trying their hardest. They have given to us so far \$23.4 million for us to use for COVID-19, mostly of course for health and social services but for other expenses because they gave us the flexibility in that. They gave us \$8.7 million for airlines. They are promising more. They gave us \$35 million for businesses recently. You know, I mean they are trying the best they can. The question, though, is: are we tracking it? Absolutely, we are tracking. The Department of Finance is responsible for tracking. All finance directors in every department has a special COVID-19 code that they use to implement any of the expenses we are doing. We are tracking, and we are trying to be as responsible as possible.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Honourable Premier. Oral questions. Member for Yellowknife Centre.

QUESTION 259-19(2):
RESPONSIBILITY AND PRESERVATION OF
GOVERNMENT ARTWORK

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's indicative of the question of public art that it's uncertain whether the question should be for Infrastructure or for ECE, but I am going to start with Infrastructure. As I mentioned in my statement, the recent discovery of a hand-painted mural lying on top of a gravel pile on the Stanton campus raises questions about how the government tracks and cares for art that it acquires. My first question is simply: who is responsible for the care and maintenance and the appropriate storage of art

from the old Stanton hospital? Thank you. That question is going to the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. It's confusing.

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

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are trying to work with the other Minister and the Member to get some answers for her questions here. When it comes to public artwork, it is the responsibility for the department to care for it, to maintain it, to store it, and they can always reach out to the Prince of Wales Heritage Centre for advice. That is where the experts are. That is the situation right now. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. GREEN: Thank you to the Minister of ECE for that answer. Is there a policy or are there guidelines in place that describe how art in the government's possession should be cared for?

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Right now, there are no government-wide guidelines. However, not just ECE but ECE in collaboration with all departments has put together the Culture and Heritage Strategic Framework that is 2015 to 2025 as well as four-year action plan that is 2019 to 2022. As part of that framework and action plan, one of the goals is to safeguard heritage, including artwork in government buildings that requires special consideration and preservation. We have put our mind to it, but the work has not quite begun yet. I will leave it there. I won't answer all of the questions in advance from the Member.

MS. GREEN: I appreciate that information. I think the time has come to start that work of putting those guidelines in place. My next question is whether there is a formal chain of custody for artwork so that, when they come into the government's possession, they are tracked from the time that they come in to the time that they are disposed of, sold, given away, or in other ways come out of the government collection.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: No, there is not right now. The government has a lot of artwork. There are a lot of government buildings, and they have lots of things on the walls. That means there is artwork that could be worth virtually nothing, and there could be some large pieces, like the Member has referenced, that could be worth quite a bit. There was an inventory taken by ITI, I believe, about 10 years ago, that looked at all of this, but nothing has been done since. I think the reason for that is because this massive artwork, it would cost more than all of the work combined is worth to inventory it, so I think that what is needed is a focus and identification of some of these special pieces and a system put in place to ensure that we know where those are and that, once they are done their useful

life within the government, they can be preserved either by the museum or an appropriate organization.

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

MS. GREEN: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate that answer. You know, I am going to say that every artist who does a commission or makes a donation of art to the government feels that the piece is special, so deciding on which pieces are special I think is going to be somewhat problematic. However, I think we owe it to these artists to acknowledge their work in the government's possession, to take care of it, and to make sure that it is stored appropriately when it's not displayed or even that it's displayed appropriately. I am looking for a commitment to begin work on this whole area of managing public art as soon as possible. Thank you.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Certainly, commissioned art is different from something that someone might buy at the store to fill an empty wall, and there is not much consideration put into that piece of art. No, it is a different level that the Member is talking about. I will work with the Minister of Infrastructure. The department has some expertise in asset management and combine that with the expertise that we have in the culture and heritage division and see what we can do to remedy this problem because it is a shame when you see a piece of art that means a lot to a lot of people buried under the snow and degrading away like that. Yes, I can commit to having those discussions and charting a path forward. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 260-19(2):
CREATE MINISTER RESPONSIBLE FOR
TRANSPARENCY

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the previous Assembly, we had a Minister responsible for public engagement and transparency, and I think we can all acknowledge that those are severely lacking in the GNWT and much work needs to be done. Mr. Speaker, some good work was started. There was an open government policy. However, I think the implementation and the continued work under that policy has not been carried on in this Assembly. My question for the Premier: is she willing to create a Minister responsible for transparency and open government? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Yellowknife North. Honourable Premier.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the Member said in the 18th Legislative Assembly, there was a Minister appointed, just in that Assembly, for transparency. The Minister developed a policy, and in all honesty, the Minister got blamed for everything in that Assembly. In reality, it is that every department has a responsibility, and every Minister has a responsibility for transparency. However, in saying that, I know the federal government is doing that, as well. We're a small jurisdiction. We're 19, seven on Cabinet. I would have a portfolio and a Minister for everything if I had the resources, but I don't. I hate to say this because I'm a social worker, that there would be other things that I would appoint Ministers for on top of that, in honesty, because there are so many gaps in our government.

However, what we've done recently is that we created a branch within the Department of Finance. It's called the Information Systems Shared Services. Through the creation of this branch, the GNWT consolidated the responsibility for all GNWT information systems, including what the federal government calls their digital government under the chief information officer. As I mentioned, the information shared systems is housed in the Department of Finance. I am not making her the Minister of transparency or accountability, but by default, she is actually the Minister. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. JOHNSON: I believe, in the future, I will direct my questions to the Minister of Finance. I do think that the centralization of ISSS will bring some of this work, but ultimately, they need to reach in the departments. Each Minister needs to be responsible for this. I think COVID has shown us that more and more government data needs to be public, and more and more services need to be online. One of the things that should come out of this: every single government service should be available online eventually. Is the Minister willing to put that in mandate letters to department that they work to bring all their services available online?

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: At this point, the mandate letters should have been in the process of being shared with MLAs, so I am not going to pull them all back from you and start adding things. I made a commitment, though, to the Regular Members that I would be open to feedback, not that I would make changes, but I'd be open to feedback. If that is something that the Member feels that should be on those, then I would welcome that feedback on those mandate letters.

MR. JOHNSON: That will be my feedback, that the mandate letters need a clear direction to get departments to make this a priority because when it sits on the side of different units' desks, it simply doesn't get done. My next question is: if the federal

government has a pilot project open by default, this would take our records and make them open to the public, essentially our DIM system. I think it would also incentivize departments to prioritize record keeping. Is the Premier willing to keep a similar pilot project in the GNWT?

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: I do have to use some notes for this. We all have strengths and weaknesses, and the Members know that this is not my strength. I'm using help. As the Information System Shared Services branch moves forward with developing, formalizing the GNWT's approach to delivery of services, consideration will be given to how we can make government documents available online. This work will be informed by the GNWT's open government policy and our obligation and responsibilities under the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act. In saying that, Mr. Speaker, I do have to acknowledge that all departments are trying their best to put as much information as possible. We are in an unusual situation in these times of COVID-19, so I do ask to be patient. Don't expect everything to be on tomorrow. When there are gaps, also, at the same time, let us know because we are trying our best, all government departments. Let us know, and we will try to amend it.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are gaps. I think one of the gaps is we have that open policy, and that work was started by the previous Minister of transparency and engagement. That work has largely not been actualized. I'm unsure if the responsibility of that policy lies with ISSS. Can the Premier make sure that there is a unit where someone is clearly in charge of implementing the goals in the open government policy which was developed? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: I must say that we have an amazing Cabinet here. As soon as the question was asked, I've seen my Finance Minister shaking her head and saying, "I agree." Yes, we will make that commitment. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 261-19(2):
DELIVERY OF IMPROVED INTERNET SERVICES

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. My question is for the Minister of Finance responsible for the Mackenzie Valley fibre optic link. My statement earlier today recounted how the expense was justified to this House as a means of

connecting our communities to faster and more reliable Internet services. All of the references portray the project as delivering high speed Internet services in the communities, not a mile away with \$1 million hook-up cost. Can the Minister explain why the promised improvements to Internet services in the communities along the fibre link has not happened? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, Mr. Speaker, the Mackenzie Valley fibre link is essentially the highway that makes it possible for these communities to have access to high speed Internet. Without that highway, there would be no opportunity for these communities to have access. Right now, Fort Simpson, Wrigley, Tulita, Norman Wells, Fort Good Hope, and Inuvik, all have a point of access inside those communities, directly inside those communities. The GNWT, the role that we had was in terms of providing that highway. We are the owner of that highway. We are not the Internet service provider, so we're not necessarily, then, going to take it from the point of access and run the line into somebody's home.

We are, however, also a consumer inside those communities, meaning that we take it from the point of access in the community, bring it into schools, bring it into healthcare centres, and bring it into government offices. Quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, there has been tremendous improvement because the ability of all of those government services now is to access high speed Internet. It is in those communities. We are not the service provider. We are also an advocate to support the Internet service providers so that they can, then, provide that last mile of connectivity between the point of access into homes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. O'REILLY: I want to thank the Minister for that. I agree with her assessment, but the problem was that this project was sold to the House, to the public, as a way to allow for individuals, households in the communities to get access to high speed Internet. It hasn't panned out. Given that the promise was to have services in the communities, what steps will the Minister take now to deliver on that promise and literally go the extra mile to ensure that the improvements of Internet service actually happen?

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: In addition to being the owner of the main highway that brings that link all the way up and brings that point of access and, in addition, being the consumer that helps make it attractive to Internet service providers once they're in that community, there are two other roles, I think, that the government is playing and

must continue to play, and needs to, certainly, do a very good job of playing as we've all realized how important Internet services are in our homes. That is as an advocate and as a supporter.

As an advocate, both at the federal government level, in terms of going in, this is a priority for the federal government, as well. It is important that they understand and realize that this is going to leave us behind if we don't have access to Internet in the homes of everyone. It is not enough to have it at the school; you need to now have it in your home, as well. We are an important advocate. I spoke earlier, very recently, at the federal finance committee's opportunity to speak there, and this is one of the things that I recommended to them, is that they must make good on that promise to bring Internet and broadband into the homes in communities across the North.

The other one is as a supporter who is working with the private corporations who are the Internet service providers to ensure that they have the opportunity to make the right connections, whether it's community connections, that they have the opportunities to go into those communities, that we can assist them with whatever supports they need so that they can then be the Internet service providers in those communities.

MR. O'REILLY: I want to thank the Minister for that explanation. We have seen during the pandemic how the limitations and problems with Internet access in all NWT communities has hampered communications, especially for distance education and people trying to work from home. While the Mackenzie Valley fibre link may help some communities, clearly, it is not going to link all of our remote communities either. Can the Minister tell us if there is a plan to improve Internet connectivity in the NWT comparable to southern Canada and, if not, when will that plan be ready?

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: The Mackenzie Valley fibre link is certainly one part of it. Making the connection up to Tuktoyaktuk is another. Looking at what other areas of connectivity we can work with. For instance, the road currently to Whati is another point where we want to look at what we can be doing as a supporter and as an advocate to make sure that we're using all those opportunities to get the basis, to get the fundamentals there available for those Internet service providers.

The plan, if we're going to be having a plan, is much more than just what the government can do. It's going to have to engage and look at what the Internet service providers are going to be able to do, what is private industry going to be able to do, because, again, the government is not in the business of running a line from the point of access into the homes. I certainly will commit to looking at

that so that we are engaging differently, but I don't want to make any bones about it. This isn't a plan for the government to run the lines from the point of access to the home. It's a plan to make sure we have the point of access, and then to have a plan to engage, to support, and to advocate to get those lines into those homes.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, monsieur le President. I want to thank the Minister for that. I don't think she actually answered my question about when we're actually going to see a plan. The Minister knows well my views on megaprojects that Cabinet keeps pushing. I have made no bones whatsoever about that, but if there is one project that I think we can all get behind, it's improving Internet connectivity in the NWT. All of us can get behind that. It is something I think that the federal government is ready to move on, ready to fund us, but we need the plan. Can the Minister commit to making improved Internet connectivity across the NWT the highest priority for this government, especially when approaching the federal government for infrastructure investments? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: I am certainly not going to speak for the whole of the Assembly and determine which of our priorities ranks above one or the other, but I think every Member here who has experienced the last two months of working from home and working remotely knows how important Internet connectivity is. As we're going forward, we are not entirely out of the weeds in terms of COVID. People are going to continue to rely on digital communication. It is obvious that this item is a priority, and it already was a priority of the Assembly. I'm not, as I say, going to rank it above the others, but I certainly can assure the Member that, when we are having our federal Ministers meetings, out of all departments, that this idea of broadband, the importance of having digital access, is being raised across the board. It will continue to be raised, and I really have no difficulty, certainly, in making that commitment, that we have raised it and will continue to do so. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Oral questions. Item 8, written questions. Item 9, returns to written questions. Item 10, replies to the Commissioner's address. Item 11, petitions. Item 12, reports of committees on the review of bills. Item 13, reports of standing and special committees. Item 14, tabling of documents. Minister of Justice.

Tabling of Documents

TABLED DOCUMENT 118-19(2):
REPORT OF THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES
JUDICIAL REMUNERATION COMMISSION 2020

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following document: "Report of the Northwest Territories Traditional Remuneration Commission 2020." Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

TABLED DOCUMENT 119-19(2):
ANNUAL REPORT TO THE LEGISLATIVE
ASSEMBLY UNDER THE TRANSPORTATION OF
DANGEROUS GOODS ACT 2019

HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table the following document: "Annual Report to the Legislative Assembly under the Transportation of Dangerous Goods Act 2019." Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Tabling of documents.

TABLED DOCUMENT 120-19(2):
OFFICE OF THE LANGUAGES COMMISSIONER
FOR THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES ANNUAL
REPORT 2018-2019

MR. SPEAKER: Pursuant to Section 23 of the Official Languages Act, I wish to table the Office of the Languages Commissioner for the Northwest Territories Annual Report 2018-2019. Thank you.

Tabling of documents. Item 16, notices of motion. Item 17, motions. Mr. Norn.

Motions

MOTION 8-19(2):
REVOCATION OF APPOINTMENT OF THE
HONOURABLE MEMBER FOR GREAT SLAVE TO
THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

MR. NORN: Marsi cho, Mr. Speaker. Pursuant to Rule 60, I wish to withdraw Motion 8-19(2). Marsi cho.

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Tu Nedhe-Willideh wishes to withdraw Motion 8-19(2). Does the seconder for this motion, the Member for Hay River South, consent to have the motion withdrawn, pursuant to Rule 60?

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, I consent to having Motion 8-19(2) withdrawn. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. Colleagues, Motion 8-19(2) has been withdrawn by the mover and the consent of the seconder. We will now continue with the orders of the day. Item 17, notices of motion for the first reading of bills. Item 18, first reading of bills. Item 19, second reading of bills. Member for Yellowknife North.

Second Reading of Bills

BILL 6:

AN ACT TO AMEND THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY AND EXECUTIVE COUNCIL ACT

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am very excited to move this bill into second reading. Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Hay River North, that Bill 6, An Act to Amend the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act, be read for the second time.

Mr. Speaker, this bill amends the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act to permit this Assembly to conduct all or a portion of a session by way of teleconference or video conference, and it permits Members to participate in a session by way of teleconference or video conference at the discretion of the Speaker. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Yellowknife North. To the principle of the bill. All those in favour? All those opposed? Any abstentions? The motion is carried.

---Carried

Bill 6 has had its second reading. Member for Yellowknife North.

MR. JOHNSON: Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to waive Rule 73(2) and have Bill 6, An Act to Amend the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act, moved into Committee of the Whole for consideration later today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Yellowknife North. The Member is seeking unanimous consent to have Bill 6 moved into Committee of the Whole. Are there any nays? There are no nays.

---Unanimous consent granted

Bill 6 will be moved into Committee of the Whole. Thank you. Item 20, consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters: Tabled Document 30-19(2), Main Estimates 2020-2021, with the Department of Health and Social Services, with the Member for Yellowknife Centre in the chair.

Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters

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

MR. NORN: Marsi cho, Madam Chair. Committee wishes to consider Tabled Document 30-19(2), Main Estimates 2020-2021.

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

---SHORT RECESS

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Good afternoon, Members. Today, we are going to continue our review of the Department of Health and Social Services budget. When we left off yesterday, we were talking about the section on out of territory services. Are there any additional questions on out of territory services in the Health and Social Services budget? I think that's beginning about page 175 of your document. Are there any additional questions on out of territory services? Sergeant-at-Arms, could you please escort in the witnesses. Will the Minister of Health to again introduce her witnesses, please.

HON. DIANE THOM: Thank you, Madam Chair. Today, I have with me Deputy Minister Bruce Cooper and Ms. Mathison. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Madam Minister. I have on the speaker's list the Member for Monfwi. Please go ahead.

MR. LAFFERTY: Masi, Madam Chair. [Translation] Thank you, Madam Chair. Page 180, that's what I'm referring to, about the English term, when we say addiction treatment centres, meaning that, for the treatment, they would be able to be sent to Edmonton, but last year, according to the record, there were 191 sent for treatment, and that spent well over \$200,000 on residential, school, and medical services, all together included, but because I don't know if it would be in the same department, I would like to ask about that one. Sending people for treatment out of the territory, is it under Health and Social Services? Would they be able to look into it again? Regarding the 191 people who were sent out of the territory, is it possible that they could be treated or going for treatment here in the territory, because there is on-the-land funding?

We have a lot of elders today who would be able to treat. Our leaders, our teachers, would know how to help with the treatment, but people referring to working on themselves, we are always sending them out of the territory. Let's not do it anymore. Let's have an addictions program here in the territory and have elders working with them. Put

them in place. We know they are strong, respecting our elders, and also have an aftercare program, as well, with it. Right now, I would like to ask the Minister: was there ever an issue, topic of discussion, about this kind of treatment being put in the territory? We know how many were sent. That's the money that could be spent in the territory. Can the Minister respond to that? [Translation ends]

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): [Microphone turned off] ...Minister of Health and Social Services.

HON. DIANE THOM: [Translation] Madam Chair, addiction treatment centre [English translation not available] [Translation ends] I hear where the Member is coming from in terms of looking at doing something closer to home, including our elders, including our residents. Right now, within the department, we provide funding to all the Indigenous groups to have an on-the-land fund. In terms of the addictions, have we thought about that in the past? I am going to ask Mr. Cooper if we have thought about that previously.

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

MR. COOPER: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes, in fact, there had been four different residential addictions facilities in the NWT over the years. The last facility closed in 2013, and that is when the department signed contracts with southern providers. At the time, the thought was that using southern providers would provide for more specialized treatment, more choice for people. To now, our focus has been on southern facilities that we have certainly heard issues around aftercare. Certainly, the experiences that we have had with the COVID response and observing the impact on people through the disability council initiative has caused us to consider this issue of: what could we be doing here in the North to add onto the on-the-land that we've been doing, and might there be other opportunities to look at a treatment centre? It is certainly something that's not off the table. It is something we are going to be looking at as a range of options to incorporate lessons learned out of COVID.

I do think it is important, notwithstanding the challenges that exist with aftercare and housing, we do have about 70 to 75 percent of people who attend treatment in the South in our current model who do return here sober. We have been focusing a lot on efforts to make sure that this gets maintained and they continue to get supported. All that to say that we are, absolutely, open to the idea of looking at a treatment centre, and we'll be taking a look at this question, and different treatment models as part of our planning forward. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Deputy Minister. Follow-up question, Member for Monfwi.

MR. LAFFERTY: [Translation] Thank you, Madam Chair. About the treatment, when we speak of treatment, sending people out to Edmonton, it has been seven years now in the Northwest Territories. There is no addiction treatment centre with us right now, but we know we have an agreement with Edmonton or Alberta for the treatment of our people. When can we have our own program, an agreement, on-the-land program within our region? We all need the treatment. We want it very strong so that we get very strong elders. We know; we lived here; we grew up with elders and how we respect our elders when they speak to us. However, what we are going through in addictions of all sorts, alcohol, drugs. If we put it all on the side, we are strong enough. We would be able to take their words and go with this after-treatment program.

When we speak of it, I am not really in favour of sending people out. They come back; there is no aftercare program. I have to say that again for our young man that we have lost recently. What happened to him? When I look at it today, it's a very heavy issue. It's very important that we share it. How come we don't have treatment on our land in our home community? We lose a lot of people to addiction. It's not very healthy one way. I would like to see programs within our regions. On-the-land programs are very important. If it's under them, it would be very powerful.

When we send them away, out of the territory, for treatment, when they come back, what do we see? We don't have an aftercare program. We also spend a lot of money going out that way, but if we have it within our homeland, we would have the control of being funded. Right now, if it's out of control, we would be able to control it from here. When they are out there, we don't know what's going on. We don't really know what they are doing with them. Again, I have to say, we don't know. When they come back, they are back to square one with their addiction. We see that.

This is why I am repeating this, especially in my home community, my region. How many weeks now that we have lost all sorts of people, young and old? I have to continue. I have to be very strong and do whatever I can for my people. It has to be fixed. It has to happen. Right now, I would prefer to have a motion. Justice Department, ECE, they have to be able to be working together. This is why. Are the Ministers able to work together and have a proposal together and say this is what they can do for our homeland so it can be done? Is it possible that would happen? I know it's not going to happen right now, but when we leave now, when we come back to the table in the fall, we would have

something in place. It would be the beginning of having a discussion and very strong to have this treatment for our people. Thank you, Madam Chair. [Translation ends]

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Member for Monfwi. Our condolences to the families of those who have died in your region as a result of their addictions. I am going to turn to the Minister now for her response.

HON. DIANE THOM: Thank you, Madam Chair. Again, I apologize, too, for what the Member's family has gone through as a result of mental health and addiction. Right now, in the territories, we have the Mental Wellness and Recovery Action Plan, which supports the 19th Assembly's priorities, which is increasing the number of culturally respected, community-based mental health and addictions programs, including aftercare. Some of the key activities in this action plan include reducing wait times and increasing access to counselling services by establishing access to e-mental health options, enhancing supports and aftercare options for individuals who are recovering from addictions, as well as developing a GNWT problematic substance abuse task force, which includes developing a territorial plan on alcohol. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Minister. Any further comments, Member for Monfwi.

MR. LAFFERTY: [Translation] Masi, Madam Chair. Just a short form. I would like to just say to the Minister what is written in front of her, she is reading, but most of the time there's no follow-up. I'll have to say what happened to my home or my region. If we had actions about what we have, it would be good. Right now, I'm asking the Minister if she would be able to say: let's have a strong after-care program proposal. It's not only for communities, because I know, I hear, in other regions, they have all these issues, this problem like the Tlicho community, see if she would also work with them. In the short form, I'd like to have her to work with PSEA so that this after-care program would be strong. Thank you. [End of translation]

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Minister.

HON. DIANE THOM: Thank you, Madam Chair. I hear the Member asking our department to work with the Tlicho government and the residents in terms of how we come up with solutions to better enhance some of our programs so that we can deal with mental health and addictions. That is something our department will look into. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MS. MARTSELOS: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just want to make some clarifications with regard to addictions. I, too, in my region, have a lot of mental health issues, and I had deaths in our region due to addictions. I respect the Member from the Tlicho. He is asking for more monies put into on-the-land, but I want to make sure that the option is still there for members to have the proper addiction facilities available for treatment, because the addictions facilities that are being offered in southern jurisdictions, especially Poundmaker's, is very much on the theme of Indigenous people, when they go to addictions. I'm quite familiar with all of these, because I've had Poundmaker's do complete addiction courses and whole things at Salt River, on reserve. They were six weeks long, and a whole team is included, psychiatry, psychologists, and these were all Aboriginal people.

To me, addictions also includes getting into what happens, why they are in this situation, and on-the-land is part of that for the after-care, and I respect the Tlicho Member's statement. I think that on-the-land doesn't have enough monies allocated to it, and I think that's something that should be looked into in future, but in treatment centres, most of the time, most treatment centres have addiction doctors who go there, and they balance the whole thing even with the pills and what is needed to offset some of these addictions. You know, these are big costs and, for the amount of money we spent, I was surprised at how little it was, for 191 people who went, because that would have cost us much more in the long run.

I'm just pointing those out, because I'm always about getting the best for the members of the Northwest Territories, and I want to make sure that the after-care is also in place. I mentioned that yesterday. I'd like to see you think about that, Madam Minister. We had a great discussion on this in past times with all the Aboriginal groups about addictions. We spent a whole day on it one time with all the leaders. It was very informative for me because, like I said earlier in my comments, almost every household, no matter if it's Indigenous or non-Indigenous, no matter of race, no matter of colour, no matter of religion, there is always a problem in almost every family, and it's something that each and every one of us has to face. Anonymity is very important, also. We live in a small territory. Anonymity and privacy are some of the things that we discussed in the last couple of days, and I think that anonymity is extremely important when we make some of these big decisions. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. DIANE THOM: Thank you, Madam Chair. I hear the Member's concern about being

anonymous. I mean, right now, there is so much stigma attached to mental health. When people hear about going to treatment and going to get some help, there is that stigma attached. We need to get away from that. We need to start thinking about: how do we rename or how do we get away from people thinking it's wrong to go to treatment? It's not. You're going there for help, and I think that's important. I hear what you're saying. Sorry, Madam Chair. I hear what the Member is saying, and I totally agree.

On-the-land programs are important; they are key. Right now, our department spends \$1.8 million with partnerships with Indigenous groups so that they can start to deliver on-the-land programs, and I think that's important. I mean, every Indigenous group in the territory is diverse. We have First Nations, Metis, Inuit, and it's all culturally relevant. They deliver programs based on how they want to heal their residents and their people. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Minister. Do you have a follow-up question, Member for Thebacha?

MS. MARTSELOS: No, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you. Are there any other comments or questions on this section? Mr. Jacobson.

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just on work on behalf of others. Bringing up what my colleague from Monfwi brought up in regard to the healing centres, I know Fort McPherson had Tl'oondih. Inuvik and the Gwich'in, there are two places that we could send people to get help, get healing, and I guess working with that. I've seen so many people, same as him, fall through the cracks in regard to sending them out for treatment. When they come back home, there is nowhere to go. It's a vicious cycle, but it's a cycle of peer pressure and that they make by choice. I think those should be really looked at in regard to trying to help our own people up there, because nothing has been done. Nothing is being done. We could help more people if it's more centralized, say, in the Inuvik area, bring people in from the communities. That's just one of the concerns that I have.

These past few months, with the First Nations and the cancer strategy across our territory, I think what we should be really looking at is: so many people are telling me that they are getting misdiagnosed with cancer. They've been going to the health centre for a year, a year and a half, and they get sent out. They go out to Edmonton, come back, and when they do come back to the community, it's stage 4 cancer. You can't do anything. It's too late. Some of them get stage 2, they did catch it in time, but I'm dealing with a couple of constituents like

that. The misdiagnosis is happening too much. I just want to make sure that the Minister is making sure, on behalf of all of our constituents who we serve, and the department, I guess out of Inuvik it would be myself, that the following up of the heading to the Cross Cancer Institute, making sure their appointments are made, especially with this COVID-19 stuff that we have going on, just to follow through. Just a couple of weeks ago, we had one with kidney failure with a misdiagnosis again. It's really tough in our communities, because our health centres do the best that they can to provide the service. We have to rally around that in terms of trying to work together for our constituents to getting them served. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Member for Nunakput. That takes us back a few pages, but I am wondering if you would like to respond to that question, Minister.

HON. DIANE THOM: Thank you, Madam Chair. I hear the Member's concern, and it is very important. Right now, we have a relationship with Alberta as they take a lot of our patients. It is a combination of making sure, when we catch anybody at a certain stage in cancer, that we do our best. That has been our department's approach, to make sure that they get to their appointment as quick as possible. The relationship that we have with Alberta has been doing great. We are trying to make sure that our patients in the Northwest Territories are just as important as the patients in Alberta, and we have that relationship. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Minister. Do you have a follow-up question, Member for Nunakput?

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just wanted to see, on my first comments in regard to the treatment, if being able to bring it up North, working with the Gwich'in, working with the Inuvialuit, working with communities who want to try to help our own people, is it possible to see if there are any avenues that we could work together, going down that road together? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. DIANE THOM: Thank you, Madam Chair. I know, in the past, that we have had a lot of treatment programs in our communities. I don't know why they have shut down. That's prior to my time. It is something that we could look at. I do want to say that we provide funding to the Indigenous groups, but we don't tell them how to spend it. When we provide a contribution agreement with them, that's them coming up with their own plan and resources. Most times, they match a lot of our dollars, and they are able to deliver programs that

are relevant to them and their culture. We do provide funding; we just don't tell them how to spend it. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Minister. Anything further, Member for Nunakput?

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. No, I think it's time that we do start telling them in regards to how to get treatment, because they're not doing it. It's too much overhead, the costs. The start-up cost is the biggest thing. Like I said, we have two camps up there, three camps, potentially, that closed down due to everything being sent down to Alberta. I am thankful that our territorial government has a good working relationship with Alberta. I am happy for that, that people are being served on a timely basis, but I think it's time that we start taking a look at ourselves within to try to start taking care of ourselves and working together; not just giving them the money and pushing it to the side, thinking it's going to get done, but actually seeing boots on the ground trying to do these programs as a starting point. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Member for Nunakput. That's more a comment than a question. Did you want to respond, Minister?

HON. DIANE THOM: I hear the Member's comment, and I take that as a comment. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Minister. Any further questions on this section? Member for Hay River South.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm on page 180. Hopefully, I'm on the right page.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): You are.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you. This may have been answered yesterday; I had to leave a little bit early. I just want to know: how many people do we have in the South under residential care right now? Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Member for Hay River South. Let's see if we get the same numbers today.

HON. DIANE THOM: [Microphone turned off] ...Deputy Minister Cooper. It's 119.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Deputy Minister, please.

MR. COOPER: Thank you, Madam Chair. My binder indicates it's 119 adults and 50 children.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): That is consistent with yesterday's answer. Good. Further questions, Member for Hay River South?

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I had a question from a constituent there a few weeks ago. She has a sister who has been down there for quite a number of years, and whether she's forgotten or whether the government has forgotten about her or not, I'm not sure. Are there any plans to repatriate the people under residential care back to the territories in the South? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. DIANE THOM: Thank you, Madam Chair. This is something that our department is looking into. Right now, we have residential care services for those with difficult needs. They have developmental delays. There are complex care needs. We would like to bring them closer to home. Sometimes, the services that we offer are not suitable for them and, therefore, the reason why they are not able to be at home. Thank you.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just to continue on with that, then, if we can't provide the services here, I'm just wondering: we keep sending people down there. How many people have we brought back because we actually implemented something here in the territories to allow them to come back? How much of that work has been done? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. DIANE THOM: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just remembered something prior to the question. We are doing a supported living review so that we can be able to determine all of our patients who are having to have services outside of the territory, to do a review so that we can repatriate them eventually.

In terms of the past, sorry, Madam Chair, I'm just going to ask Deputy Minister Cooper. I don't have the numbers in front of me to be able to offhand say how many people we have actually brought back in the prior years. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. COOPER: Thank you, Madam Chair. Unfortunately, I do not have the number either, but it's something we will endeavour to see if we have in the department. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Deputy Minister. We will take that as a commitment to return. Member for Hay River South.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. What is the average cost, I guess, per person per year to house them down South? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. DIANE THOM: Thank you, Madam Chair. In front of me, I don't have that number, but we have to recognize that it would all depend on their level of care. The patients that we have outside of the territories, whatever services they are providing, it all would depend. I don't believe we have numbers at this time. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. It sounds like it's about \$200,000 per person. It just seems to be a fairly hefty number. It would be nice to see, start to look at ways to bring people back here. In saying that, you mentioned a variety of issues that people have, and I am not sure if there is kind of a theme to that, if there are more in one area or not. What is it that we are short of here in the NWT that we have to send these people South? What are we short on the ground? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. DIANE THOM: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm not aware of the specifics, and I will ask Deputy Minister Cooper to be able to dig deeper into specific care needs and costs. Thank you.

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

MR. COOPER: Thank you, Madam Chair. This comes down to care intensity. Often, you have individuals who require one-on-one, 24/7 care. Sometimes, you have people who have feeding tubes or special, very intense care needs. Sometimes, you have individuals who have behaviour issues which require a good workforce of people trained in different methods of behavioural modification and different tools and strategies. What it comes down to is a mixture of probably some human resource capacity issues, the ability to have to guarantee a continuous service over the life of a person inside a market that can fluctuate, expertise. Sometimes, it's actually having facility with the correct equipment and to be able to provide the level of care that's required. It really comes down to an individual-case decision about when someone would be cared for in the South. Many of these arrangements are historical. They go back quite a ways, and some of them are family-based care arrangements and where individuals

with disabilities have a kinship relationship there. It's their family now, in some ways, that they're living with. There are tangibles as I've described, and there are also some intangibles for some of the people who are there now that we expect our review will show. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I guess the next question is: you said that there are some people that have been down there for quite a number of years. How many of those people have we lost to the Alberta healthcare system, if any? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. DIANE THOM: Thank you, Madam Chair. I don't know that level of detail. However, I can look to Mr. Cooper to be able to see if he's got specific numbers on how many we have lost as a result of them going to Alberta. Thank you.

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

MR. COOPER: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm going to confess that I'm not sure what "lost to the healthcare system" means, if it means people who have died while in Alberta or if it means individuals who are now being cared for by Alberta. There would be none of those because anybody who is in Alberta in arrangement who is an NWT, was an NWT resident, is remaining in our care while in Alberta. If it's the former question about the lifespan or different health events that occur, I don't know the answer to that question.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. My understanding, as well, with dementia, we have facilities here in Yellowknife to place people, but we don't really have any facilities outside Yellowknife with the proper care, and we send people to Alberta. Can you give me an indication if this government's looking to expand that type of care outside Yellowknife? An example would be Hay River. We have a building that's going to be available, and I just want to get an indication if that is something that this government would be looking at. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. DIANE THOM: Thank you, Madam Chair, and I'm smiling at the Member. We do provide

dementia care throughout the Northwest Territories in our facilities, so thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Minister. Anything further? Last question, Member for Hay River South?

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Nothing further. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Member for Hay River South. Are there any other comments on page 180, out of territory services? If there are no further questions, then, on page 180, I'm going to call the page. Out of territory services, operations expenditure summary, 2020-2021 Main Estimates, \$73,528. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, committee. Next, we are going to look at funding allocated to health and social services authorities beginning on page 185. Are there questions on this page? Sorry, Members. I didn't realize these were double-sided pages. We are now going to consider supplementary health benefits beginning on page 182. Are there any questions on this page for the Minister? Go ahead, Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes.

MS. SEMMLER: Yes. Looking on page 183, the extended health benefits, can the Minister explain how, this year, they expect it to be less than previous years? Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes. Minister.

HON. DIANE THOM: Thank you, Madam Chair. In the previous years, the budget was \$13 million, and this year, it is \$11 million and change. The reason for the decrease is we got one-time funding in the prior year. Given that one-time funding was for us to do a supplementary benefits program review, so that's what our department is working on right now. In prior years, it was \$13 million, and now, we're back down to \$11 million as we're doing our review. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Minister. Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes.

MS. SEMMLER: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just to clarify, in 2018-2019, we had \$13 million, and 2019-2020, we had \$13.1 million, almost \$13.2 million, and now, we're going down \$2 million almost. It was \$2 million a year for a review? Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes. Minister.

HON. DIANE THOM: Thank you, Madam Chair. In the prior years, we were able to do supplementary

appropriations to be able to address any growth. That's why it's been \$13 million, and then \$13 million, but this year, we're not given the extra funding. If we do, it would be through a supplementary.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Minister. Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes.

MS. SEMMLER: Yes, thank you, Madam Chair. I'm just kind of confused, just knowing my process now. The main estimates in 2019-2020 were the same as the revised estimates, so there was no supplementary appropriation in that section to my knowledge. I'm trying to figure out what exactly did we spend, or what are we not spending, or where did we cut \$2 million out of this budget? Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes. Minister.

HON. DIANE THOM: I'm going to ask Ms. Mathison to help me out here. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Minister. Director of finance.

MS. MATHISON: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes, this program area is one where we have in the past number of years overspent. We have annually addressed it through supplementary appropriations. In 2018-2019, we did get a supplementary appropriation to increase our expenditures there to \$13 million. The budget actually hasn't changed. In 2018-2019, the budget was \$11 million, but our spend was \$18 million because we got supplementary appropriation. 2019-2020, we got one-time funding during the business planning process to meet the needs that we were expecting in 2019-2020 while we understood the supplementary health benefits review. That funding was approved on a one-time basis, subject to the results of our review. Yes, typically, we like our budgets not have to go to that supplementary appropriation process, and because of that review, we haven't been able to adjust our budget this year. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you. Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes.

MS. SEMMLER: Thank you for that answer. With that answer, with us sitting there with \$11.4 million and we don't have the extra funding this year, what was given to me with 2018-2019 was \$18 million. Is this budget we're looking at, probably a \$6 to \$7 million difference? That's what we need to be looking at for this next year? It's not actual? Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes. Minister.

HON. DIANE THOM: Thank you, Madam Chair. The program is demand-based, as well, the actuals will fluctuate from year-to-year based on the benefits that we provide to clients. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Minister. Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes.

MS. SEMMLER: I'll move on to the next section. The medical travel benefits, we've got \$19 million and then \$15 million and \$15 million. The \$15 million for medical travel benefits, is this just for non-government travel, medical travel benefits? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes. Minister.

HON. DIANE THOM: Thank you, Madam Chair. The medical travel program is complex. Right now, if a patient in the Northwest Territories does not have any insurance or any way to cover their medical transportation, this is something that our department covers. However, if you are an employee of the GNWT and you require some medical travel, then the benefits will come through human resources. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Minister. Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes.

MS. SEMMLER: Thank you. Under this medical travel benefit, I know that we have contracts. Does that fall under this budget? Just to clarify, for Larga and for Vital Abel and for the different homes, does that fall under this chunk of money? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes. Minister.

HON. DIANE THOM: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm looking to my colleagues. They are nodding "yes," so it does include that. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Minister. Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes.

MS. SEMMLER: Thank you. Just to touch on here, I would like to know, since it falls under here and now that we're sitting under this, there have been a lot of concerns raised with medical travel and some of the places where they have to stay where there is not enough food for some of the residents who I've gotten complaints from, so how do we assess that? Is there an assessment over these places or questionnaires that go out to people so that we know that we are providing enough funding so that, when people are travelling for medical travel, they are meeting the needs of the clients when they are travelling out? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes. Minister.

HON. DIANE THOM: Thank you, Madam Chair. I hear the Member's concern. When we send our patients out, we're sending them to the facilities outside the territories; even within the territories, we have a number of places we use. The Northwest Territories health and social services authorities, they have regular reviews to ensure that the locations or the facilities are meeting the requirements, so we do have the review done. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Minister. Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes.

MS. SEMMLER: No, that's all I have. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Are there any additional questions for page 182, supplementary health benefits? Member for Kam Lake.

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I just have a couple of questions in regard to supplementary health benefits, and I'm just wondering: is there an anticipated review of supplementary health benefits coming in the near future? Thank you.

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

HON. DIANE THOM: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes. Right now, we are looking, and we talked about the reduction in main estimates from prior years because that was one of the recommendations, that we put together a review, so we're doing that now. We have our committee on child and family services, and we are looking at that. That is something that we will bring forward to AOC, and we're planning a time to review that. Thank you.

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

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Would the Minister be able to speak a little to the scope that they have planned for that review and what the anticipated cost of that would be? Thank you.

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

HON. DIANE THOM: Thank you, Madam Chair. There are a number of things we're looking at within the review, mostly to save costs. If you look at supplementary health benefits and the amount of money we spend on a yearly basis, it is quite high, so it is something that our department is doing a review on so that we can look at if there are some

areas that we can improve on cost savings. I mean, we're doing our budget review now, and it's a half a billion dollars. If there are areas where we can have a review done so that we can save some costs, absolutely. This is one of the things that we're doing, and it's in progress. Our plan is to have this tabled by the end of this session. Thank you.

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

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Does this review solely look at the costs of supplementary health benefits, or does it also take into consideration the cost of preventative care and the long-term effects of actually being able to save money by spending money on people here and being able to ensure that they have access to supplementary health benefits that they ultimately need and that would pay for itself long-term, down the road? Thank you.

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

HON. DIANE THOM: Thank you, Madam Chair. There are a number of things we're looking at. It's not just costs. When I bring it to AOC, I think there will be that further discussion because we're doing this in stages, and stage one is we are using internal resources to be able to get this started. Then, you know, coming back to AOC and being able to get that feedback so that we can ensure that, when we do this review, it takes into consideration some feedback. Thank you.

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

MS. CLEVELAND: I'm good. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Member for Kam Lake. Any further questions on page 182, supplementary health benefits? Seeing none, I am going to call this page. Supplementary health benefits, operations expenditure summary, 2020-2021 Main Estimates, \$30,009,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, committee. We will now turn to the information items that begin on page 185. We'll start with funding allocated to health and social services authorities on page 185. Are there any questions on this page? Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes.

MS. SEMMLER: Thank you, Madam Chair. What I'm looking at is: can the Minister tell me, for the Northwest Territories Health and Social Services, the \$295 million, is that all salaries? Or what is the

breakdown of that number? Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes. Minister.

HON. DIANE THOM: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm going to turn this one over to Ms. Mathison to provide the details as I shuffle through papers. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Minister. Director of finance.

MS. MATHISON: Thank you, Madam Chair. That is for salaries and operational expenses. It's pretty much an accumulation of all the expenditures throughout the document that we've looked at under grants and contributions that are going to the authorities for all the various programs. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you. Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes.

MS. SEMMLER: Thank you, Madam Chair. The \$295 million is what operations and staffing for our hospitals, health centres, and that all fall under the NTHSSA throughout the Northwest Territories, just to be clear? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes. Minister.

HON. DIANE THOM: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes, that is correct.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you. Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes.

MS. SEMMLER: Thank you. Just looking at the allocation on the information items kind of attached to the active position summary, I'm just trying to figure out, with the position summary and the salaries, is overtime included in that number, or does that come later? Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes. Minister.

HON. DIANE THOM: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes, that is correct.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Minister. Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes.

MS. SEMMLER: There is a line item in that \$295 million for estimated overtime? Or is that something that is going to come later? Thank you. Just clarifying, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes. Minister, can you clarify, please.

HON. DIANE THOM: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes, that is correct.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Minister. Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes.

MS. SEMMLER: Thank you. I just never knew that we budgeted overtime. Can you tell me, in the previous year, was there a change in the main estimates? What was the increase from the main estimate to the end of the year that we needed to increase, if there was anything, for overtime, in the cost to the health authorities? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes. Minister.

HON. DIANE THOM: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm going to turn to Ms. Mathison to help me with the question. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Minister. Director of finance.

MS. MATHISON: Thank you, Madam Chair. Throughout the document, we talked about areas of increase in the budget related to the collective agreement that was negotiated for the term of the last agreement, and there is a percentage or some factor of that increase associated with budgeted overtime, as well. Overtime is hard to forecast, so sometimes, we don't necessarily have a budget that matches our needs in overtime. Yes, there is an increase throughout the document reflective of overtime increases. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you. Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes.

MS. SEMMLER: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just want to know if the department can tell me, in the 2018-2019, just so I can get a picture of what extra costs in overtime the NTHSSA had to come back for, to this government, well, not this government, but the previous government, to ask for, just related to overtime in the NTHSS? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes. Minister.

HON. DIANE THOM: Thank you, Madam Chair. I don't have that level of detail with me right now, but that is something we can look into. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Minister, for that commitment to come back with the information. Further questions, Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes?

MS. SEMMLER: This is something that I have asked previously, so I guess I'll just move on to the next. Within this budget, knowing just kind of what I was talking about today in my Member's statement and with the nursing shortage, can the Minister tell

me: do you know how much we spent in the past year alone on job shares and flying people in and out, and the travel costs for health positions? Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes. Minister.

HON. DIANE THOM: Thank you, Madam Chair. We don't have the details of the NTSSA's budget, but I may look to Ms. Mathison, if she has that level of detail. I don't know. We may have to, Madam Chair, get back to the Member in terms of some detail. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Minister. Director of finance.

MS. MATHISON: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes, I do recall us pulling together this information when it was asked. I just don't have a copy of it here with me, but we do have that information available.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Director of finance. Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes, your time is expired. Do you need to be put back on the list? Any further questions? Member for Inuvik -- Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. Yes, I'd like to be the Member for Inuvik sometime in the future, maybe, but I think they have a couple of pretty good MLAs right now. I'm looking at the 2018-2019 annual report for NTHSSA. The accumulated deficit is \$100 million. I'm just wondering if someone can tell me what the accumulated deficit is now for the authority. Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. DIANE THOM: Thank you, Madam Chair. There was a number that was shopped around previous in March when I met with AOC, and I want to make sure that the number is accurate. I'm going to ask Ms. Mathison or Mr. Cooper to come up with the most up-to-date deficit rather than me telling you what I told you in March. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. COOPER: Thank you, Madam Chair. The accumulated deficit at this point is projected to be \$119 million.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. Presumably, then, that's to March 31, 2020? Thanks, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. Everyone is nodding.

MR. O'REILLY: So what is the plan to deal with this deficit? I don't blame anybody in this room for that. This is an issue of chronic under-funding of our healthcare system. Is there a plan to deal with this deficit over the long term? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. DIANE THOM: Thank you, Madam Chair. That is the intent. We are going back to the health authorities to ask them to come back with a debt recovery plan, and we are hoping that some of the reviews that we're doing and some of the things that we're doing right now can help reduce some of the deficit. That is the plan with all the different health authorities, is to go back and come back to our department with a debt recovery plan. Thank you.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair, and thanks to the Minister. I guess I'll be kind of clear here. I don't want the deficit done on the backs of our citizens. I don't want to see people lined up in the hallways waiting for healthcare and so on. The idea of health system transformation is that we could find some efficiencies. I'm all for efficiencies, but I just don't know how the health authority can make up this kind of deficit over a short period of time. We need more money spent on healthcare. We all know that, and I don't know whether there are opportunities to get money from the federal government or wherever. Can the Minister just talk a little bit more about where the expectation is that these funds are going to be found? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. DIANE THOM: Thank you, Madam Chair. We are hoping that our plan will identify areas where we are under-funding and areas that we can improve. The plan is not to not provide adequate services. That is never going to be our intent. You look at the COVID virus right now, and some of the ways that our department is increasing efficiencies. We're doing healthcare through virtual care. We're doing it through telehealth. There are areas for improvement where we can reduce some of the budget. This is something that our department will look at as a result of COVID-19 and how we have cost-saved. Right now, we are going to the federal government on everything; whatever is related to COVID in our department, we are getting federal funding for. I'm not saying our budget is going to

decrease next year, but it's just ways where we're trying to find efficiencies. This is just one of many ways that we can look at. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair, and thanks to the Minister for that. Can the Minister tell us when this plan is going to be ready and if it can be shared with MLAs even in a draft form? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. DIANE THOM: Thank you, Madam Chair. Sorry, can I ask what he wants shared?

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): The Member asked if you could speak to the timing of the plan being completed and whether it would be shared with Regular MLAs.

HON. DIANE THOM: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm going to look to Deputy Minister Cooper as I don't have the exact dates other than we want the authorities to come back with us. Maybe he can speak to a specific timeline so that we can come back to AOC. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. COOPER: Thank you, Madam Chair. Our plan is to have a first deficit recovery plan in tandem with the authority by fall 2020. We had originally hoped that this would be done, we'd have some options in place for the end of March. Of course, things changed radically in the last little while. We needed to be realistic, given the intense focus at the NTHSSA on COVID. We need to have a plan that cannot have the focus on a potential wave two diluted. We are hoping that fall 2020 will be realistic for us, and it will absolutely follow normal protocols for engagement.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. I appreciate the words of the Deputy Minister and the Minister. I often don't say "thank you," so thank you for your hard work.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. Are there any other questions on this page, funding allocated to health and social services authorities? Member for Thebacha.

MS. MARTSELOS: I just want to ask a couple of questions on page 185. The \$295 million, I would like the allocations in detail. You don't have to give it to me today, but I would like to do that. There are

a couple of things that I am concerned about with some of the answers from the Minister, and that is going back to the communities and regional health authorities to try and cut budgets. I do not agree with that, especially in the situation that we are in. We should be adding. There are a lot of things that have been taken away from regional healthcare facilities that are not okay. Once I get all these figures together that I have been promised yesterday and today, I will be using my time during the Members' statements to make my case very clear. On the positive side, because I did say some positive things today, we are very lucky to be living in the Northwest Territories. Not only at the local healthcare system and the Stanton one, and also with my recent illness with Cross Cancer, the care that I got, you can only get in Canada. It was incredible, and the people on the front-line are there to make sure that we are served properly. It's easy to sit here, and it's hard to criticize. Sometimes, we have to give those bouquets to the people who really count. The care that we get is exceptional. I want to thank all those who worked the front lines because they are special people. With that, thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Member for Thebacha. Minister, where can the Member find the detail of the MTHSSA budget?

HON. DIANE THOM: Thank you, Madam Chair. We will request the authorities to provide us detailed budgets, and then we will share that with the Member. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Minister. Further questions on this area? Member for Hay River South.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just a question on page 185 with respect to Hay River Health and Social Services Authority. We see an increase of \$1.542 million. Can you give me an explanation on that? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. DIANE THOM: Thank you, Madam Chair. I am looking at my paper, and it says that it is from other revenues. I am just going to get clarification from Ms. Mathison. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Minister. Director of finance.

MS. MATHISON: Thank you, Madam Chair. The bulk of that is for the increase in the collective agreement that was newly negotiated. Thank you.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: No further questions. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Member for Hay River South. Are there any further questions? I see the Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes would like to have a second round. Let's give it to her because it's Friday.

MS. SEMMLER: I am just going to ask these two questions, just in regard to the budget. Can the Minister provide figures on paid overtime just so we can get a picture of what we pay in overtime in the health authority for 2018-2019, if we don't have the calculations from 2019-2020? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes. Minister, do you have that detail available?

HON. DIANE THOM: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just quickly looked it up, and I am able to share some of the numbers. Overtime costs include both overtime and lieu time that are paid for 2018-2019. The Department of Health and Social Services has paid \$143,000 and change. The Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority has paid \$8,629,000 and change. The Tlicho Community Services Agency has paid \$796,000 and change. The Hay River Health and Social Services Authority has paid \$962,000 and change. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you for that detail, Minister. Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes.

MS. SEMMLER: Last question: can the Minister provide me with the number that it costs to pay for job shares and travel associated within these departments for the 2019-2020 year, if she has that? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes. Minister.

HON. DIANE THOM: Thank you, Madam Chair. It's \$686,000.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you. Anything further, Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes? If there is nothing further, then we will move on to page 186. This is the active positions summary. Are there any questions on page 186? Member for Kam Lake.

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I just wanted to know, with the child and youth care counsellors that the territory is anticipating adding to all of our regions, with the recent developments of COVID and the anxiety and added mental health concerns that this will cause for the children of the Northwest Territories, is there an added emphasis to get these positions all in place across the territory quicker? Thank you.

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

HON. DIANE THOM: Thank you, Madam Chair. Other than we are actively recruiting, I don't know anything further, but I can look to Deputy Minister Cooper to see what the impacts would be. I hear what the Member is saying. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. COOPER: Thank you, Madam Chair. It is still our plan to advance with the four-year child and youth care counsellor rollout. We're just finished year two. We're at the beginning of year three. I believe the plan is for the needs for year three, for rollout, will be considered as part of the supplementary appropriations review process.

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

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Should the Minister hear from her colleague from the department of education that there are substantial concerns coming out of schools about kids really struggling with the new COVID world, is the department willing to speed up the process of putting the child and youth care counsellors into schools across the territory? Thank you.

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

HON. DIANE THOM: Thank you, Madam Chair. When we initiated that project, we did it in a phased approach. Right now, we are in a phase where we're looking at expanding by region. We have heard a lot of positive feedback. It's a partnership with Education, Culture and Employment and health, where we are providing some funding, but the Department of Education, Culture and Employment and the schools are able to utilize extra supports. However, we are ensuring that children are getting good services. It also includes virtual options. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Minister. Are there any further questions on page 186? Seeing none, we will now move to page 187, lease commitments. Are there any questions on this information item? Seeing no questions on page 187, we'll go to pages 188 and 189, which is work performed on behalf of others, pages 188 and 189. Are there any questions on these pages? Seeing no questions on these pages, we will now return to page 163, the department summary. I am going to call the page. Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. I have one quick question that I would like to ask the Minister

about. What is happening with the regulations to prohibit the sale of vaping materials to youth? I am sure the COVID stuff has, maybe, put a delay in that, but it was a very, very important issue when the changes to smoking legislation was brought forward in the last Assembly. I think it's something that we have to deal with and we still need to deal with quickly. Can I get an update from the Minister? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. DIANE THOM: Thank you, Madam Chair. The vaping regulations came into effect at the end of March, so our department is still looking forward to move in consultations regarding the banning of vaping flavours at a later date. We do have to go out and consult, and that is where we are at right now. We had planned for the end of March; however, COVID interrupted. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Minister. Any further questions? Go ahead, Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. Can I respectfully suggest that you probably really don't need to do a lot of consultation? There was extensive consultation during the development of the bill itself. Juul Labs, the vaping industry was there; the health folks were there. There was vigorous debate and discussion, presentations. People know it's coming. Can we please just get on and do the right thing for our youth? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. DIANE THOM: Thank you, Madam Chair. I hear the Member's concern. I have heard it on the floor several times. I agree. I am all about making changes. However, the process is still for us to do consultation, so that is what we will do. We could look at ways of speeding it up, if that's what it takes. I see the Member nodding, so I am assuming he is quite happy with my answer. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Minister. That was a lot of white teeth. Are there any other further questions for this department? Seeing none, I am going to call the page. Health and Social Services, operations expenditures, total department, 2020-2021 Main Estimates, \$522,011,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you, Members. Thank you to those witnesses who have appeared before us. We will ask the Sergeant-at-

Arms to escort them out. Thank you. Members, what is the wish of committee? Mr. Norn.

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

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Mr. Norn, I don't think that's possible. We just passed this department.

MR. NORN: My mistake. Sorry, Madam Chair. I move that we rise and report progress.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green): Thank you. The motion is in order. The motion is non-debatable. All those in favour? Are any opposed? Thank you, Members. The motion is carried.

---Carried

I will now rise and report progress.

MR. SPEAKER: Order. May I have the report of the Committee of the Whole, please, Member for Yellowknife Centre?

Report of Committee of the Whole

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Your committee has been considering Tabled Document 30-19(2), Main Estimates 2020-2021. We have completed the review of the Department of Health and Social Services. We need to pass a motion to say that we're done with this. I recommend it be concurred with. Sorry, I'm a bit short on details.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is in order. Do we have a seconder? Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes. All those in favour? All those opposed? Any abstentions? The motion is carried.

---Carried

Item 22, third reading of bills. Madam Clerk, orders of the day.

Orders of the Day

COMMITTEE CLERK (Ms. James): Orders of the day for day 25, Monday, June 1, 2020, at 1:30 p.m.:

1. Prayer
2. Ministers' Statements
3. Members' Statements
4. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery
5. Returns to Oral Questions
6. Acknowledgements

7. Oral Questions
8. Written Questions
9. Returns to Written Questions
10. Replies to Commissioner's Address
11. Petitions
12. Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills
13. Reports of Standing and Special Committees
14. Tabling of Documents
15. Notices of Motion
16. Motions
17. Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills
18. First Reading of Bills
19. Second Reading of Bills
20. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters
 - Tabled Document 30-19(2), Main Estimates 2020-2021
 - Bill 6, An Act to Amend the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act
21. Report of Committee of the Whole
22. Third Reading of Bills
23. Orders of the Day

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Madam Clerk. This House stands adjourned until Monday, June 1, 2020, at 1:30 p.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 1:45 p.m.