



NORTHWEST TERRITORIES
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The Honourable Frederick Blake Jr, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

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Minister responsible for NWT Power Corporation

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Mr. Jackson Lafferty

(Monfwi)

Ms. Frieda Martselos

(Thebacha)

Ms. Katrina Nokleby

(Great Slave)

Mr. Steve Norn

(Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh)

Mr. Kevin O'Reilly

(Frame Lake)

Ms. Lesa Semmler

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Hon. R.J. Simpson

(Hay River North)
Government House Leader
Minister of Education, Culture & Employment
Minister of Justice
Minister responsible for the Public Utilities Board

Mr. Rocky Simpson

(Hay River South)

Hon. Shane Thompson

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YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**Friday, October 30, 2020****Members Present**

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

The House met at 10:02 a.m.

---Prayer

SPEAKER (Hon. Frederick Blake Jr.): Item 2, Ministers' statements. Minister of Education, Culture and Employment.

Ministers' Statements

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 83-19(2):
OUR LANGUAGES CURRICULUM

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today, the Department of Education, Culture and Employment is celebrating the official launch of the Our Languages curriculum. This launch marks an important milestone for Indigenous languages in the Northwest Territories.

Our Languages is a competency-based curriculum that provides Indigenous language instructors with curricular outcomes, instructional strategies, and assessment tools to foster language growth in classrooms. It promotes a whole-school approach to language learning to ensure that Indigenous languages are heard and spoken throughout schools, at assemblies, and during routines in all Northwest Territories classrooms. Our Languages was made in the Northwest Territories in collaboration with Indigenous elders, teachers, language champions, neurolinguistic experts, curriculum coordinators, and community advocates and was informed by national and international curricular documents. Our Northern language experts helped to ensure that Our Languages aligns with the two foundational curricula of the Northwest Territories' education system, Dene Kede and Inuuqatigiit, which ground teaching and learning in Indigenous traditions, culture, and place.

In order to achieve this long-awaited milestone, the Department of Education, Culture and Employment worked with regional Indigenous language coordinators from the participating regional Indigenous governments to ensure that promising community practices and cultural connections were included in the Our Languages curriculum.

The department also worked with education bodies to advise and support Indigenous language instructors through each of their unique situations during COVID-19, including offering online and video-based professional development. All Indigenous language instructors have been trained and continue to have follow-up in-servicing in the Our Languages curriculum and associated supporting resources.

Additionally, a revised version of the Indigenous Languages and Education Handbook was recently released to support schools in using the curriculum effectively. This handbook outlines actions and promising practices that principals, teachers, Indigenous language instructors, and educational assistants can undertake to deliver quality education that promotes and enhances Indigenous languages and culture-based education in our schools, homes, and communities.

As of the current school year, 42 out of the 49 schools now offer Indigenous language programming as a second language. In addition, four schools now offer Indigenous immersion programming in the primary grades.

Mr. Speaker, it has been an incredible year for Indigenous language revitalization initiatives in the Northwest Territories, and there is more excitement to come. The new Our Languages curriculum, supplemented by the Indigenous Languages and Education Handbook, provides an opportunity to carry on the legacy of our Indigenous languages and traditions. This ground-breaking initiative, made in collaboration with our Indigenous language revitalization partners across the territory, is something that we should all be very proud of. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Ministers' statements. Minister of Environment and Natural Resources.

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 84-19(2):
2020 NORTHWEST TERRITORIES
ENVIRONMENTAL AUDIT

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have a strong and effective regulatory

system in the Northwest Territories that relies on Indigenous, territorial, and federal governments working together to make wise decisions about the use of our land and water. This system is always evolving to serve the people of this territory better.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources has a mandate to support the sustainable use of natural resources. Every five years, an independent auditor is appointed to conduct an environmental audit, as required under legislation and land claim agreements. The 2020 Northwest Territories Environmental Audit is the second audit commissioned by the Government of the Northwest Territories since devolution. It was conducted by a team of independent consultants and guided by a steering committee of Indigenous, territorial, and federal government representatives. The auditors focused on how environmental trends were used to make decisions, the effectiveness of cumulative impact monitoring, how the regulatory system is working, and the response to recommendations from the previous audit.

The 2020 audit found the environmental regulatory system in the Northwest Territories has continued to improve since the last audit in 2015. There were no new significant issues identified in the 2020 audit, and there was progress across most regulatory components. Certain recommendations of the audit were already recognized as priorities of this government, supported by the mandate priorities to settle and implement treaty, land, resources, and self-government agreements and increase regional decision-making authority and employment in small communities. The audit recognized the Government of the Northwest Territories for making progress on climate change policy and action planning, as well as working with Indigenous governments and organizations to make new laws and improve existing laws related to land, water, and resource management since devolution.

While there has been progress over the last five years, there is still work to do. The audit found that there are improvements to be made in the areas of community wellness, land use planning, finalizing land claims, and engaging communities. In total, the 2020 Environmental Audit provided 40 recommendations directed at decision-makers. All responses to those recommendations are included in the 2020 Audit Technical Report. The Government of the Northwest Territories has committed to implementing our responses to the audit recommendations and continuing to improve our environmental management in the Northwest Territories.

Mr. Speaker, the 2020 Environmental Audit is an important tool the government and its partners can use to improve our resource management systems, while meeting our obligations under land claim

agreements and devolution. Later today, I will be tabling the audit and look forward to working with all responsible parties over the next five years to follow through on the recommendations in the audit. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Ministers' statements. Minister of Finance.

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 85-19(2): GOVERNMENT RENEWAL

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Mr. Speaker, in February, during the delivery of the budget speech, I said it was time to use creativity and innovation to find internal efficiencies. Since then, our government has had to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, and in my last two fiscal updates since the onset of COVID-19, I have again said that now is the time to use creativity and use this moment of heightened awareness around our fiscal situation to consider how we want to emerge from the pandemic as a government and as a territory.

The Department of Finance's mandate is to "obtain, manage, and control the financial resources required to implement the Government of the Northwest Territories' policies and programs." Those responsibilities are not new; neither are our many fiscal challenges. We are going to use the current climate of recovery and renewal as an opportunity to reimagine how we obtain, manage, and control those financial resources.

Mr. Speaker, over multiple Legislative Assemblies, the data shows patterns of budgeting and spending that have impaired the long-term sustainability of the GNWT. Our expenditures and the public service continue to grow; our planning is often reactive instead of proactive; and the significant capital investments which the territory absolutely needs have driven up our short-term debt. The COVID-19 pandemic has added to these fiscal pressures, and the GNWT needs a stable fiscal footing to support the territory's recovery. We are far from alone in these challenges. Other governments have similar challenges, and fortunately, new ways of budgeting government finances have emerged to respond.

The Department of Finance is planning to shift the way our budget is developed. The Government Renewal Initiative will rely on value-driven budgeting principles to review GNWT programs and services department by department and allocate resources to areas that are most critical and valuable to residents. Value-based budgeting, also known as priority-based budgeting, is both the idea that underlies the building of the budget as well as the method. It is founded on the common-sense idea that government financial resources should be allocated based on how effectively programs and services give value to residents.

This is a fundamental shift from how budgets are currently developed, where a large focus is on incremental increases and decreases from the year before. Using incremental budgeting, most of the budget is not actually subject to the same level of scrutiny as new spending, and it can be difficult to respond to new or changing priorities. Incremental budgeting is more about where we have been; but now, we want to shift to define our fiscal foundation by where we want to go.

Some of the key principles of this approach are to:

- Provide better transparency to territorial priorities and how services and programs contribute to those priorities;
- Prioritize and allocate budgets at the program and service level;
- More directly question our past spending habits;
- Evaluate the true cost and benefit of programs and services as part of budget development, rather than only looking at incremental changes; and
- Build more accountability for results into funding decisions.

This is a significant undertaking. Over the next few months, the Department of Finance will finalize the framework for how government renewal will be implemented early in the new year. We have already established the strategic priorities of the 19th Legislative Assembly and are actively working on additional priority needs resulting from COVID-19 in our Emerge Stronger work. With those priorities in mind, we will undertake an evidence-based evaluation of where government resources are spent.

For a budget development process that is based on the values of our residents to be meaningful, engagement with my fellow Members of the Legislative Assembly is critical. The work will be difficult. Defining and ranking often competing priorities is challenging, but that is the work of governing. Applying the work of priority and value balancing to government budgeting is an opportunity to better reflect the diversity of the values and needs of all residents of the NWT. This is an opportunity to work together to ensure the government continues to have the resources required to deliver the programs and services that are important to the residents of the NWT.

I stated in June and it holds true: "If ever we needed creative problem solving to achieve responsive and effective results, it is now." I am confident that the Government Renewal Initiative will bring out this creative problem solving and help

us maximize effectiveness, support the territory's pandemic recovery, and build a sustainable foundation for the future of the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Members' Statements

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON RAPID HOUSING INITIATIVE

MS. CLEVELAND: Mr. Speaker, in September, the federal government launched the Rapid Housing Initiative, a \$1-billion program to help address urgent housing needs of vulnerable Canadians through the rapid construction of affordable housing in partnership with municipal and territorial governments, Indigenous governments, and non-profit organizations. Unfortunately, Cabinet has not updated this House about this new funding opportunity, so I will.

The initiative will support up to 3,000 new permanent, affordable housing units across Canada and cover the construction of modular housing, the acquisition of land, and the conversion or rehabilitation of existing buildings to affordable housing. The housing must be either standard rental, transitional, permanent, or supportive housing, single-occupancy, or seniors' housing, with a minimum of five units or beds. Each application must be a minimum contribution request of \$1 million. The Rapid Housing Initiative will support both the construction of modular, multi-unit rental projects and conversions or rehabilitations of existing buildings that are in a state of disrepair or have been abandoned.

This grant program has core mandatory minimum requirements that include expediency and affordability. Affordable housing projects are meant to happen as quickly as possible, using modular-type construction to provide affordable housing to Northerners as quickly as possible. Affordability means that the rent is less than 30 percent of the gross income of targeted tenants and that affordability is maintained for a minimum of 20 years. In addition to meeting speed and affordability requirements, the initiative prioritizes northern housing applications with subsidies or supports from municipalities; territorial or Indigenous governments; favourable land status; energy efficiency; and accessibility.

Mr. Speaker, the Northwest Territories has entrepreneurs that manufacture modular housing and tradespeople ready to work on projects like this. What is the Housing Corporation doing to connect them with this funding opportunity? CMHC

has started accepting applications for the Rapid Housing Initiative this week and will accept applications until December 31st. This means there is no time to waste. The federal government aims to commit all funds before March 31, 2021, perfectly ahead of our construction season. The lack of progress by the Housing Corporation on the co-investment fund has me worried, Mr. Speaker. I am concerned that they do not have the resources to act quickly on this new federal initiative to ensure that the NWT gets its fair share of the funding. I want to remind the Minister that access to affordable housing and reducing core need is the key priority of this assembly. Mr. Speaker, I will have questions for the Minister responsible for the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation at the appropriate time.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON HALLOWEEN 2020

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. October 31st. Halloween. All Hallow's Eve. A day and night of magic and mystery when ghouls and goblins walk the streets and astronauts roam the earth. Growing up, Halloween was always one of my favourite times of the year. I can still remember the smell and feel of the pumpkin guts as my siblings and I carved jack o'lanterns, roasting seeds and burning our fingers playing with candle wax after our mom clearly told us not to.

This year the children of the Northwest Territories will experience a different kind of Halloween, one filled with numerous doses of hand sanitizers, masks that have nothing to do with their costumes, and innovative ways of candy delivery, such as chutes or honour system bowls where our youngest citizens will have their ethics tested. Do they take more than what they're allowed to, or do they follow the rules?

In my neighbourhood, I don't generally get a lot of children come my way on Halloween. Preference is given to the areas with higher density housing, efficient and smart thinking on the part of the kids. This speaks to my engineering heart, so I don't take the lack of interest in my neighbourhood personally.

Mr. Speaker, on this day before what is arguably one of the most popular holidays of the year, I wanted to take a moment and wish everyone a safe and fun celebration. I am so pleased that, despite the strange, new world that we find ourselves in these days, we continue to live our lives and allow our children to build their own memories, like those I remember fondly from my own childhood. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON MACKENZIE PLACE HIGH-RISE

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Hay River, as with other communities, is in a housing crisis, more so with the closure of the Mackenzie Place high-rise due to the fire over one-and-a-half years ago. Fingers were pointed, and blame was placed. Now, the person responsible for causing the fire has been long forgotten. The real losers have been those that were displaced overnight, some of whom moved away from the NWT, while others were lucky enough to find accommodation. Some continue to couch-surf, and others find themselves homeless. Although the finger-pointing is ongoing today, my concern is not who is at fault but, more importantly, how we can open this building and have apartments available to those in desperate need of housing.

There are individuals, some in tears, who contact me daily, voicing their need for accommodation. These apartments were much needed in the 70s when the building was constructed and are needed even more so now. I have been working on moving this file forward since I was first elected. At this point, if the owner, who also has responsibilities to address the orders placed against the building, is not provided approval to reopen some of the apartments fairly soon, then the integrity of the building may be compromised due to the absence of heat and electricity. The loss of electricity will eliminate the aircraft warning beacon atop the building thus impacting air traffic and passenger safety. Our local radio and TV stations have stopped broadcasting and, along with other service providers, have removed their equipment from the building because of uncertainty with the electricity.

There were numerous safety orders placed against the building which have been satisfied, my understanding is that the final outstanding order right now is that issued by the department of health. I know that the department of health has the best interest of our residents in mind as they review the detailed abatement report submitted by the owner. I do appreciate the fact that the department and owner's representatives are working together to satisfy the order in a timely manner.

It is obvious that the NWT Housing Corporation has no plans to construct any significant number of public housing units in Hay River anytime soon. Therefore, re-opening of the high-rise is important. It will alleviate some of Hay River's immediate housing issues and take some pressure off the NWT Housing Corporation. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
ADDRESSING THE NUNAKPUT HOUSING
CRISIS

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Addressing Nunakput's housing crisis, Mr. Speaker, young families have no place to go. We have not enough units in the community. Housing is not adequate for my elders, such as no backdoors in some of the units that are built now. Overcrowding, causing illness, which is a ticking timebomb for COVID-19 and for not enough water for the people inside the unit for water delivery. Houses are in despair. When the wind blows in a certain way, you've got snow coming in through the windows, and you've got snow coming through the doors, Mr. Speaker. Heating costs go through the roof. People can't pay their bills or make them when they're living in poverty. Don't forget that.

We have no units coming into the communities. I at least need 10 units for Paulatuk, Ulukhaktok, and Tuktoyaktuk, and I need at least five for Sachs Harbour. That's how short we are with the young families that we've got coming up. We have LGOs doing the best they can with what they got, Mr. Speaker. The resources they have, the staff, the maintenance staff that go tirelessly day after day, fixing up all the units that are in despair. The first thing this government has done is the Arnica Inn project, the 42 beds for the territories here in Yellowknife, which I'm very happy for Yellowknife, and I supported that.

At the time, the Member for Monfwi asked the Minister when is the Housing Corporation going to wake up, Mr. Speaker. We have a \$60 million fund sitting there that we have to tap into. I feel the Housing Corporation has to start doing more in taking this sense of urgency. Where is the planning? It's been eight months since we tapped into that money. The project officer delayed the application process, and the co-investment fund may not get done until Christmas. At a level position not going to cut that they won't have the authority to ensure the \$60 million funding gets approved. Someone has to have the authority to rally the Indigenous governments and NGOs to get them application processes, working with our community corporations and IRC in my riding, Mr. Speaker. This House is encouraged to see the Minister seek more funding. We're going to support that Minister in getting more funding. I'm here to help her. We're all here to help her to help our people. The people need housing, and in my riding, Mr. Speaker, it's an urgent matter. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
PERSONAL EXPERIENCES WITH THE
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES HEALTHCARE
SYSTEM

MS. MARTSELOS: Mr. Speaker, the last year, I spent more time than I would have liked attending various medical appointments for my personal health. I'm happy to report that, on this journey, I had a lot of time to think about people, about priorities in life, and about positive changes on how our government can make a difference. After spending considerable time in and out of health systems over the last year, it only renewed how much I care for the front-line healthcare workers and every person who works within these systems, from the doctors to the administration staff, right down to the janitors.

Anywhere that I went, whether it was the Fort Smith healthcare system, the Stanton Territorial Hospital, the Cross Cancer Institute of Edmonton, or the Misericordia Community Hospital in Edmonton, I was always treated with respect, dignity, and empathy. For that, I am very thankful. Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, I also want to thank my colleagues in this House for their understanding and their steadfast support for my health throughout all of this. Thank you, as well, to the staff within the Legislative Assembly for all the extra support you gave me along the way.

Lastly, Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the constituents of Thebacha for their concerns and understanding regarding my health. I truly appreciate their patience and support throughout this journey. I represent an awesome community with amazing people, and I can't imagine having it any other way. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
COVID-19 SECRETARIAT

MR. BONNETROUGE: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. I want to weigh in on the debacle of the COVID secretariat that I'm facing as an MLA. I'm here to represent the constituents of my riding but, most of all, for the people of the Northwest Territories. I see the way decisions are made by this government, and for the most part, they certainly do not favour giving anything to the small communities. I would like to mention that the COVID secretariat will create an extra 150 positions and cost this government approximately \$87 million over four years.

Mr. Speaker, this is quite concerning. Perhaps, this government had blinders on during the pandemic and did not approach the creation of the secretariat with a clear mind. Perhaps, if they were to call the

group COVID task force, maybe they would have had a different outcome had they looked at various options as to the formation of the group. The GNWT has a workforce of over 4,000 employees, perhaps closer to 5,000.

Mr. Speaker, we have to understand that, at the outset of the pandemic, the government declared a state of emergency and a public health emergency. It was at this time a task force should have been created from within the workforce with positions re-profiled to handle the various duties of the task force. I'm certain many employees would have stepped up to the plate to perform these duties and be able to tell their grandchildren about their exploits one day. This could have possibly saved some headaches for the budget bottom line since we're not looking too good in that department.

Mr. Speaker, the residents of the small communities where a majority are Indigenous, could use programming and buildings to assist the residents to combat addictions, depression, mental health issues, housing, healthcare, family violence centres, child and family centres, and long-term care beds, to name a few. I also note that the elders of our communities are facing challenges, accessing housing programs like never before. Many have lost faith in the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation. Who is responsible to fix that? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON WATER QUALITY MONITORING

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. The Northwest Territories is gifted with abundant and generally clean fresh water, and we want to keep it that way. There is increasing upstream activity that is causing adverse effects on water from tar sands development and pulp mills. This is why GNWT negotiated a Transboundary Water Agreement with Alberta in March 2015. The agreement is a commitment to cooperate and provides for information sharing, joint management planning, notification of changes to monitoring, reporting, and dispute resolution.

It certainly came as a surprise when the Alberta government and its Alberta energy regulator announced reductions in water quality monitoring as early as April 9, 2020. The monitoring reductions were described as "industry relief" from burdensome regulation during the COVID pandemic. Even the federal government reduced upstream water quality monitoring including sites in Wood Buffalo National Park. GNWT was apparently not consulted or informed beforehand which would

appear to be contrary to the Transboundary Water Agreement.

Credit goes to GNWT staff and the Minister of Environment and Natural Resources for responding to these reductions and even taking on some of the monitoring themselves. Much of this work was done behind the scenes to gather more information and recommend that priority be given to reopening monitoring at important sites. GNWT has also requested that it be added to coordinating committees related to oil sands monitoring to ensure better communications. Much of the Alberta upstream monitoring has been restored while the federal monitoring has also apparently restarted.

I support the GNWT efforts to date, but I suggest that political action is necessary to protect our waters. Water quality should not be optional according to the whims of the day. This episode does throw some doubt on the effectiveness of the Transboundary Water Agreements. I will have questions later today for the Minister of Environment and Natural Resources. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON ELECTORAL REFORM AND RANKED BALLOT VOTING

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Democracy is not a stationary institution. We must remember that innovation is a cornerstone to truly democratic politics, and as such, we cannot allow our institutions to become stagnant or irrelevant. When we stand here in this House and we're happy with 50, 60 percent voter turnout, I believe we have allowed this institution to become stagnant. I believe this House must champion electoral reform, Mr. Speaker. This is not just our elections. We must also remember we control school board elections and municipal elections in this House.

Mr. Speaker, one of the first ways I believe we must do this is ranked ballot voting. Ranked ballot voting gives more choice for voters. It discourages negative campaigns in that you are acting for second place votes. It eliminates vote splitting, and it ensures candidates actually can get a majority of support.

Mr. Speaker, 64 percent of my constituents didn't vote for me, and when you factor in that almost half didn't vote, it's more like 80 percent of my constituents never voted for me. I would like to stand here one day and know that a majority of my constituents voted me here, even if it was on their second pick, Mr. Speaker. I believe we need to end

"first past the post" in the Northwest Territories for both our school boards, municipalities, and this House, Mr. Speaker.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, our last election was the first using online voting. I am very happy to see that, but we need to extend that to our school boards and municipalities. The Northwest Territories Association of Communities has asked us for this. They have passed a resolution, and we have failed to allow them to use the same online voting software that we use.

Lastly, Mr. Speaker, and perhaps most controversial, I believe we need to lower our voting age from 18 to 16. This isn't to say that 16-year-olds will know everything they'll ever know in life. I was 16 once. I remember how dumb I was, but the reality is: the younger people vote, they create a lifelong voting turnout. It is proven, when you lower the voting age, you increase overall voter turnout throughout life. Right now, sometimes an 18-year-old doesn't see their first election until 22, and if they don't vote in that, they don't vote for the first time until they're 26. Then, that pattern is not ingrained. Especially at the education authority, Mr. Speaker, I do not see why we do not let older high school students vote for who is on their school boards and who is running their schools. I believe this Assembly must champion electoral reform. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON CELL PHONE COVERAGE ON HIGHWAY NO. 3

MR. LAFFERTY: Masi, Mr. Speaker. [Translation] Mr. Speaker, today, we have Highway No. 3 from Behchoko to Yellowknife, and we also cannot use cell service between these two locations. Sometimes, there's an accident that may happen on the highway. Even though these things are happening, we are losing a lot of people because there is no cell service between these two locations. I will also ask questions when it's time. [Translation ends]

I want to talk about the riskiest highway safety issue in the Northwest Territories. I refer to Highway No. 3, that 100-kilometre stretch from Yellowknife to Behchoko junction. It is the biggest road in the territory, Mr. Speaker, carrying more people daily than the entire population of Norman Wells. It's a treacherous road, like a rollercoaster on a highway, challenging the road-handling skills of even the most cautious drivers.

Mr. Speaker, this dangerous mix of traffic volume, road conditions, is compounded by a third factor,

the lack of cell services, including 911 service that doesn't work most of the times on the road, along the road's entire length. When an accident happened, Mr. Speaker, the injured are on their own, unable to call for help because their cell phones won't work.

Mr. Speaker, I was once a hero on Highway No. 3. I happened to come across a road vehicle, a young individual who was seriously injured, couldn't get up on his own. Almost 50 vehicles passed by. Nobody stopped. I was fortunate to see the vehicle, and I was fortunate to have my satellite phone and called in an ambulance to the community of Behchoko and also Yellowknife. Cell service is very important along the highway for the safety factor. We do not have that opportunity right now, Mr. Speaker. Not everybody carries satellite phones when they travel Highway No. 3 or other major highways.

The cell service is not going to make Highway No. 3 easier to drive, but it would make ambulances to dispatch before accident victims die of their injuries. This is a huge safety factor. This cellphone problem is a simple solution, but it requires government action. It requires government action now, or human lives will surely be lost. I intend to question the Minister responsible on this matter at the earliest time. Masi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Monfwi. Members' statements. Item 4, returns to oral questions. Item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery. Item 6, acknowledgements. Colleagues, we will return after a short recess.

---SHORT RECESS

MR. SPEAKER: Item 7, oral questions. Member for Monfwi.

Oral Questions

QUESTION 437-19(2): CELL PHONE COVERAGE ON HIGHWAY NO. 3

MR. LAFFERTY: Masi, Mr. Speaker. [English translation not available] [Translation] ...how important the cellphone service is important on this road, so that is my question towards the Minister of Finance. [Translation ends]. Five months ago, the chief of Behchoko wrote Cabinet with an urgent problem. The problem is cellphone coverage on the road to Yellowknife and Rae junction. The chief wanted help getting Northwestel to extend coverage to the busy section of the road, including 911 coverage. Minister Wawzonek promised this House in June that she would contact Northwestel regarding the lack of cell services on Highway No. 3 between Behchoko and Yellowknife. Would the Minister kindly describe the progress that her

department has made with Northwestel to date? Masi, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have done a number of things since the time of June. We have already responded back. This same enquiry was made by some of the chiefs from the Member's communities, as well as from the Yellowknife mayor. We have responded back to them to let them know the work that we have undertaken. We have some initial costing that would demonstrate the costs of either partial or full coverage between the Whati junction to Yellowknife, so we have that initial costing done. That was done in conjunction with Northwestel and the Department of Finance, and we have communicated that over to the Members of the Legislative Assembly. What stage we are at now, Mr. Speaker, is to actually flesh that costing out more so that it's more determined and more specific. Having done that, Mr. Speaker, we would be in a position to actually evaluate whether or not this is something that can be put forward for infrastructure either by the GNWT or if it's something that we may want to approach the federal government with. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. LAFFERTY: It has been a few months now, and we are still talking about this cell coverage between the junction and Yellowknife. I have spoken to the Minister, as well, about this particular area. We are investing in our people's lives, and lives matter. On Highway No. 3, we are contemplating identifying the dollars in this area. It needs to be an urgent matter. We need to take actions today. Any day, people could die for lack of cell service between Rae junction and Yellowknife, waiting for life-giving help to arrive. Why hasn't this department or the Minister given this matter priority over the urgent needs, the issue that is at hand on Highway No. 3 between the junction and Yellowknife? When are we going to get serious about the safety issue of Highway No. 3 travellers?

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: We went out and did exactly what we said we would do, which is to get in touch with Northwestel, who are, in fact, the largest provider of cell coverage and cell services in the Northwest Territories and would be in the best place to actually be the provider of cell coverage and cell services on this stretch of highway. Having done that, we have an initial costing, and now we are at the stage of doing an evaluation on final costing. The infrastructure acquisition plan that is in front of all of us this week, if the Member is suggesting that this would make its way into that, that was not ever going to be feasible between June and today, but the idea is to have the information and the data available to evaluate

whether or not it should form part of a future infrastructure acquisition plan.

MR. LAFFERTY: At times, we wait on whether it be the federal government or a company such as Northwestel. Sometimes, there is procrastination or dragging their heels. Sometimes, it takes time. If Northwestel can't justify the cost, then what is the territorial government, our government, doing to make it worth the company's while to initiate this action that is badly needed, the cell service between Rae junction and Yellowknife, for the safety of those Highway No. 3 commuters and travellers?

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: What the government can do and what the government is doing is assessing the feasibility of this project so that we can actually determine what the actual costs will be and then be able to make an informed choice about whether or not the government can find a way to fill a gap, if there is, in fact, a gap in the market. By doing that, we can also go out and see if there may be potential partners. This may be an opportunity where the Indigenous governments of that region may want to become involved, but it's difficult to go and have that conversation in a meaningful and honest way without really understanding what the costs are. Having done the initial feasibility, having gotten some initial estimates, we are now analyzing those costs so that we can have exactly the kinds of conversations that I think the MLA, quite rightly, is asking about.

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

MR. LAFFERTY: Masi, Mr. Speaker. My final question is: this area has been addressed to my attention almost on a constant basis as so many travellers from my community of Behchoko, when the winter road is open, and from my three outlying communities. Again, I have to emphasize that it's a huge safety factor for my people. The people of Behchoko need to know when 911 emergency cell service will be available on this dangerous, overcrowded highway. They need to know, in an accident, if emergency is on their way immediately. When will this government take action on this very dangerous situation? I want to get more specific with this Minister. Since it's an urgent matter, during the life of this Assembly, is it possible to initiate -- the discussions are taking place, but the actions to make this happen? Mr. Speaker, masi.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: I certainly want to acknowledge that I appreciate these questions in the House. It brings attention to the matter. It certainly demonstrates the urgency of the issue. There are always asks and always needs, and so many of them relate to the well-being of the people of the Northwest Territories. Just to give some

context, it would be \$90 million in estimate to cover only 65 percent of all of our roadways in the Northwest Territories. Now, that is not the section that I recognize that the MLA is asking about. That section would be, initially, for a full coverage, about \$10 million, but then there are annual costs.

There are options being looked at. I know MACA is looking at options in order to provide 911 coverage. The Department of Finance wants to analyze these numbers, see what we can do, see how accurate they are, and then look for ways to potentially, as I've said, partner with perhaps the Indigenous governments, who would stand to hopefully benefit most from this, and partner and/or seek funding from the federal government. I can't give a specific timeline on a solution to this. What I can do is say that we're going to keep moving this forward as quickly as we can, so that we can ensure that the people of the Northwest Territories have safety and protection across all roadways. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 438-19(2):
MACKENZIE PLACE HIGH-RISE

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I talked about housing for Hay River, and I've got questions for the Premier. I'm going to be a realist here because I am not holding my breath on the Housing Corporation coming up with any solutions for the community. We have a solution in front of us. We've got 50, 60, 70 apartments and up to 122, and for some reason, this government just does not see it. I don't want to hear that anybody has died in Hay River because of exposure or freezing to death, as well, so that's why I keep after this subject. I would like to ask the Premier to confirm: what departments are involved in addressing the efficiency issues and orders related to the Mackenzie Place high-rise? Is there a lead department? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Hay River South. Honourable Premier.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes. The lead department that will be looking into the Mackenzie Place high-rise -- I want to make sure I get the name right. I'm just used to calling it the high-rise; sorry, Mr. Speaker. The lead department will be Municipal and Community Affairs, and then there are key departments that are working on it, of course: Municipal and Community Affairs; Health and Social Services is working on it; Infrastructure has a piece in it; the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation; and then also the WSCC, Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: I'd like to ask the Premier to confirm the status of orders placed on the high-rise by the department of health. Has communication stalled, or are we making progress to have those orders satisfied?

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Since that is a direct question for the Department of Health and Social Services, I would like to defer it to the appropriate Minister.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Honourable Premier. Minister of Health and Social Services.

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the Member for Hay River South for that question. There is a public health order in place for the building based on the risk of exposure to asbestos and mould, among other things. The CPHO has been working diligently with the owner this month to understand the level of contamination and remediation that has taken place and what needs to take place in the future. The most recent development is that the CPHO has hired a consultant to verify and augment the reports that she has received from the contractor for the owner, and this work will be done on an expedited time frame. I think that the CPHO is well aware of the value of the building as housing in a situation where housing is in very short supply and is trying to bring together the need for safety with the need for housing as soon as possible. Thank you.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: That answer is very encouraging. I'm glad to hear the word "expedited," as well, and I look forward to hearing the results. The other issue, now, with the Mackenzie Place high-rise is that there is potential for the power to be turned off next week, and it's going to have an effect on the emergency lighting, which sits on top of it and gives some indication to aircraft that there is a building there that is kind of high. What I'd like to ask the Premier is if she or one of her departments will commit the appropriate department to keep the power on in the high-rise to ensure aircraft and passenger safety, because, at this point, if that light goes out I'm not sure what's going to happen with that. I heard that the airport was going to just tell the aircraft that there is a big building there, so be careful. I'm kind of hoping that's not the situation.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: That question I'd like to defer to the Minister of Infrastructure.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Honourable Premier. Minister of Infrastructure.

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The role of the Department of Infrastructure is limited to inspections, to communication, and enforcement of the territorial regulations to ensure

that the GNWT-owned assets are in compliance with the applicable federal regulations. As this is a private infrastructure, the owner is responsible for the complying with federal Canadian aviation regulations. For the lighting of the towers above the specific heights of this enforcement by Transportation Canada. We remain hopeful that the owner will be able to find a solution by November 6th and will be able to keep the electricity on the building. Should this not happen, there will be a notice to airmen, or the NOTAM, created that will advise pilots of the building that does not have a rooftop beacon in the vicinity of the Hay River airport. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thought, with that sunshine shining in here, I was going to get some good answers, but I see it has kind of gone away now. I hear that the department has certain responsibilities, but as government we have responsibility of the safety of our people and the residents of the NWT. We have a lot of aircraft flying around. For probably \$5,000 or \$6,000 we can keep this power on for probably for the rest of the winter. I'm not happy with the response, and I'll talk to the Minister later. Can the Premier confirm what is the position of the Office of the Fire Marshal on the Mackenzie Place high-rise? Has that order been satisfied or is there further work and inspections required with respect to it? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: I'd like to defer that question to the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Madam Premier. Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs.

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just in regard to the fire at the Hay River high-rise, I want to follow up with the Member. It is quite lengthy, and there is a lot of detail with what the fire marshal has displayed. I'll follow up with the Member on that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 439-19(2):
NATIONAL HOUSING CO-INVESTMENT FUND

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today, the housing situation has been going on in Nunakput and across the whole territory, lack of housing. It made the news the other day that \$60-million fund that wasn't touched in regard to the co-investment fund. I'm wondering if the Minister is making with her department, her housing

department, making a strategy and working with our local NGOs and where I'm from, IRC and the community corporations. I'm going to send a letter out saying that, "Okay. The \$60-million fund, what kind of plan can we come up with in the communities?" Will the Minister entertain that, in regard to helping her spend that \$60 million in regard to getting more units in the houses where they are needed in the communities? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know there is going to be a lot of talk about the national co-investment fund and how this program is rolling out. I just want to make it very clear that this is a federal funding program that the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation is acting in support, to try to program deliver and try to connect and outreach the CMHC to access these programs throughout the Northwest Territories. This summer, the Housing Corporation had mentioned we had visited 14 communities out of the 33. Out of those 14 communities, every Indigenous group was consulted. We did meet with them and also to provide them with an update on how the program works. It is \$60 million.

I am committed, and I want to spend that money by the end of this government. I want there to be applications coming forward. My department is working strategically on how are we going to be partnering up with CMHC to tell the federal government we are not a southern jurisdiction. The way we do business in the Northwest Territories is different. It does not match the way that the program is laid out.

In regard to my colleague's region, I just wanted to provide him an update that we do have housing retrofits happening in Tuktoyaktuk this year with the completion date of 2021, materials and labour and major retrofits on four units. Paulatuk, we have major retrofits on five units, as well, with the completion date of February of 2021. Materials and labour on four additional units in Paulatuk, as well, with a fourplex that is being finalized in Inuvialuit Regional Corporation. Sachs Harbour we have three major retrofits, two units that's completion for December 2020. Tuktoyaktuk, as well, we have materials and labour on one unit and the tender will be going out in February 2021 and the delivery date of October 2021. Just to further update my colleague, we are working on a community plan, and we are starting the consultation and hopefully the completion would be within 2021, as well. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Madam Minister, for that update, too. I see that, but we need new units. We need more units. The units that we do have we could have had about another 20 more units because there is so much mould and stuff going on in the community. People are getting sick. I'm thankful to hear that. I know that's happening, but we need more units. We have either sell out what they can get rid of to get it out of the system because I know we're only allowed so many units in the community. We have to get rid of some of the old units and put some new ones and bigger ones, fourplexes. We need more fourplexes. We have young families in regard to that.

I know the Minister tried to come up to my riding, but at the time I wasn't available to do a tour. I'm inviting the Minister to come up with me to see firsthand what's happening in my communities in Nunakput and hearing it from my constituents and seeing what we need. We need to work together and spend this money. I'm here to help her to spend this money. The NGOs got a list, IRC, community corporation. Like I said, priority one is my constituents in regard to proper allocated housing in regard to a roof over their head and homelessness, also. That's my next question.

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: I hear the plea from the Member. The lack of housing throughout the Northwest Territories is quite significant, and we are working with each of the communities. We do have partnerships, as well, with the Indigenous groups throughout the Northwest Territories. I did send out notices to the Indigenous groups in Nunakput, but the invitation to invite was declined due to COVID. We are scheduled to go to Tuktoyaktuk possibly the third week of November. I'll be speaking with the Member.

MR. JACOBSON: I'd like to thank the Minister for that. We do need to get this money flowing. Last time the money was being spent was eight months ago. They have to have somebody hired right away at the department of housing to start allocating and start getting priorities set to start spending this co-investment money. It's free money. I really would like to see if we could, what's the timeline for that person being hired in the department to start spending the \$60 million?

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: The Housing Corporation is in the process of hiring a person right now. Hopefully, we'll have the hire completed and done and in the office by the end of November. I just wanted to elaborate on the co-investment fund. It's a federal funding that is provided to the Northwest Territories, also the Rapid Rehousing Program funding, as well, but these are federal funding programs. The Northwest Territories does not have direct access to it. We are supporting these federal initiatives, and we are trying to get the messaging

out there so NGOs, stakeholders, and Indigenous groups can come to the table, submit their application. We as a Housing Corporation can provide our technical support. I have also advised my department to make our construction plans and our building plans available to these applicants, as well.

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

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to invite CMHC on that tour in regard to seeing. They came to Tuktoyaktuk about two years ago. We told them all our issues, and we never heard back from them. I would ask the NWT representative invited onto that tour of Nunakput and whatever tour she is going on in regard to other than my riding, but I think it's a real priority. It has to be done. We have been sitting. If they are holding \$60 million of the territory's access to funding, it should be spent, and it's urgent. Some people are homeless. Some people, they need a little bit of a light to say that -- I know this Minister is trying, and we are here to help her. Help me help you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you for the Member's comments, as well. During these tours, CMHC is travelling with us, as well. The purpose of CMHC to be travelling with the Housing Corporation is to provide those introductions, as well, and to build those relationships with the communities so we could see these applications completed and we could see successful applications delivered from the Northwest Territories. Also, the commitment to get houses on the ground is absolutely a priority for this government, for the Housing Corporation, as well. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 440-19(2):
COVID-19 SECRETARIAT

MR. BONNETROUGE: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Premier. I ask if all possibilities were looked at prior to the creation of the secretariat with the bottom line in mind. I would like to reiterate that we had a state of emergency, which has since been removed but currently still have the public health emergency. Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Deh Cho. Honourable Premier.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I had stated earlier, the formation of the secretariat was because there were multiple departments that were working on different initiatives. Oftentimes the right hand was trying to

figure out what the left hand was doing, so the secretariat formed, I think it was just about a month ago, within that. When the secretariat formed, Mr. Speaker, we were hit with the increases of the cases, the second wave coming in southern Canada. We did not have a lot of time to do a lot of consultation, and our communication was not the best on that. We have spoken to address that before.

Since that meeting, though, I have reached out to Indigenous governments. We are still in that process. On September 30th, I did meet with the Indigenous governments. There were eight of them in total. I had strong support, verbal support, that they actually said, "We support the creation of the secretariat," once we explained the aspects of it. The NWT Metis Nation, Gwich'in Tribal Council, Acho Dene, Akaitcho Dene, Salt River First Nations, North Slave Metis Alliance, and the Sahtu Secretariat firmly said, "We support the secretariat." There was one other one that wanted more information, so I will not mention their name. They have not given me concrete. Since then, I have also met with the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation, who also have given me strong support for creation of the secretariat, understanding that we needed to have better coordination in what we are doing. I have also met with other members, Chief Bonnetrouge, Nahanni Butte Dene Band and Dene Nation and the Dehcho First Nations, but then again, at this point, we have not got a solid. We have got soft supports, but they have not said, "We 100 percent support it," concrete.

We are doing our work working with our municipal governments, as well; we have met with them; the business community, we have met with them; and the Indigenous governments. Options, Mr. Speaker? I wish we had more time. This pandemic hit us really quickly at the beginning of this government. When we have had a chance to breathe, almost as soon as we could take a breath, the second wave was starting in southern Canada. Time has not been on our side. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. BONNETROUGE: I would like to thank the Premier for her answer and for listing the First Nations that she had been in contact with. I certainly do not want to undermine the leadership's decisions from each of those regions, but my question had been if all possibilities, scenarios, were looked at prior to the creation, like having a think tank how we could do it. In my Member's statement, I had listed. We have up to 5,000, and now I am hearing close to 6,000 employees. Why did we not canvass? I am trying to get to the bottom line here.

We are paying an extra \$87 million over four years. That is extra money for just 150 positions, which I

believe we could have created from within our bureaucracy, our bloated workforce, and re-profiled the positions. I keep stating the state of emergency and the public health emergency, which probably is a strong tool to get you to direct those positions, something similar to what we have been hearing on the radio lately about the late Pierre Elliott Trudeau, who invoked the War Measures Act back in the day. That is why I keep harping on the state of emergency and this emergency that we have in place. This can direct us to do those things, and this is hurting our bottom line.

I kept stating in my statements that our small communities are suffering. There are lots of issues with housing. I don't want to repeat myself, but there are a lot of social problems there. I am trying to help out this government of why we don't go that route to look at savings to the bottom line in our budget. I am wondering if I could get an answer to that. Further to that, it's not too late to start recruiting from within. I don't mean this out of disrespect, and I really want to stress that. I certainly do not believe we need to pull retirees out of retirement to continue the work of the GNWT. Will the Premier look at using the current GNWT workforce to create this task force?

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: I would love to be able to say that we will stay status quo and we will use the current workforce. That is what we were doing at the beginning of the pandemic. I would have fought back and said that was the right way to do it, except I spoke to the employees who told me they were burning out. They were working way too much overtime. They were working seven days a week. It was not sustainable. It came from their mouths, saying that the current structure, the old structure, was not sustainable.

We do not want to spend a whole bunch of money, so we are looking at -- I can't remember the number. At the beginning, all of them were redeployed, but I do know that well over half of them right now are still redeployed from departments, people who are committed to helping with the health and safety. It's not because they need extra work. It's that they believe the cause is necessary. We do have a lot who are redeployed within departments. We have new hires, as well. Sixty-six of the 150 positions are going to be outside of Yellowknife. That means 66 positions outside of Yellowknife that are actually new jobs for community members.

Mr. Speaker, we speak in this House so often about the need for jobs in small communities. This is one option. It should not be riding on the health and safety, but it is an option for people. Again, I would love to have looked at it different ways, but it is coming from the staff and the people. Now, the Indigenous governments are saying that, as well.

We need to have coordination within this, and this needs to be our priority. I keep going back to when I was fighting to look at different structures. Honestly, one Grand Chief told me and it stuck in my head to this day: how much money is one life worth? Mr. Speaker, that will probably rest with me until the end of this pandemic, and I ask MLAs the same question. Mr. Speaker, to all MLAs, how much money is one life worth?

MR. BONNETROUGE: I understand the federal government's partial contribution is welcome, but I do not see the guarantees for further funding in the coming years. T7*-his may be redundant on cutting other programs and services to keep feeding this secretariat. Will the Premier commit to revamping and looking at cost-saving ways to form this task force?

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Absolutely, we're looking at cost-saving ways. That's why the secretariat was formed, to get better coordination, to be able to see what we're doing, to look at ways that we can actually be more efficient, more effective in our service delivery. I would like to say, Mr. Speaker, that, of the \$31 million I believe it is, around what we're looking for in this supplemental that's coming forward, I believe it's around \$23 million that is already funded from the federal government. The federal government in their Speech from the Throne identified the maintaining of COVID-19 supports as a huge priority in their government. We're holding them to that.

In my last meeting with the federal government, I emphasized the needs of the North and how vulnerable we were because we don't have the health supports that we need in every single community. Prime Minister Trudeau promised me on that call, and he has followed through, that he does care about the North, and he would get in touch with us and look at the additional money that we need. We are in the process. It is just being finalized this weekend actually, that we will actually be asking for more money for the secretariat. I do take to heart that the Prime Minister does hear us and is concerned about the North.

As well, again, since we formed the secretariat, we are looking at cost-saving measures. We are meeting with the municipalities, the Indigenous governments next week, and looking at isolation centres and what we could do with that, options of how we can afford that. That's the biggest expense within the secretariat is for isolation centres, critical for smaller communities, critical for our people. If we can find ways to get that down and still provide for the health and safety, then, we shall do that.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Madam Premier. Final supplementary. Member for Deh Cho.

MR. BONNETROUGE: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mahsi to the Premier for her actions and work moving forward. I know you state that the Prime Minister does care for the North, but all the funding to cover COVID issues does not come from the federal government alone. It has been left up to the territorial government to find funds from other programs and services to continue the secretariat. I'm just wondering the scenario that I had before. If we had taken employees from within, this would have helped our bottom line tremendously. I'm just wondering, what is the COVID secretariat hoping to accomplish or change that will see a noticeable improvement over how we're currently delivering it from within? Mahsi.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: What the COVID secretariat is hoping to accomplish, I stated before, is better coordination, more transparency, better communication to the communities, and the opportunity to be able to look at efficiencies and effectiveness within our services. I'll give an example, Mr. Speaker. I've been asked about the border patrols down by Providence-Hay River. It's a great question. The reality, and the reason that we're looking at different things and didn't go out through normal processes is we didn't have time.

Mr. Speaker, the secretariat was only formed, I think, three weeks to a month ago, and before that, it was individual departments. Normal procurement processes would have helped, but there was fluctuation within departments, et cetera. It was until the COVID secretariat formed and took over, at that point, we said we need to have facilities for our workers and, therefore, we're rushing. We got the Providence one, and we're doing the other up North, as well. Those areas, if we had it under one structure as the secretariat, ideally -- I hope it doesn't last another year, but if does last another year, we would be better prepared. We would be making sure that we had services and supports in place all season round. That's just one example of how we will actually be more efficient as we go forward. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: I thank the Honourable Premier. Colleagues, before we continue, I just want to remind everyone to keep your questions short and also the answers because we're not even midway through here and we still have six people to go. Our time is 20 minutes. Just a reminder for the future. Oral questions. Member for Frame Lake.

QUESTION 441-19(2):
WATER QUALITY MONITORING

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. My question is for the Minister of Environment and Natural Resources. In my statement earlier today, I noted that the Alberta provincial government and Alberta energy regulator unilaterally decided to

reduce water quality monitoring as a result of the pandemic and to provide so-called industry relief. Can the Minister confirm whether he received any notice of these reductions in water monitoring by Alberta, and what we are doing to prevent this from happening again? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, I'd like to thank the Member for Frame Lake for doing the Member's statement and asking these important questions and saying how good the work that the ENR staff are doing. The suspension of the long-term water quality monitoring in Alberta caused significant concerns this summer. The GNWT was not notified about the suspensions of water quality monitoring. However, I must inform the House here, it should be noted, that there are provisions within the Alberta and NWT water management agreement that allows either government to take urgent action where needed to protect the health or safety of the public. COVID-19 was an example.

Mr. Speaker, as soon as we learned of the water quality monitoring suspension, I reached out to my Alberta counterparts, Minister Nixon, and the federal Minister of ECCC to express my concerns about reduced water monitoring in Alberta and ask that the GNWT become members of the oil sands monitoring committee. I'm happy to report that all provincial water quality monitoring has been reinstated in June and July, and the monitoring at key federal sites has been in place since August. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. O'REILLY: I want to thank the Minister for that. I'm not sure that industry relief qualifies for the sort of exemptions that the Minister said, but I understand that it takes some time to have water quality samples analyzed and that, of course, once that analysis is done, we can better understand adverse impacts from upstream. I think some of those impacts may have compounded by high water levels that have been carrying additional sediments into the NWT. Can the Minister tell us whether the analysis of this summer's water samples has been finished and whether there are preliminary findings?

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: In our conducted water quality monitoring in the North and South Slave regions on the Slave, Hay, Liard, Peel, and Coppermine rivers this spring, the department did additional monitoring on the Slave River at Fort Smith due to the concerns about flooding in Fort McMurray. Results for the July monitoring of the Slave in Hay River have been released, and analysis of the August sampling is under way. The

department has committed to make these findings available to the public through our website, and we will also provide it to standing committee as soon as they become available. So far, the results have pointed to the effect of high water levels, including higher than normal metal concentration.

MR. O'REILLY: I want to thank the Minister for that. With the surprise reduction in water quality monitoring by Alberta and the federal government, this would seem to have some impact on our ability to detect water quality changes. We need to have repeated, continuous, long-term water quality monitoring, and that's one of the cornerstones of the Transboundary Water Agreement. Can the Minister tell us what impact the reductions in water quality monitoring have had on our ability to detect and predict adverse impacts on NWT waters and people?

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Healthy water is of critical importance to the Northwest Territories and its residents, and continuous long-term water quality monitoring is a critical part of the Transboundary Water Agreement. While water quality monitoring in Alberta was suspended, the GNWT conducted our own monitoring at borders throughout most of the pandemic, with only slight delays at the start of the season. Our results at the border are consistent with those in other parts of the basin and point to the impact of high water levels. All Alberta monitoring and most key federal sites, including all key sites downstream of the oil sands, are now up and running.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the response from the Minister. I'm not sure he actually understood what I was saying. We need long-term, continuous data sets, but I want to move on. I support the efforts of our staff to stay on top of the situation, but I am not convinced that the Transboundary Water Agreements are working as they should. Could the Minister tell us what lessons GNWT has learned from this experience and whether any changes will be made to the Transboundary Water Agreements? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: To just elaborate on the third question: yes, we continue to monitor, and we are continuing to do it with our transboundary agreements. This agreement is one of the most comprehensive of its kind, as it takes into account traditional knowledge, biological indicators, and indicators on early warning systems to detect changes in water quality before they reach the border. While there were some challenges this summer with its implementation, we have seen improved communications and notifications since

then. Our bilateral management committee, which impacts the agreement, is led by ADMs from both governments. As well, deputy ministers are now meeting quarterly to ensure effective communication between our two jurisdictions. The GNWT continues to pursue a seat on the oil sands monitoring committee that would give us a stronger voice on related monitoring program decisions. The GNWT will continue to protect NWT interests with the context of the NWT-Alberta Bilateral Water Management Agreement. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 442-19(2):

LAND USE MANAGEMENT FOR THE INGRAM TRAIL AND YELLOWKNIFE AREA

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In my statement today, I spoke about electoral reform, but I'll get to reforming democracy if I can get a few yesses out of the Department of Lands first. My question for the Minister of Lands is: will he develop land use area regulations for the Ingraham Trail? Perhaps I can get agreement that this work can be part of phase 2 of the Public Land Act and regulations. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Yellowknife North. Minister of Lands.

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you. I should just say no, but I won't this time. The department has prioritized the implementation of the Public Land Act. This is a major body of work that involves the development of multiple regulations to bring the Public Land Act into force in early 2022-2023, or earlier. This work is to be completed within existing resources and requires a dedicated team whose main focus will be on this important work. This is the important part that the Member has been asking for: yes, we will look at this. As we are working through this process, we will identify issues and challenges that we need to amend to the Public Land Act and regulations, but it will be in phase 2 of the act. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. JOHNSON: When I first ran for this job, I never thought I'd be so excited about an agreement to develop land-use regulations. In the past, we have tried to develop a Yellowknife periphery area strategy. This initially failed because it largely had a recreational focus and ignored the residential aspect that these are people's homes. It also failed to get proper consultation and engagement from the Akaitcho Government. I believe this work still needs to be done, to set out what the future of the Yellowknife periphery area looks like. Will the Minister develop a Yellowknife periphery area strategy?

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: For the Yellowknife peripheral area, it has become clear that land management consideration must consider a diverse set of land users. Planning needs to consider activities such as traditional use, tourism activities, mineral exploration, agriculture, residences, commercial use, and recreational use, and how these activities might coexist. The department is reviewing the work completed on the draft for Yellowknife recreation management and has been engaging with Indigenous governments and organizations. In light of these interests and input from Indigenous governments and organizations, the department is revisiting how best to develop a plan for the Yellowknife peripheral area.

MR. JOHNSON: I think that was a yes. I'm glad to hear that, and I'm glad to hear we are working with our Indigenous governments. Really, at the end of the day, what I am looking for is to give the vast majority of the land in Yellowknife North back to the Akaitcho and to keep a few leases in fee simple where my residents currently live. Can the Minister write to Akaitcho on what they would require to agree to land disposition of those leases?

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: As I mentioned, the department is engaging with Indigenous governments and organizations on a range of issues, including planning in and around Yellowknife. The Department of Lands also undertakes Section 35 consultation with IGOs and on all land distribution decisions, which will also include the process of completing a bulk land transfer of vacant public land to the City of Yellowknife. A technical review briefing has been offered to the MLA on related matters by EIA and Lands and may help answer these questions in their full context.

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

QUESTION 443-19(2):

ADDICTIONS AND MENTAL HEALTH

MS. SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Premier just quoted, "How much money is one life worth," when speaking about the COVID budget. My question is: I ask the Premier how much are the lives worth of those who we have lost since March 2020 to addictions, which could be secondary to mental health issues and trauma? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes. Honourable Premier.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Absolutely, Mr. Speaker. I stand by the Grand Chief's message: how much money is one life worth? We could use that in many instances. The Grand Chief used it

with the secretariat and our measures in there, so I don't want to twist his words, but it can be used with many things.

Addictions and mental health has been something that all societies have been struggling with for many, many, many decades. It's not as simple, in my opinion, as just putting a treatment centre in Yellowknife. Treatment centres work for some; they don't work for all. AA works for some, but it doesn't work for all. On-the-land healing works for some, but it doesn't work for all. School supports, the child counsellors might work for some, but it won't work for all.

What I am saying is that we need a continuum of services, and this government is doing the best to provide that continuum of services to address our mental health and our addictions within communities. Again, it's something I hold to my heart. The reason I came in here was because of homeless people, and I have said that before. If I was to share some of the stories I've heard of the homeless women, I would shock Members on the other side, and that's why I came in, to make changes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. SEMMLER: There is a budget of about \$86 to \$87 million over two-and-a-half years for COVID. GNWT amounts for addictions and on-the-land have been quoted in the House last week: \$2.3 million a year for addictions treatment; \$1.8 million for on-the-land healing. That is \$4.1 million a year. That is \$10 million for 2.5 years. It doesn't add up for me. When is the Premier going to look at a better way of providing addiction services or if her Minister, if she wants to pass it on, can look at a better way of providing addiction services? We have mental health counsellors, all those types of things, in our system. They are burnt out, too. We are short-staffed, so we need to look at a better way. Maybe it is putting more money behind it.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: The Minister of Health and Social Services would like to take this answer. I would like to defer it to her.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Madam Premier. Minister of Health and Social Services.

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question. Mr. Speaker, what the Department of Health and Social Services is doing early next year is to survey people who have received treatment in addictions centres to understand directly from them, the people who have used these centres, about the successes and shortcomings of their experience. I am very interested in seeing that information. What I remember from our tour that you were on, as well, Mr. Speaker, as a member of the social development committee, is there was quite a gap

between what was being said by people in the NWT and what was being said by clients in the centres. I am very interested in that first-hand information to understand whether the approach we are taking now is one that is resonating for the clients themselves. Thank you.

MS. SEMMLER: Addictions come from, like we said, we have drugs and alcohol. There is usually a root cause, but I know one of the things that we have lost a lot to is overdoses and alcohol and freezing to death. Will the Premier work with her Cabinet Member, maybe the Minister of Justice, to make sure that maybe we can have a -- everybody knows in the communities who are the drug dealers and how these drugs are coming in, but everybody is afraid. We need to have a way to work with the RCMP so people have a safe way to report and do kinds of things. As long as we have the supply there, we are going to have the problems.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: The Member is right. Mental health and addictions are not just one department's responsibility. It goes across all departments. In fact, it's a community issue. The stories I heard from women, when they were children, what happened to them did not happen because of our government. It happened because of people, so it does take a community to deal with the mental health and addictions that we are facing. Mr. Speaker, what I can commit to is that we will bring this issue to the committee of Cabinet or social committee, and we will look at a wholesome, all-of-government approach to dealing with that. However, Mr. Speaker, in respect, I would like to see the results from the survey that the Health and Social Services Minister has committed to. At that point, it would make sense that we would sit together and look at what we can do from a whole-of-government approach. Again, it will mean that all Members will need to look at that, as well, and all communities. We need to deal with this. It's not okay.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Honourable Premier. Final supplementary. Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes.

MS. SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is just more of a comment to the Premier. I am glad that you are going to take this further, and if there is a survey, I am reaching out to the residents of the Northwest Territories to make sure they take part in this. It's going to take not just one community. It's going to take the whole territory to deal with this, and I don't want to lose more family members, more constituents, to overdose, freezing to death this winter because of addictions or anything. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes. That is taken as a comment. Thank you. Oral questions. Member for Kam Lake.

QUESTION 444-19(2):
RAPID HOUSING INITIATIVE

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The \$1-billion Rapid Housing Initiative, which is complementary to the National Housing Strategy, was announced in September this year, and the applications are due at the end of this year, on December 31st. This is barely two months away, Mr. Speaker, and this makes me quite nervous, especially when I hear the Minister for the Housing Corporation talking to a colleague of mine about hoping to have the advisor person for the co-investment fund in place by the end of November. This does not leave somebody who is just potentially coming into the GNWT, coming into the Housing Corporation, to get their feet wet and to really be able to dive right into an application process in one month. I am wondering if the Minister of the Housing Corporation is willing to commit an existing employee of the Housing Corporation to do the application process for this Rapid Housing Initiative and have them assigned to the application process. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Kam Lake. Minister responsible for the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation.

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for your comment. This is something that I am wanting to complete by the end of November. We do have an offer that is out there right now, and we are in the process. If we do have a decline with the offer, we are going to be looking to hire in-house. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. CLEVELAND: I really want the Minister to see great success from these different federal housing initiatives. For this Rapid Housing Initiative, not the co-investment fund but for this Rapid Housing Initiative, will the Minister allocate an existing staff member from the Housing Corporation to do the application process, starting right away?

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: With the federal announcement with the rapid housing program that is offered to the Northwest Territories, Northwest Territories Housing Corporation and CMHC will be meeting next week on strategically how we are going to be program-delivering. Also, I will be meeting with my federal counterpart to speak about this program because he did not leave us a large amount of time to be dealing with this application. I just think that the timeline is honestly unrealistic, so I will be talking to the federal government, as well.

MS. CLEVELAND: I am happy to hear that the Minister will be sitting down with the federal Minister for CMHC in order to discuss the Rapid Housing Initiative. I think it's really important, and I think that it's important that everybody in this House support the Housing Corporation and make sure that they have the resources that they need in order to be successful in putting housing on the ground. With that in mind, Mr. Speaker, will the Minister of housing please allocate a member of the Housing Corporation today to be the champion of the Rapid Housing Initiative?

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: We are in process. I will keep the Member updated. Should we be able to hire someone immediately, I will inform my colleagues of what the outcome was of the position, whether it was declined or accepted.

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

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am tempted to try to put my remaining three questions into one, but I don't want to get in trouble, so I am going to pick one. What I would like to know is: has the Housing Corporation been able to reach out to any of the potential partners that would be involved in the rapid rehousing initiative? One of those key ones would be that the Rapid Housing Initiative favours applications that have received financial supports from municipalities, like in the form of property tax or permitting-fee waivers. I am wondering if the Housing Corporation has had the opportunity to reach out to the City of Yellowknife or had the opportunity to reach out and discuss this with people like the integrated case management, who would know what vulnerable populations in different communities desperately need for housing, in order to get houses on the ground? Thank you.

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: The announcement of this federal funding is very new. CMHC and the NWTHC will be meeting next week, and these meetings will be amongst the managerial staff here in the Northwest Territories. This is not a meeting that would be with the federal government at this time. Right now, I am just looking at the possibilities for this Rapid Rehousing Program initiative. Like I had said, three months to get these applications, and it takes us a year, 365 days, for us to complete a co-investment application. This is unrealistic. I will be talking to the federal government because this does not work for the Northwest Territories. We need an extension on the application process. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, colleagues. Our time for oral questions has expired. Item 8, written questions. Item 9, returns to written questions. Item 10, replies to 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 Environment and Natural Resources.

Tabling of Documents

TABLED DOCUMENT 216-19(2):
2020 NORTHWEST TERRITORIES
ENVIRONMENTAL AUDIT TECHNICAL REPORT

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table the following document: "2020 Northwest Territories Environmental Audit Technical Report." Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Tabling of documents. Item 15, Notices of motion. Item 16, Motions. Member for Kam Lake.

Motions

MOTION 19-19(2):
APPOINTMENT OF THE INFORMATION AND
PRIVACY COMMISSIONER, CARRIED

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. WHEREAS Section 61 of the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act permits the appointment of an Information and Privacy Commissioner by the Commissioner of the Northwest Territories after the approval of the appointment by the resolution of the Legislative Assembly;

AND WHEREAS the Legislative Assembly considers the appointment of an Information and Privacy Commissioner essential to exercise the powers and perform the duties under the Act;

AND WHEREAS the term of the Information and Privacy Commissioner is expiring;

AND WHEREAS the Legislative Assembly is of the opinion that the appointment of an Information and Privacy Commissioner should now be made to effective on November 23, 2020;

NOW THEREFORE I MOVE, seconded by the Honourable Member for Sahtu, that pursuant to Section 61 of the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act, that Mr. Andrew Fox be appointed for a term of five years as Information and Privacy Commissioner;

AND FURTHER, that the appointment be effective November 23, 2020.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

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

---Carried

Thank you. Motions. Member for Kam Lake.

MOTION 20-19(2):
APPOINTMENT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION,
CARRIED

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. WHEREAS Section 23(1) of the Human Rights Act provides the Commissioner on the recommendation of the Legislative Assembly shall appoint an Executive Director of Human Rights to carry out the responsibilities set out in the Act,

AND WHEREAS the Board of Management is tasked with recommending an individual to the Legislative Assembly and the Legislative Assembly is prepared to make a recommendation to the Commissioner;

NOW THEREFORE I MOVE, seconded by the Honourable Member for Sahtu, that the Legislative Assembly recommends the appointment of Ms. Nicole MacNeil of Yellowknife as Executive Director of Human Rights during good behaviour for a term of four years as recommended by the Board of Management.

AND FURTHER that the Speaker be authorized to communicate the effective date of appointment to the Commissioner. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

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

---Carried

Motions. Item 17, notices of motion for the first reading bills. Minister of Education, Culture and Employment.

Notices of Motion for the First Reading of Bills

BILL 20:
AN ACT TO AMEND THE EMPLOYEE
STANDARDS ACT

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Mr. Speaker, I give notice that on Tuesday, November 3, 2020, I will move that Bill 20, An Act to Amend the Employee

Standards Act, be read for the first time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Notices of motion for the first reading of bills. Item 18, first reading of bills. Minister of Finance.

First Reading of Bills

BILL 16:

AN ACT TO AMEND THE INCOME TAX ACT

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Hay River North, that Bill 16, An Act to Amend the Income Tax Act, be read for the first time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Motion is in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

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

---Carried

Bill 16 has had its first reading. First reading of bills. Item 19, second reading of bills. Minister of Justice.

Second Reading of Bills

BILL 15:

MISCELLANEOUS STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2020

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Inuvik Boot Lake, that Bill 15, Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2020, be read for the second time. This bill corrects inconsistencies and errors in the statutes of the Northwest Territories. The bill also deals with other matters of a minor non-controversial and uncomplicated nature in the statutes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. To the principle of the bill.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

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

---Carried

Bill 15 has had second reading. Minister of Justice.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I seek unanimous consent to waive Rule 73(2) to

have Bill 15 moved directly into Committee of the Whole for consideration. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. The Minister is seeking unanimous consent to have Bill 15 moved into Committee of the Whole. Are there any nays? There are no nays.

---Unanimous consent granted

Bill 15 will be moved into Committee of the Whole. Thank you. Second reading of bills. Item 20, Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters: Committee Report 4-19(2), Standing Committee on Government Operations Report on the Review of the 2018-2019 Northwest Territories Human Rights Commission Annual Report; Committee Report 5-19(2), Standing Committee on Government Operations Report on Review of the 2018-2019 Annual Report of the Information and Privacy Commissioner of the Northwest Territories; Minister's Statement 77-19(2), National Housing Co-Investment Fund; Tabled Document 165-19(2), Government of the Northwest Territories Response to Committee Report 1-19(2): Report on Long-Term Post-Pandemic Recovery, Recommendations to the GNWT; Tabled Document 166-19(2), Government of the Northwest Territories Response to Committee Report 2-19(2): Report on Long-Term Post-Pandemic Recovery, Recommendations to the GNWT; Tabled Document 167-19(2), Government of the Northwest Territories Response to Committee Report 3-19(2): Report on Long-Term Post-Pandemic Recovery, Recommendations to the GNWT; Tabled Document 181-19(2), Capital Estimates 2021-2022; and Bill 15, Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2020, with Member for Inuvik Twin Lake in the chair.

Consideration Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): I call Committee of the Whole to order. What is the will committee? Mr. Norn.

MR. NORN: Marsi cho, Madam Chair. Committee wishes to deal with the following items: Tabled Document 181-19(2), Capital Estimates 2021-2022, for the departments of Infrastructure and the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation. Next item, Committee Report 4-19(2): Standing Committee on Government Operations Report on the Review of the 2018-2019 Northwest Territories Human Rights Commission Annual Report, and also Committee Report 5-19(2): Standing Committee on Government Operations Report on Review of the 2018-2019 Annual Report of the Information and Privacy Commissioner of the Northwest Territories.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, committee. We will take a break.

---SHORT RECESS

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): I will now call Committee of the Whole back to order. Committee, we will resume consideration of Tabled Document 181-19(2), Capital Estimates 2021-2022, with the Department of Infrastructure. We are on programs and services on page 46, with information items on pages 47 through to 49. Do any Members have questions or comments for the Minister? Sorry, Minister, do you have witnesses?

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Yes, I do, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Sergeant-at-Arms, please escort the witnesses to the Chamber. Minister, will you please introduce your witnesses for the record.

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I have with me today Steve Loutitt, who is the acting deputy minister. I also have Robert Jenkins, who is the ADM for energy and environment.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Welcome. Members, do we have any questions or comments under programs and services? Member for Monfwi.

MR. LAFFERTY: Masi, Madam Chair. [Translation] When we say infrastructure, we are talking about things that are going to be built in our community. This is the item that we are on. I have one item. We've been talking about Whati, and also the elders have been mentioning this over the years. They have been talking about having hydro to their community. When did they have a change of decision? I want to know what the department is doing on this topic, regarding electricity to Whati. [End of translation]

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. The Whati transmission line is a key initiative under the 2030 Energy Strategy. Just to put this in perspective, the project would displace 500,000 litres of diesel energy currently used for power generation in Whati and reduce greenhouse gases by 1.4 kilotonnes annually. The Government of the Northwest Territories is committed to partnering with the Tlicho Government to advance this Whati transmission line. Madam Chair, that's where we're at with this project right now. Thank you.

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

MR. LAFFERTY: Masi, Madam Chair. This particular one used to be mini-hydro; now, it's a transmission line. The Minister talked about partnership with the Tlicho Government. I know there has been a lot of discussion over the years. We're still talking about it. A lot of elders have passed on. They have always stated that they can't even have dried fish hanging up outside because of the heavy black smoke out of the diesel generators in the community. This Whati transmission line, are we heavily dependent on a federal contribution, as well, or is this directly between the GNWT and the Tlicho Government? Masi.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I am going to turn this over to Mr. Jenkins.

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

MR. JENKINS: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes, the Whati transmission line is included within our 10-year notional plan. Federal support will be imperative to the successful implementation of this project. We will be working on an application for federal funding on this project that we hope to submit next fiscal year, and that would be on the 75/25 funding basis. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. LAFFERTY: Masi, Madam Chair. I'm just curious about the time frame. Since we have an all-weather road going through the community now, with this transmission line, obviously, it will be much easier to connect to the community. The submission of a proposal, I am very surprised that it's not in with the federal government yet. Like I said, we've been talking about this since mini-hydro, and now the transmission line. Once the submission is initiated, what will be the time frame? If all goes well with the federal government, shovelling the dirt, I'm just curious on the time frame itself, Madam Chair. Masi.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. The Member is correct. We did work on the technical study, the preliminary environmental studies, and a potential additional traditional knowledge of the land use studies. Once the routing and the feasibility work is completed, Infrastructure will work toward federal funding under the ICIP program. This would not likely begin until

late 2021; that's the timeline. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. LAFFERTY: Masi, Madam Chair. Since there was a big shift from mini-hydro to transmission line, one would assume that the community of Whati has been actively engaged. If so, I'd like to get more detailed information, probably from the Minister, not right now but later on. What kind of engagement have taken place from mini-Hydro until today? Just a comment to the Minister if she can follow up on that? Masi.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Absolutely. We will get the Member a little bit more detail information and the specific timelines on where we're at with the project. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Minister. Member for Monfwi? No. Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

MR. NORN: Marsi, Madam Chair. Just going through this long list here, I counted 37 items for the project listing, and again, I only see one. It's frustrating, very frustrating. I did have some questions on the one project here that's clearly listed here, Lutselk'e, the Lutselk'e Power Plant. I just want to ask the Minister when, this project, can we expect to see up and running and to completion and just give an idea, an update, to the House on when it's going to be started and finished. Marsi cho.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I will tell you in one second here. Actually, Madam Chair, I would like to divert this to Mr. Jenkins.

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

MR. JENKINS: Thank you, Madam Chair. The Lutselk'e Power Plant, that project involves a replacement and a relocation of the existing plant. The existing facility is nearing the end of its service life. We have received funding from Canada under the ICIP program, and we're looking at project completion as stated in the capital plan of 2021-2022. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Mr. Jenkins. Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

MR. NORN: Marsi, Madam Chair, and thank you for that response. What is the total cost of this project? Thank you.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I will divert this question over to Mr. Jenkins.

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

MR. JENKINS: Thank you, Madam Chair. That project is approximately \$12 million. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Mr. Jenkins. Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

MR. NORN: There's a little bit of a bright light at the end of the tunnel for me in terms of this whole capital plan booklet. I'm glad to see there's some work being done, but as I said, I think there could have been a lot more. I'm just going to turn my attention to some of the various items here on page 49. I just wanted to see if there's any ballpark estimate of what else is being spent in the Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh riding in terms of the work being done? Marsi cho.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm going to ask Mr. Jenkins. He probably has a detailed list there. Thank you.

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

MR. JENKINS: Thank you, Madam Chair. We would have to go back and provide a listing of projects. Is the Member referring to, specifically, energy projects in his riding? Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Mr. Jenkins. Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh, can you clarify?

MR. NORN: Marsi, Madam Chair. Yes, I will absolutely clarify. In the various items up here, I'm seeing hydro infrastructure. There's Raven fuel management, renewable solutions for off-grid diesel, Taltson expansion. Those four items, if you can give me a ballpark of what benefits this will be coming towards my riding? Marsi cho.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh. Mr. Jenkins.

MR. JENKINS: Thank you, Madam Chair. Some of the items as the Member indicated, we are

advancing work on the Taltson expansion project. We have \$18 million over three years, a 100 percent funding grant from CIRNAC for that work to advance that. There are a number of other areas in terms of renewable solutions for off-grid diesel, other areas that we would be looking in evaluating through the years potential projects across a number of regions, and we'll make sure that we look at any potential projects in this riding. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Mr. Jenkins. Member for Tu Nedhe-Willideh.

MR. NORN: Thank you. I don't want to speculate, but I bet if you did look at this, you won't find a whole lot of benefit. It just goes to my point. I've kind of been seeing this over and over, almost like a mantra. It's disappointing to see the lack of help we've been getting. I need to go back to my constituents and tell them why there's a lack of love, for a better word, in terms of contracts, the construction for this year. I want to hear some assurances.

I'll have some questions for the Premier later on, but we need to keep these projects going and spread out so there's more equity because right now there isn't. There's a lot of aging infrastructure in my riding, and we need to keep the upkeep. We still need to keep people working. We still need to keep these infrastructures up and showing the government that they do care for their citizens, right across the board, not just for the larger centres. Again, I'm very frustrated. We're not quite done yet here. Like I said, hopefully, I'll see a little bit more come through down the pipe here for the riding. Marsi cho.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member for Tu Nedhe-Willideh. Member for Great Slave.

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. First of all, I'm going to go back to the Whati line that my colleague was raising up there. I'm just wondering if Infrastructure has considered routing the line along the TASR road for future planning of development. If we're going to be put in a roadway, the idea that maybe later on, that will spur other development or even homes or things along that roadway. I'm sure we'll see cabins and such pop up. Wouldn't it make sense for one infrastructure corridor? I do understand there are money considerations with coming straight off of the source. However, if we're looking at a longer-term planning, maybe we want to think about that as actually as being a linear infrastructure corridor?

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I think that's an excellent idea. I think the Member kind of understands where the need to be able to capture some of our 2030 strategy and to be able to meet some of our goals. That is something that the department will look into. Thank you.

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

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. Of the projects in the list here on these couple of pages, several of them are denoted as having the federal funding pots, the ICIP and the DMAF. Could the Minister provide us with an idea of which of these projects we have actually secured the 75-cent dollars for and which are just ones that we're hoping to secure the funding for still? Thank you.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I am going to defer this to Mr. Jenkins.

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

MR. JENKINS: Thank you, Madam Chair. There are six energy projects under the integrated bilateral agreement for which we've received approved federal funding. That is the Inuvik Wind Project, Snare Forks hydro upgrades, Sachs Harbour diesel power plant project, Fort Simpson LNG project, Lutselk'e diesel power plant project that we just discussed, and the Taltson hydro overhaul. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. I don't have any more questions. Just more of a comment. I'd like for the Minister to commit to no tricked-out vehicles, that many of these ones that are listed in here are not full of all the perks and top end of the line. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member. I'll take that as a comment. Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. I want to follow up on my colleague's questions, colleague from Monfwi, about the Whati transmission line. I raised a number of concerns with this project in the last Assembly in a rather hurried review of the capital budget that was carried out in one day in August of 2019. This kind of project just kind of came out of thin air. I'm just wondering: there was money appropriated in the 2020-2021 Capital Estimates for this project. Was any of it actually spent, and if so, how much? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. The budget for this project was about \$33 million. I'm going to see if Mr. Jenkins has the amount that we have spent to date. Thank you.

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

MR. JENKINS: Thank you, Madam Chair. As the Minister mentioned, this project is included with our 10-year notional plan, notional at \$33 million. To date, funds have been carried over; none are spent. We are working with the Tlicho Government to advance this project, and we have started some consultations on the project and discussions on potential routing. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. There was a lot of work done on mini-hydro for Whati using the Lac La Martre falls, very close to the community, and there was some preliminary work also done on mini-hydro for Gameti and Wekweeti, as well. As I understood from the information that I tabled in the last Assembly, you could probably do all three of those communities as mini-hydro for the same cost of this 60-kilometre over from Snare. Has the department looked at the relative costs of those three mini-hydro projects versus the Whati transmission line? Mahsi, Madam Chair.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm trying to find the answer here. I'm going to defer this to Mr. Jenkins.

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

MR. JENKINS: Thank you, Madam Chair. The GNWT, we are working with the Tlicho Government to advance the Whati transmission line project. The development of this transmission line does not preclude the future development of the 13-megawatt hydro project on the La Martre river that could support future industrial development and electrification of the North Slave. We are also advancing a project, a community hydro project, to serve Gameti. There was hydrology information that has been collected over the last few years. We need to look at that and confirm the hydro resource, have some more additional technical environmental work carried out, in partnership, of course, with the Tlicho Government and the community government, and then make decisions on that project moving forward. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. I think we're jumping the gun here and including money for the Whati transmission line in the capital estimates when we haven't even made an application to the federal government yet, apparently, for this project. There hasn't been any analysis of the cost of a transmission line versus the cost of having three mini-hydro projects that could serve the three Tlicho communities. I just don't understand why this project is being pushed without that kind of analysis. Can the Minister commit to provide that analysis to this side of the House? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Absolutely. If the Member would like more detailed information on the project, that is something we can provide.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. Great, yes. I really appreciate it, because it's my understanding that I think we could get mini-hydro projects that each community could actually control and have a self-sufficient energy future. At the same cost of building this big transmission line, they could become self-sufficient and control their own energy future. That's the kind of future I'm interested in, Madam Chair. Of course, that would need to be done in consultation with the Tlicho Government and all of the communities.

I want to move over to the Inuvik wind turbine project. I know that the Gwich'in Land and Water Board just rendered their decision on some issues around the land-use permit that was submitted for that project, and I am furiously trying to skim the decision myself that came out yesterday. It looks like the board has ruled that GNWT can rightfully have a land-use permit, but that they really need to consider this issue of whether the area is really part of the reindeer-grazing reserve. I have kind of a technical question here for the Minister: why did we not change the area that the turbine project is supposed to be located on? Why didn't we change the regulation and take it out of the reindeer reserve before trying to push this project through? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I am going to ask Mr. Jenkins to provide some

rationale about why the planning was done in previous years. Thank you.

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

MR. JENKINS: Thank you, Madam Chair. The Inuvik wind project, that is another key initiative under our 2030 Energy Strategy. We've been in the regulatory process for a few years, the Member is correct. The recent ruling from the Gwich'in Land and Water Board on the eligibility to occupy land, the board did rule that the GNWT is eligible to occupy the land for this project and for this purpose. Madam Chair, we will continue on through the regulatory process, and that is an opportunity for parties to raise concerns with the turbine itself and environmental concerns throughout the process. We respect that process. We will work through that process, and we look forward to the discussions with all the parties. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. Where I'm going to go with this is: I am very worried that this project is going to get referred to an environmental assessment. There was no reason whatsoever that that had to happen, had our government actually properly consulted and worked with the Gwich'in Government in relation to this project. I also don't think it's a great idea where GNWT willy-nilly decides that it can reallocate pieces of land that have been designated for certain purposes for other purposes. You can't take stuff out of a reindeer-grazing reserve and unilaterally decide you're going to change it to do something else. Are we going to follow our own laws, or not? If you are going to change the law in that region, you need to consult the Indigenous governments, as well.

This is a head's up for the Minister: with other infrastructure projects, including this one, we should not be willy-nilly deciding that we're going to change areas that are set out in regulations and unilaterally decide you're going to change it to something else. I'd like to get an explanation as to why we think we have the ability to change something that is a reindeer-grazing reserve to a wind turbine without going through due process, changing the regulations, and consulting the appropriate Indigenous government? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. The Inuvik wind project, again, is one of our key initiatives, so that is something that we are working toward. We have been waiting for the Gwich'in Land and Water Board to be able to give a ruling,

and we are quite excited about the ruling that was done today. We continue to engage with communities and Indigenous organizations, so we can start to advance the project and ensure that participation and partnership in the development of any energy solutions here in the territories. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. I'm just going to read one line, one line, from the most recent ruling that came out yesterday: "The Gwich'in Land and Water Board suggests that the GNWT is best placed to enforce its own legislation." That includes, this is me editorializing, the reindeer-grazing reserve. You cannot just unilaterally decide that you are going to change something that is designated for a certain purpose under a regulation and decide that you are going to use it for something else without changing the regulation itself. That is against the law, and we are breaking our own laws. Thanks, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member. I'll take that as a comment. Member for Hay River South.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just want to go to fuel storage capacity with respect to Hay River. I understand why we are looking at this, but the question I have is: why is the government doing this when we actually have a private sector in Hay River that could possibly handle it? Even in Enterprise, there is an industrial yard going in there, which I understand they have rail car service there and they may have extra or be looking at fuel storage there. I am just wondering if the government has actually talked to that proponent and really looked at this issue because it's going to add environmental liability to the government, depending where these tanks are. I suspect that they are probably going to be in the old town, on the island of Hay River, close to water sources. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. The MTS, the department, is looking and studying and considering the construction of a buffer fuel storage capacity at the Hay River marine terminal, so that is kind of where we are at now and also looking at the needs of the people in Hay River. Thank you.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Madam Chair, my concern is that we are turning MTS, by the looks of

it, into almost a private-sector type business, competing against private sector. I would like the government to reconsider this and gauge the private sector to see if there is anybody who can provide that service. I understand that there are funds made available, supposedly by federal government, with some costs provided by the territorial government, as well. I would just like to know what those numbers are. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I hear the Member's concern about working with the private sector, and if that is an option for the department, then, absolutely, that is something we can look at. In terms of the number, I am going to send this to Mr. Jenkins, looking for the costs. Thank you.

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

MR. JENKINS: Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you for the question. It's a total of \$21.5 million federal and \$7.5 million GNWT. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes. Those are the numbers I have, as well. I am pleased to hear that the Minister will consider talking to private sector and try to include them in on this, as well. The next thing I want to go to here is the transmission line, the Fort Providence transmission line. I would ask the Minister: where is that line going to start, and where is it going to end? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I am going to get Mr. Jenkins to provide this information.

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

MR. JENKINS: Thank you, Madam Chair. The Fort Providence T-line will use surplus power available in the existing Taltson system. That will virtually eliminate the use of diesel for electrical generation in the communities of Fort Providence, Kakisa, and Dory Point, except for emergency backup. There will be a need still for diesel emergency backup. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Mr. Jenkins. Member for Hay River South.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. Knowing that Northland Utilities actually provides the power to Kakisa and to Fort Providence, what involvement will they have in that line, or is this line going to be part of the potential takeover when we talk about the Hay River franchise? Are we also looking at Kakisa's and Fort Providence's potential takeover by the Power Corporation? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just want to talk a little bit about the project, using the surplus hydropower, that is available at the existing Taltson system to eliminate the use of diesel for electrical generation in the communities of Fort Providence, Kakisa, Dory Point. The delivery of hydropower to the customers and communities would also reduce the cost of power. I am going to revert the question over to Mr. Jenkins to provide more detail on what the plan is for the project. Thank you.

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

MR. JENKINS: Thank you, Madam Chair. As mentioned, this is a 170-kilometre-long transmission line that is being proposed, from Hay River to Fort Providence. We have had discussions with the utility. Obviously, the utility will be involved in discussions moving forward. Ultimately, there will be a power supply that will provide whatever utility in the future is responsible for delivering that electricity in the community. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Mr. Jenkins. Member for Hay River South.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. It's interesting. I do not oppose the idea. That is for sure. We are always looking for cheaper power in the south. When I read the news, I see that the Power Corporation, we're spilling water over the dam and we've got surplus power, but we are not utilizing it in the communities to promote manufacturing or to promote electric heat. I understand that the reason that we are doing this, possibly, is because we are waiting for the big mine to show up around Pine Point or wherever. We seem to be waiting for that big white elephant, and it never seems to come, when we could be actually using that source of power to reduce the cost of power in the South Slave area, which would then, in turn, spur the economy, as well, like the manufacturing sector and whatever other

businesses. I am just wondering what are your thoughts on that, Madam.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I think the project is one of the best projects we have in this energy strategy. There is opportunity within the many different projects that are happening here in the South, whether it be whatever region, that we need to be able to look and see what works best, what is cost-saving, and try to help us meet our 2030 Energy Strategy. This is something that our department is looking into. Thank you.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. When I look at it, I am looking how to reduce the cost for the people in the community. This is one way to do it. It has been sitting there for years, year after year after year, and nothing gets done. Now, it's the best project. It is a good project. There is no doubt about that. I just hope that we utilize it in the right way.

I would like to go to talk about the ferry system. I know in Fort Simpson they were looking at the potential for a bridge. I am just wondering what involvement the government has in this, or is it just the community of Fort Simpson that was pushing this idea? I know that the ferry system, a few of the ferries are probably aging out, and there is going to be a requirement to either build new ones and replace them or look at a bridge along the different areas. I am just wondering what the government is planning with respect to aging ferries and replacements. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I am going to give this to Mr. Jenkins. Thank you.

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

MR. JENKINS: Thank you, Madam Chair. I would ask that Mr. Loutitt take this question. Thank you.

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

MR. LOUTITT: Thank you, Madam Chair. The department is continually looking at our ferry operations, and they are on our schedule for maintenance, for rehabilitation, for retrofits, as we have in our plan, to continually keep them operating safely and effectively and efficiently. We're also looking at bridges in certain areas. We've had

studies going on that we're beginning. We've had consultants visit certain areas and we're looking at what our bridge needs for the future. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Mr. Loutitt. Member for Nunakput.

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just a few things in regard to the Infrastructure services that were going. The Inuvik terminal and the runway extension, just making sure that we have local contractors that are doing the work that's coming up on these projects. Keep it local and in regard to no bringing in outsiders. That's just a comment to have on that. The M18 project, they had a meeting last night back home with M18, which is 13 kilometers outside of Tuktoyaktuk, on Tuktoyaktuk 71a lands, and I'm just wondering if this government is looking at any monies because it will provide LNG with the condensates off of that wealth. You'd get gasoline and diesel that we could provide for the region. I'm just wondering if there is anything coming up with that question I have for M18 for funding. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. That project is a great opportunity for the Beaufort-Delta. We provided the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation with a support letter to be able to advance the project. We're constantly looking for ways to be able to tap into stuff that are cheaper for our infrastructure, and there is opportunity for the Member's community in Tuktoyaktuk to be able to look at how we can perhaps tap into the source. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. JACOBSON: Yes. It is a really good opportunity to get gas a lot cheaper for the outlying communities because I think, without our subsidy that's given by our government, you'd be paying \$2-something a litre. Getting opportunity to do something like this would probably be about \$1.25 a litre, if not a little bit cheaper, because we're getting it right there at the source. It being on 71a lands under the Inuvialuit Final Agreement, 71a lands meaning Tuktoyaktuk lands. Are we keeping in contact with the Tuktoyaktuk community corporation with their business, the Tuktoyaktuk development corporation, and keeping them apprised on what we're doing with IRC and keeping them in the loop, or is it just IRC giving them information? How does that work with this, Madam Chair? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member. We're going a little bit away from this, but I'm going to let it go a little bit. Minister.

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just want to note that the Department of Infrastructure is supporting IDC in their discussions with the Ferus Natural Gas. We are also helping them with their logistics plans, including the supply chain support, which is important. I do want to say that we have a nondisclosure with the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation. Therefore, we can't share too much information about this. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you for that. Moving on, in regard with all the infrastructure, the DMAFing with the fuel tank storages in Ulukhaktok and Tuktoyaktuk and Sachs Harbour, the timeline on that, I heard the assistant deputy minister before saying one is approved. Are all three projects approved? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm going to ask Mr. Jenkins to be able to provide that.

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

MR. JENKINS: Thank you, Madam Chair. That is information we will have to follow up with committee on. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Mr. Jenkins. Are there any further questions, comments to programs and services on page 46? I will now call the activity, infrastructure programs and services, infrastructure investments, \$94,424,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Members please return now to the departmental summary found page 40. Infrastructure 2021-2022 Capital Estimates, \$292,766,000. Mr. Norn.

COMMITTEE MOTION 45-19(2):
TABLED DOCUMENT 181-19(2): CAPITAL
ESTIMATES 2021-2022 - INFRASTRUCTURE -
DEFERRAL OF DEPARTMENT (PAGE 40),
CARRIED

MR. NORN: Marsi cho, Madam Chair. I move that the committee defer further consideration of the

estimates for the Department of Infrastructure at this time. Marsi cho, Madam Chair.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Question has been called. All those in favour? Opposed? Motion is carried.

---Carried

Consideration of the departmental summary has been deferred. Thank you, Minister, and thank you to your witnesses. Sergeant-at-Arms, please escort the witnesses out of the Chamber.

Committee, we have agreed to resume consideration of Tabled Document 181-19(2), Capital Estimates 2021-2022, with Northwest Territories Housing Corporation. Does the Minister responsible for the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation wish to bring any witnesses?

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Yes. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you, Madam Chair. With me today, I have the president of the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation, Tom Williams, and finance and administration vice-president, Jim Martin. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Minister and welcome. The committee has agreed to forgo general comments. Is committee agreed we will proceed to the detail contained in the tabled document?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Committee, the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation is included in the capital estimates as an information item and the totals are not votable. We will continue to review these estimates as we have for the previous considered departments, however, we will not vote on the totals. If Members have comments or questions they can be raised at the appropriate time.

Committee, we will defer the corporation totals and review the estimates by activity summary, beginning with finance and infrastructure services on page 65, with information items on page 66. Are there questions, comments? Member for Tu Nedhe-Willideh.

MR. NORN: Marsi cho, Madam Chair. Yay, I have two items here! It looks like there is going to be some retrofit work in Deninu Kue here. I did have a few questions about that, but I could start with my first question: when is this work expected to be started? Marsi cho.

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

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm going to defer this question over to Mr. Williams as I know the Housing Corporation has had delay in project delivery because of COVID-19. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. WILLIAMS: Thank you, Madam Chair. I will defer the question to Mr. Martin.

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

MR. MARTIN: Thank you, Madam Chair. The projects in question relate to the major retrofits. For the communities noted, we expect to start that work, tender that work, later this fiscal year for delivery next year. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Mr. Martin. Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

MR. NORN: Thank you. I am disappointed to see the other communities in my riding not in this, like Ndilo, Detah, Lutselk'e. I know, a lot of us in the small communities, we get a lot of housing complaints, a lot of them, and it doesn't ever stop. You are always advocating for these types of things, and that's why we're here. Again, it's a bit frustrating, and we do get a lot of these programs turned down. A lot of my constituents get turned down for things like the CARE and SAFE programs. It gets a little bit disheartening, but like I said, I don't take no for an answer the first time. I keep plugging for it, and that's what I'm here for. This is more of a comment, but I've noticed so far, through all our capital estimates, that you see a lot of offsets from the federal government here. My question for the Minister is: why don't we see more of that in these line items? It's very curious. Marsi cho.

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

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just to be clear, with the Member's question, is that additional federal funding that he is asking about? If he could just clarify.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Yes.

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you, Madam Chair. We have federal engagements, and the federal funding that we do have is for the structure of our cost savings for our units, as well. It is not identified as we do apply to the federal government, and it's not included in the estimates that we have provided. I will defer the question over to Mr. Martin. Thank you.

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

MR. MARTIN: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes. The delivery proposed for 2021-2022, the capital projects set out, the Housing Corporation is proposing to recover \$1 million in 2021-2022 from the current investments proposed under the Low Carbon Economy Fund. That is an example of where we will be leveraging additional federal dollars. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Mr. Martin. Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

MR. NORN: Thank you. I just had a quick question. I know it's not so much this, but are we expecting to see more retrofits forecasted in terms of more of these retrofits in my riding? Marsi cho.

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

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you, Madam Chair. I can provide the Member with the list, the current list that is to be delivered in 2021-2022. We do have plans to be doing additional work in Detah, Ndilo, and Lutselk'e for 2021-2022. I also wanted to add that we are working within COVID, as well, so we are working with the restrictions of the communities. A lot of our projects have been delayed because they didn't want new people entering into their communities, but I will keep you updated and provide a document to you. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. NORN: Thank you. That is encouraging to hear. I did have one other question, too. When I do my constituency visits, it really pains me to see, like I said, when you have existing buildings and infrastructure there that are not being used as best as they can. You still see a lot of abandoned buildings, and you know they used to be NWT HC assets or probably still are. I can count at least four or five occasions when I was walking around in Lutselk'e and Deninu Kue that I've seen that. What are the plans for buildings that are deemed abandoned? What is the threshold where they are deemed abandoned or they cannot be salvaged? Marsi cho.

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

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you, Madam Chair. The Housing Corporation does have something similar to asset management, so we do look at the lifetime of our buildings, and we do have a demolition process, as well. One of the things that the Housing Corporation does do, because land is limited, as well, we administer our buildings. If they are beyond economic repair, we will demolish those buildings, and we will end up replacing them. As our budget is rolling out, it would depend on the amount of money and funding that we will be receiving that year. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. NORN: If I could just get something in writing, too. If there is a list of buildings slated for demolition, that would be good for our communities to know. Like I said, a lot of these buildings, they are eyesores, and nobody wants to see that. It's always good to keep our stock updated and keep them up to date. That's all I have for now. Thank you. If I have more questions, I'll forward them when ready. Marsi cho.

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

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you, Madam Chair. I will provide the Member with a list of the demolition and the inventory that we have in his riding. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. If I did my math correctly on page 66, it looks like there are going to be 104 retrofits and nine new units. The nine new units seem to be in Inuvik. Can someone tell me: is that RCMP housing, or is that housing that is going to be made available to residents? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you, Madam Chair. That would be our RCMP units. I will have Mr. Martin elaborate on the program delivery. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. MARTIN: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just to confirm, those nine units scheduled for 2021-2022 are for the RCMP housing delivery. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. Why are there no new units for residents of the Northwest Territories? It's all retrofits. Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you, Madam Chair. We did roll out our estimates, and we did put our budget together. We do have some units that were announced in June of this year. I don't have them listed on here, but we are looking at the retrofits and looking at the units. I want to say that I want to bring them up to standard, and I had announced this, as well, that I wanted to sell the refurbished units and to put home ownership on the ground. I will have Mr. Williams elaborate on the response, as well. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. WILLIAMS: Thank you, Madam Chair. The Minister is correct. We do retrofits with our existing finances that we do have, and our inventory. Unless we get new money, new money for infrastructure and new money for O and M, we can't add to the inventory. We do a lot of due diligence on making sure that our existing units are kept in good order, so half of our budget is spent on retrofitting our existing public housing stock. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. When I look at all the other departments in here, there are a whole bunch of shiny new toys for everybody except for the Housing Corporation. What's going on here? We have lots of retrofits, I get that, but no new units? I just don't get it. Is this the glass ceiling that we're talking about here, where the Housing Corporation cannot take on any new units because there is concern around O and M? Is that what we're talking about here? This is a question for the Minister. Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes, that is correct. It's operations and maintenance funding. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. Okay. We've got to get more money into the Housing

Corporation for new units. I don't know how I can say that more clearly. If it's pitched to the financial management board as forced growth, a new initiative, I don't care anymore. We need more money for housing, for new units, and for the O and M that needs to go along with that. Can the Minister make a commitment to go to the Financial Management Board and get more money for new units for the Housing Corporation? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes, I will put something together. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks. I think that is the best news I have had almost all year. Look, I think Members on this side want to support the Minister in getting more money for the Housing Corporation for new units, not just retrofits. If you can find some federal money that goes along with it, that is great, but we need more money from our own source, our own pot. I want to shift a little bit here now, Madam Chair, but that was indeed great news and a fantastic commitment from the Minister, and I don't want to underestimate that in any way.

When I look, though, on page 65 of the estimates, this is flow-through money that comes really through the Department of Finance as a contribution to the Housing Corporation for its capital. If you look at 2019-2020, there is about \$17 million and change; 2020-2021, \$11.6 million; 2021-2022, only \$10.6 million. Our contribution to the Housing Corporation for capital is declining over time. How can that possibly be? What is happening? How can our capital contribution to the Housing Corporation actually decline over time when housing is such a high priority? Am I misinterpreting this in some way? That is what I would like to know. Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you, Madam Chair, and to the Member, as well. We do have a decline in the funding that we do receive, but we also have the RCMP units that are coming forward. Those are just RCMP replacement for market housing units. I will have Jim Martin elaborate on the declining of the funding. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. MARTIN: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes. For 2021-2022, the Housing Corporation, as per the estimates, has set aside approximately \$10.6 million to support our regular capital delivery and the RCMP units, as we identified, for incremental revenues to support our social housing program, so we are doing that. However, in addition to that, we are also making other investments within the allowance that we have within our fiscal framework. Examples of other investments beyond the \$10 million would be an additional investment of \$1.2 million into the Community Housing Support Initiative program. This program has a significant amount of uptake, particularly from smaller communities, and we are going to continue to support that strategic investment.

We also are supporting a couple of additional co-investment fund applications for 2021-2022, as well, and the two in particular that we had built into our fiscal framework right now is the Hay River Family Support Centre -- we are planning to fund that project, our share of it, of course; we are hoping to leverage a significant investment from the federal government with those dollars -- and also the Yellowknife Women's Society's project, Arnica Inn. We have a notional amount set aside of additional dollars to leverage funds there, as well. We are starting to shift a bit of our dollars into leveraging and expanding our base through that means.

Other areas that we are investing in in 2021-2022 that do not show up in the capital plan is: we are continuing to support investments in the public housing lease-to-own program. We do see a significant amount of opportunities for home ownership in this area, and we will continue to support that. Also, for 2021-2022, we are investing additional dollars into fuel tank replacements. We recognize that this is an environmental risk area, and we have done a good assessment of the replacements that need to be completed over the short while here. We will be putting in an additional \$1 million into fuel tank replacements planned for 2021-2022 to accelerate that investment. Then, finally, we are investing in some additional environmental assessments to support our districts with the delivery of our maintenance and improvement projects. Those are some examples of additional dollars that we have been using beyond the capital allowance that we have in our fiscal framework. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. Look, lest anybody gets the wrong idea, I know our people at the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation work very hard at their jobs, and they are obviously very creative in finding other pots of money and ways of

leveraging funding and so on. However, the fact is that we need more money spent on housing. I want to reiterate. I am right behind the Minister when she goes to the Financial Management Board to get more money for capital projects, new housing for the Housing Corporation so that we can possibly start to address our housing deficit across the Northwest Territories and the units that are in core need, which continue to grow. I am right behind the Minister when she goes to get more money. Thanks, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. I will take that as a comment. Member for Thebacha.

MS. MARTSELOS: Thank you, Madam Chair. This morning, in my Member's statement, I said that I had a lot of thinking to do about people, about priorities in life, and about positive changes for how our government can make a difference. Obviously, when you look at page 66, when you see the community of Fort Smith with major retrofit, one unit, I want to know from the Minister: how is that going to make a difference in the community of Fort Smith?

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

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you, Madam Chair. One of the things the Housing Corporation is working on is Indigenous partnership. It's a huge priority for us within our department, but we have additional housing programs and additional housing partnerships that do exist in Fort Smith. With the announcement of the federal money that they did have, we did work in conjunction with them. Looking at opportunities like that, the Housing Corporation is in a different financial situation that we have. It's very unique how we administer and how we program-deliver compared to the other government departments. However, with what we have got, we really need to rely on the Indigenous partnerships so we could look at working at projects together, so we could start initiating and start to put more houses on the ground. I really elaborate on the Indigenous partnerships and the federal money that they are able to acquire. I will have Jim Martin elaborate on the response. Thank you.

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

MR. MARTIN: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes. As the Minister mentioned, the Housing Corporation, beyond our capital plan, is working very closely with communities to look for leveraging opportunities. A good example of that is our work with the Salt River First Nation. We have supported the Salt River First Nation with the delivery of six units to date, and we are building on a very successful partnership there.

We are going to continue to look for those opportunities through various funding mechanisms that we have available to us, the Community Housing Support Initiative program, as was mentioned previously, also looking for opportunities to partner with Indigenous governments and other partners to leverage additional dollars under programs such as the co-investment fund. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Mr. Martin. Member for Thebacha.

MS. MARTSELOS: Thank you, Madam Chair. I want to go back to the National Housing Co-Investment Fund. It's controlled by the Government of Canada, the fund. We are always going back to that: there is \$60 million there; there is the co-investment fund, and 25 percent is all you've got to put in. If the Government of the Northwest Territories is really, seriously thinking of closing the gap on housing in the Northwest Territories, \$16.5 million is not a bad investment to make sure that we all get equal access to housing in the Northwest Territories and putting the money in so that the \$60 million can be controlled by this government. I think that thinking out of the box is about time. I think that we have to start realizing that there are other ways of killing the cat when it comes to housing. That's our biggest issue as Members in this House on both sides of the House.

I think that, with all due respect to the housing department -- it's easy to say, "We're going to go through this." What is one retrofit in Fort Smith going to do for the community of Fort Smith? Yes, we do have a partnership with Salt River First Nation. I initiated that program, but there's not only Salt River in Fort Smith; there is the Fort Smith Metis Nation; there is the community at large. We have a community that needs housing. Using this co-investment fund as an answer every time without doing anything about it and taking it seriously and getting it into our control is not okay.

It's unacceptable for a government to have all this money sitting there, \$16.5 million, and that will solve most of the problems. Instead, we're nitpicking of who gets what and who plays with what. We do play a game here. It's almost like a big dartboard. We're throwing darts, and we're seeing who is going to get this today. One retrofit? It sounds really unbelievable how this works. I'm not used to thinking in those terms. As a businessperson and a person who has done some amazing things with the community, not only of Salt River but the community of Fort Smith, to listen to people at this level talk in those circumstances is unbelievable.

I think the bigger picture for all the Northwest Territories, and we're talking about vulnerable

people here, I don't care what colour or race or whatever they are. Most of them will be Indigenous, but there are all vulnerable people from all races. It just gets to me that I have to look at page 66 again just to remind myself. I should have brought a magnifying glass to see exactly what I had there: one retrofit. It's really unbelievable. I would like the Minister to make a commitment like one of my other colleagues says and go to the financial management board and ask for this \$16.5 million, get this money into our control, and start looking after the people of the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Madam.

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

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you, Madam Chair. I hear the frustration. I hear you. The co-investment fund is frustrating. It is an opportunity by the federal government, and I am absolutely frustrated with it. It's an opportunity that's out there, but it's not an opportunity. One year to process an application is absolutely not acceptable. Now, we're looking at this rapid rehousing, and they gave us three months to go ahead and throw applications in. I look at it as an absolute insult, and I think, "Why isn't the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation capable of accessing that money? We can distribute, and we can report to the federal government and say, 'This is how we've spent it.'" Looking at the list that we have, with the amount of money that we do have as a corporation, and looking at the additional program delivery that we do have in comparison to what the retrofits and the houses that we're putting on the ground puts us in a different place.

I hear you, and I hear this throughout the Northwest Territories. I've been to some communities where we don't even have public housing units that are existing, but then people need their furnaces done. They need their houses repaired. I can honestly say that we are in almost a crisis when it comes to housing. There needs to be more emphasis on it. I absolutely agree with you, and I am getting frustrated as a Minister for housing because it's just a lot of needs that need to be met out there. We're dealing with different clientele, as well, that come with addiction issues and mental illnesses. It's larger than what is displayed on this page. I hear you. I honestly do. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MS. MARTSELOS: Madam Chair, in closing, I just say one thing. We could do positive changes and make a difference in this government. I hope that people start realizing there are other ways of doing things than the usual way. I think that we have to look at other ways. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member for Thebacha. I'll take that as a comment. We'll move to Member for Great Slave.

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. First of all, my first question is: what is an M and I project? Thank you.

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

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you, Madam Chair. I can't think of that at the top of my head.

---Laughter

I'll have Mr. Martin respond. Thank you.

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

MR. MARTIN: Thank you, Madam Chair. M and I refers to modernization and improvement project, which is a.k.a. major retrofit. Thank you.

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

MS. NOKLEBY: Lots of all these funny words. I've looked through your list here very quickly. You have 113 units that there will be retrofitting this year coming up. If you just do a very rough calculation of the total dollars, we're looking at \$94,000 a unit for a retrofit. I understand that there are different variations of levels within these units and what would be required. Can the Minister explain: is the cost of this so high because there are hazardous materials and such that need to be dealt with? It just seems like a large number for a retrofit of an existing unit. Thank you.

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

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you, Madam Chair. There are a number of different approaches we'd have to take, also environmental and structural and the design. There is a lot that goes into the retrofits. I'll have President Tom Williams respond.

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

MR. WILLIAMS: Thank you, Madam Chair. Certainly, under our three-year action plan that we agreed to with the federal government, it is to protect our assets, the longevity of our assets. That's why we're putting a lot of effort into maintaining our existing stock, improving it. We do have an aging inventory as everybody's well aware. Some are 30, 40 years old. We do have a methodology on how we develop our capital plan. Maybe I could go through that. It's short.

We have an annual infrastructure deficit of \$40 million in housing in the NWT. The Housing Corporation must utilize evidenced-based methodology to prioritize allocation of the base available capital funding that will average approximately \$15 million a year. Our capital planning process generally focuses on replacing public housing stock that is older than 40 years of age and prioritizing major repair, modernization and improvement projects for units having a condition rating of less than 60 percent. In some cases, where you don't see investment in the communities, the fact remaining is: these communities, these units are in good shape. They're above the 60 percent, some are 80 to 90 percent. They are in good shape because we have, over the years, through our capital planning process, have been improving the condition of these units on the ground. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. I did hear the Minister actually already refer to the asset management program to sort of prioritize, and I think that's along what the deputy minister is also speaking of. That took care of my next question. I was also really pleased to hear the supports for the Arnica Inn. As a Yellowknife MLA, that was definitely something I heard a lot during my campaign with my district on the verge of the downtown, very well-needed, so thank you for that.

I'm glad to hear of the shifting to leverage more money, but I was a little concerned to hear the words that "we started to shift towards leveraging our money," which you would have hoped back, would have been something that would have been a priority because it does bring dollars into our economy. Again, I'm sort of in a more comments thing. Also, just saying that I would like to ensure that the Minister is utilizing northern businesses for either the retrofits, as well as the tank replacement program. Maybe the Minister can speak to the northern procurement content of her work at this point and what the department is doing to maximize benefits? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you, Madam Chair. The Housing Corporation always had this number out as 95 percent is northern employment and northern contractors. I asked them about the additional, the five percent. Why isn't it 100? The five percent is with the space frames, so those have to be constructed in the South. I asked, "Why can't these be constructed in the North?" There are some Indigenous groups that are coming forward that are interested in constructing them and learning how to

develop them or however. Once we're able to have those space frames developed in the Northwest Territories, it would be 100 percent then. If we're looking at specialized, I want to say, environmental assessments and whatever, that would need a specialized approach. Then, we would be looking throughout the territory. It hasn't happened. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes. As one of those people that used to do that, I know there're lots of people in town that can do that kind of work. I'm glad to hear that. Again, sort of back to my background, I would like to know if your technical staff is being given specialized training around northern and Arctic conditions, by example, the cold regions engineering course that's provided by the University of Washington and run out of the University of Alaska. Are there any programs like that that your technical staff is being trained in? Thank you.

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

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just to comment, as well, having staff constantly update their training is a priority for me, as well. I'm curious to see what our technical staff have been doing to keep up with the training that they've been receiving. I'm going to defer this question over to President Tom Williams. Thank you.

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

MR. WILLIAMS: Thank you, Madam Chair. It is in our best interests to make sure our technical staff are properly trained on northern construction. We rely on and work closely with other infrastructure, with the Department of Infrastructure on best building practices. We have sent staff, technical staff, to the cold climate workshop in Alaska in the past, constantly ensuring that we provide the technical expertise to build in the North. It's important for us because it's a big investment. Any investment in housing, we have to make sure it's a proven investment, and it's going to have the durability that we need. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. My last item is just around when you're doing the major retrofits, say, of 19 units in Yellowknife. I'm assuming that's all 19 units in one location. Can you explain a little bit about: does the department, in their prioritization, look at things like project timelines and costing and try to sort of lump

together? Maybe it's units in one building so that your mobilization and demobilization costs are lessened because you're doing more at once. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: That is a part of our planning, as well, and I just wanted to also include that, just outside of Yellowknife, we really try to meet the barging season and the winter road season, as well, to decrease flying in materials into the communities. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MS. NOKLEBY: That's good.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Madame le President. Pursuant to Rule 6(2), I move that committee continues sitting beyond the hour of daily adjournment to conclude the item under consideration. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. The motion is in order and is non-debateable. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried.

---Carried

Committee, we will continue sitting beyond the hours of daily adjournment to conclude the item under consideration. Member for Kam Lake.

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I'm wondering if the Minister has a number in mind of what it would cost to ensure that every Northerner had access to a suitable, adequate, and affordable home in the Northwest Territories? Thank you.

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

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you, Madam Chair. I want to say that the number out there is quite significant. I don't want to guess because I heard the number, and I was quite shocked. I'll refer the question over to Mr. Williams. Thank you.

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

MR. WILLIAMS: Thank you, Madam Chair. Coming up with a number, and I think I raised this number when you guys first started. We did do some costing of what it would cost to get out of the housing crisis in the NWT. It's a very high number.

It's half a billion dollars if we want to reduce our wait lists of approximately 900 to 1000 people on a wait list. To put adequate housing in every community, we need some money big time. We rely on the core need report. I think the last report was produced this past year, and we take that into consideration when we do our capital planning of where we put our assets. Another area that is very important for us to inform the process, an endeavour that we're under right now, is the community housing plans. The development of community housing plans across the NWT is going to really inform not only existing need, it's future needs in each community.

Every community has different needs. As the Minister alluded to earlier, we travelled to 14 communities over the summer, so we've got to see firsthand. Every community, when we are doing these community housing plans -- I think we have about 14 or 15 underway right now -- they all have different needs, and they have different solutions on how to meet those needs. We're very encouraged. I know the progress and the community housing plans is not quick enough at times, but it is a very informing document that's going to help not only for this year or future years. It's going to dictate how we spend our money, and where we have to access additional money to meet those needs. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Madam Chair, and thank you to the Minister and Mr. Williams for answering that. I think it's a really important number to have on the record here for Northerners. I think it's really important for us to understand that we can't afford to leave any money on the table. If the feds are willing to give us money, then we need to be able to do what we can to access that money. At the 19th Assembly, we also need to support one another on both sides of the House to make sure that that money's ending up in these budgets so that it's available for the Housing Corporation to turn around and spend it on housing in communities, in regional centres, in Yellowknife, that it's available to take advantage of programs like the co-investment fund.

Here's a good question: can the Minister point to me where -- and I was very happy to hear that the Hay River Family Support Centre is being considered for co-investment fund and that Housing Corporation intends to support that, and also the Yellowknife Women's Society Arnica Inn and that Housing Corporation plans to support that through the co-investment fund. Where does that number show up in the capital budget? Does it show up in the capital budget, or is that in the Main Estimates? Thank you.

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

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you, Madam Chair. I will just revert the answer to Mr. Martin.

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

MR. MARTIN: Thank you, Madam Chair. Those two contributions noted to support those co-investment fund applications, that funding will be flowed through the Housing Corporation's community housing support initiative program, which we have set aside in our O and M. This will be reflected in our upcoming 2021-2022 Main Estimates. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I think my problem is, and I'm going to admit it, I'm new to this. This is my first capital plan, but because capital is housing, it's a structure, it's infrastructure for housing for the North, I would expect to see that money show up here. I was hoping to open this up and see a nice, shiny, \$10-million line item for housing in here to access the co-investment fund or even more, even \$15 million. To me, for us to be able to have access to every single co-investment dollar, every single year that that is still available, is really important. I'm wondering: how come there is no line item here for capital for the co-investment fund? Thank you.

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

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just want to further comment that the co-investment fund is federal funding, and we do set aside a budget. I want to say that it's \$1.2 million, and my department could correct me if I'm wrong. We would be supporting those applications annually, but for the co-investment fund and additional funding not to show up on the document is not a part of the review right now. I'll have Mr. Martin comment. Thank you.

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

MR. MARTIN: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just to clarify the mode of delivery here, as well, it might help clarify the accounting piece. Basically, the Housing Corporation, for these two projects, would be making a contribution to the proponent, and it will be the proponent that would lead the delivery. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much for that, Madam Chair. No. That helps a lot, and I think now I'm on the same page. I guess this is the place, then, where I would say that my expectation is to open the main estimates come February and to see a very large, large, substantial line item for the co-investment fund, and \$1.2 million is not going to cut it. It won't give the Minister the money that she will require in order to fully draw down on the co-investment fund and to support applications that are coming in the door. I hope that the Minister's colleagues are also hearing me, that this Minister needs support at the Cabinet table to get that money and to get that line item, because personally, and I know that I have a lot of friends in this room who feel the same way, I would like this Assembly to be known for getting houses on the ground and for drawing down on that co-investment fund and for being very good at spending free money from the federal government.

My next question is that, within the mandate of the Government of the Northwest Territories for the 19th Legislative Assembly, one of the line items is to improve availability of private market and public housing options. I know that my colleague from Frame Lake brought this up, but one of the commitments is an average of 25 units per year over four years, for a term total of 100 units. Within here, there are nine units that are earmarked, however, for the RCMP. In my mind, that really doesn't increase or begin to deliver on what the mandate commitment was. I'm wondering: why is there not a line item here for 25 units, and why is that not funded? Thank you.

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

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you, Madam Chair. Like my department said before, we take into a lot of consideration the retrofits that we have on the ground. We don't have money for new housing to put on the ground. We do rely on additional federal money that is out there and partnerships throughout the territory so we could get houses on the ground together. I will have Mr. Williams further elaborate on the question. Thank you.

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

MR. WILLIAMS: Thank you, Madam Chair. The Minister is correct here. The only way we could achieve the 100 units, 25 per year, is soliciting input and participation from private investors, including Indigenous governments. Really, utilizing the federal co-investment program is an avenue to get more units on the ground, in absence of the government providing it. It's getting new partners to the table; that's the key message. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I think that I have had many conversations with the Minister, and I know that she is definitely a champion for housing and getting housing on the ground. She wants to see this happen, and I want to support her in that and to see this happen. I feel that, if the money isn't here from FMB to support these 25 units and for you to be able to succeed and achieve that mandate item, then it's really time to get that person working on these applications so that the Minister can take control of her own success because I feel that this would be a great legacy for her to leave the North. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member for Kam Lake. I didn't hear a question, so I'll take that as a comment. Member for Nunakput.

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just in regard to the major retrofits in the communities, the small communities that I represent, anyway, I think that the quality of workmanship going in to make sure that we have a Red Seal carpenter who is travelling with these people who are coming into the communities and making sure they are certified, because I've been getting a few calls in regard to the workmanship and not having Red Seal carpenters on-site -- I just want to make sure that that is being done. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just wanted to also comment that training is a requirement when we are putting our projects out for tender. We do have to see a training aspect and also look at the quality of work and looking at the Red Seal. I am familiar with the comment from the Member's riding, and to be honest, to be just plain and honest, it's really hard to find people with the certification and to find the commitment to have the people pursue their trades and to have them complete the Red Seal. The Housing Corporation does have technical advisors come in and make sure that these projects are seen and they are seen to completion, and I do understand that we do have deficiencies after projects are completed. This is where the Housing Corporation is in support of local hire, and this is what we end up with at the local level. We do have the technical support to work with that and to correct the deficiencies that need to be done, but local hire is a priority. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I like that, technicians being able to come and work with the local contractors. If that's being done, then could we make sure that any local work that is happening, say for instance, in Paulatuk, can we have that work given to them with one of our technicians? We have people there who could do the work, but we don't have the Red Seal carpenter. Making sure that we keep it local and not bring people in because of COVID-19 times, if we have somebody local, is the department willing to work with local contractors to keep it local and to have a technician come and inspect the work? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you, Madam Chair. That is exactly what the Housing Corporation is doing right now, for us to continue with that training aspect, keeping the local contractors and keeping the work local, and depending on our technical support to see those projects going forward. That is a priority. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just want to start off with the co-investment fund and the Rapid Rehousing Program. We talk about going to FMB and finding the 25 percent, but I think we should also have a plan B, which is go to the federal government and ask that that 25 percent be waived and that the funding is 100 percent because there might be some appetite, I understand, for that. I suspect you guys have already done that or are in the process of doing that. Just so that we have some options, there, because I don't want to see that money disappear. The way we're going, it's going to lapse, and even though we've still got another six years or whatever, I'm just afraid we're not going to see it. We've got to use every angle.

The other thing, again, as well, is to try and get that \$60 million over here in the Northwest Territories so we have control of it, and the department then can manage it and get it out faster and help do the reporting. To do that, we need staff. Right now, we're into this I don't know how many months, and it sounds like we don't have any staff at the Housing Corporation looking after that. It's not just one person or two people; we're talking upwards of \$60 to \$100 million. I expect to see three, four, five, a half dozen people there just pushing this until all that money is gone because, more than likely, there is going to be more money after that. I would just like to hear from the Minister: how is she going to make sure that we actually get that money on the ground? We have got to do something different. Either you have got to reinvent the Housing

Corporation so that it's more aggressive when it comes to federal dollars, or like I said before, we just throw up the white flag and quit. I would just like to hear comments from her. Thank you.

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

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you, Madam Chair. I want the \$60 million spent by the end of this government. I want to see applications, and I want to see that money committed. I want to see more money flowing to the Northwest Territories. I have spoken to the MP for the Northwest Territories, as well, and stressing the urgency. I have spoken to the federal government, as well, and expressed the urgency and really emphasized that we are not a province. We are the Northwest Territories; we do work differently. What they can build in the South for \$500,000 is going to cost us \$1.2 million here. We live in a different dynamic so having them take that into consideration. Hopefully, I want to be successful in it. If I could get that \$60 million, that is what I want to achieve within this government and have it administered by the territory.

The other thing that the government is doing, as well, is lobbying for \$100 million over 10 years. That is another approach that the government is taking, as well. Right now, I am very concentrated on the \$60 million. I want to have that accessed by the Northwest Territories. Look, I hear your comment, as well, about the staffing and how are we going to be organized to spend and to work with the federal government and look at how this money is going to be distributed and how applications are coming through.

Right now, the program delivery has been done by the president for the Housing Corporation. He has been travelling throughout the territory. I have also included our -- I want to say the manager for homelessness; I can't think of his title right now. However, to really emphasize there is a broader need than just putting housing on the ground, there is programming, as well. It is very unique. It is very different in the territory. I am putting a lot of emphasis and a lot of weight on it. I can actually see a department that is going to be dealing with the co-investment fund and homelessness and putting all that together. As we go forward, you are going to see significant changes within the Housing Corporation. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. Earlier today, the Premier made the comment "what is a life worth," and when we are talking about housing, it's life and death for some people. We all know that. When you go in the

communities, whether it's Yellowknife, Hay River, Paulatuk, it does not matter, there are people who may be living on the street. When it's 40 or 50 below outside, we know what could happen. I think, when we are talking about this, that is something we have to keep in mind, as well: what is a life worth? I am reminded of that every day in Hay River when I am there, so it's important.

I want to talk about the RCMP housing, and I mentioned it, that Hay River got a couple of houses. We lost six public housing units, and RCMP housing units were put on the land there. The Housing Corporation has to do something. They have to do what they know, what they are best at, and that should be the delivery of public housing, not trying to get into a market, especially in the market communities where the public sector could do that. We need to concentrate on delivery of public housing units to the people who need it. This here, the RCMP housing, is an example, and to me it was a wrong move. It should have been a private sector project. I just want to make that comment. It's too late now, anyway, so we will just move on from that.

We talked about the family support centre in Hay River, and we have met with them a few times. They are getting frustrated, as well. They have been without their own building for a number of years now, and they may end up losing the building that they are in. Again, we are talking about people's lives. There could be people on the street. They are going after the co-investment dollars, so we have got to find a way again to make this happen. There is still confusion out there. It just amazes me that, after two years, there is still confusion on how to proceed with the application, with what is the process. If they are confused on the ground, I suspect that the department is somewhat confused with it, as well. I am kind of hoping that that gets straightened out, and that is why it's important that we have people who are working on that file constantly.

We talk about, "We are going to hire somebody; we are going to advertise; we are going to do this and that." There have got to be people within the organization that we can move or back-fill or whatever. Let's just get out there. It's something we have control of, something we can make happen. I would just like to get a commitment from the Minister, that this is going to happen sooner than later and that we are going to have a complement of people who can do the job and get out and assist the organizations, non-profits, whoever, who are trying to access those dollars. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just want to further comment on the CMHC funding. I hear my colleague. It is a struggle. We wanted to travel into Deline. Talk about the amount of emails that had to go to the federal government: ridiculous. Honestly, I was just appalled by it, that they want us to be working with this \$60 million, but we can't even get their employee to just jump on the plane, come with us on a day trip, and start speaking about what is it that CMHC is offering. I feel that, right now, the Housing Corporation is program-delivering on their behalf, but we need them to be at the table. For myself, as a Minister, I am frustrated with them, as well. For them to come and do a presentation, the amount of hoops that we have to go through for the CMHC person to get the approval to say, "Yes. I am going to show up; I am going to be there." I have just sent an email this afternoon to the Minister for CMHC, responsible for CMHC, and just basically said, "We need to get this done. We need to start getting out there. We need to start seeing applications." It's frustrating that there is an announcement for the Northwest Territories that we are able to access \$60 million. Now, I hear the rapid housing, and it just seems unrealistic that, if they are not directly dealing with us and we are waiting on an approval for their one employee in the Northwest Territories to be travelling with us, it really makes it difficult to program-deliver. I am frustrated, and I could hear the frustration, as well.

Also, for the family-support building, the last briefing that I had, they were to fill out a co-investment application. I will have my department follow up with them and see where they are at. I would like to have that on the table for myself so I could push that with my federal conversation, as well. For the person to be advertised, I have been after my department since January to do this, and then we are following through, and then COVID-19 had hit. Advertisements, human resources, and the amount of hoops that we had to go through, at that time, there was a job offer that was given to an additional person, and the person had declined it and had another opportunity. I know that this position is intimidating because it's going to require travel throughout the Northwest Territories, 33 communities. This person is going to be constantly on the road. It's very discouraging for people to make that commitment to us for three years. My expectations of this position are very high. Hopefully, we are able to have this person hired by the end of the month. It's already going to be November on Sunday. This person had better be working at least by November 30th. Thank you.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I think there is strong support in this room and in this

Assembly to give more money for housing. However, I do have some concerns about the current structure of the Housing Corporation and the way it operates. I don't want to just throw money at it if it does not ultimately put more houses on the ground and for the best bang for our buck. I have concerns about the lack of democratic oversight of the Housing Corporation.

I am looking at a budget here I do not get to vote on. I don't even have an ability to put money in this budget. There is one Minister, and then there is a president. There is no board. We got rid of the board. The amount of interest in housing, it just does not have the proper structure set up. When I look at BC, Ontario, Nova Scotia, it's the "Department of Municipal Affairs and Housing," municipal affairs and housing. You happen to be the Minister of municipal affairs. I believe there needs to be a department set up who is responsible for the Housing Corporation. Is the Minister willing to move the Housing Corporation into municipal affairs?

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

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you, Madam Chair. This is something that was brought to my attention, and I just need to look at the complexities of amalgamating these two departments. Right now, I would not want to do that. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I want the Minister to caution that they are not two departments: one is an arms-length corporation; the other is a department. Is the Minister willing to have a conversation with the Premier and bring back some options to Regular Members on corporate restructuring for how we fund housing in the Northwest Territories? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes, I will. Yes. Thank you.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. Could that analysis include whether the Housing Corporation should have a board, perhaps a board of deputy ministers, even. At least then, at the DNC committee, they would argue for some more housing money. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you, Madam Chair. I would just take that as a comment right now. I like the way that the Housing Corporation is structured. We have the capability of becoming very innovative and creative with the funding that we do have. Looking at the structure, no, I wouldn't change it. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. The Minister is also the Minister responsible for Homelessness. Perhaps a bad name, Minister responsible for ending homelessness is the goal here. You have no staff presently for that title. You just have an arms-length corporation. Is the Minister willing to look into getting herself some staff for ending homelessness?

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

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you, Madam Chair. The Minister responsible for Homelessness does not come with a budget, but the Housing Corporation has assumed the financial responsibility and does have staff that deal with homelessness. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. Another somewhat controversial suggestion: when I look at the Housing Corporation, I see under it, 23 authorities. Each of those authorities come with staff; they come with offices; they come with administration. My experience has been: tenants are mad at the housing authorities; the housing authority is mad at the Housing Corporation. The Minister is frustrated. This room is frustrated. It seems to be a big chain of frustration in regard to housing and a bunch of homeless people at the bottom. I really don't believe that the housing authorities are the most efficient use of dollars in that those administrative costs mean we're not spending money on actual houses. Is the Minister willing to look into removing some housing authorities?

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Right now, I'm going to just kind of redirect back to the questions related to capital. Thank you. Member.

MR. JOHNSON: This gets to my entire point, Madam Chair. I'm looking at a capital budget, which the Housing Corporation goes and creates, which is undeniably based on how much it has to pay the authorities, how many staff the authorities have,

how much staff it has, because it all comes out of one other O and M budget. Perhaps the Minister can look into that and come back with options of corporate restructuring. How many public housing units do we have in Yellowknife, and what is the current wait list in wait list in Yellowknife, Madam Chair?

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

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you, Madam Chair. I will have Mr. Martin respond to the question. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. MARTIN: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes. In Yellowknife, the Housing Corporation administers 344 public housing units. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you. Can I get the wait list, and can I get how many of those public housing units we own as opposed to rent? Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Again, I'm going to redirect us back to the capital. Unless the questions are going to be leading up, if you could direct your questions to the capital. Thank you. Member for Yellowknife North.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I believe we have a very large wait list. We have a lot of housing units. I believe we don't own a lot of them. I would like to build capital such that we can have GNWT-owned housing units in Yellowknife. Is the Minister willing to bring the rented units or the amount of units that we don't own into GNWT ownership in the Housing Corporation? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you, Madam Chair. This is a discussion I'll have with my department. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. We had a bit of a conversation about capital management and I believe I heard, I forgot the put the figure down, but a very significant deficit, \$40 million a year essentially, for the Housing Corporation to manage its stock. Is the Housing Corporation required to amortize its assets such that it is required to spend a certain amount in its capital

budget every year, and if so, what is that amount? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you, Madam Chair. That is correct. I don't have the amount in front of me. I'll have Mr. Martin respond. Thank you.

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

MR. MARTIN: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes. Our annual amortization depreciation of assets runs around \$14 million. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. This is one of those things I struggle to understand: budgets and the Housing Corporation budget. If we are required to amortize \$14 million in assets, are we not then required to spend \$14 million in the capital budget? However, I note that this capital budget is not \$14 million. Can I get an explanation for why that is? Thank you.

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

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'll have Mr. Martin respond. Thank you.

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

MR. MARTIN: Thank you, Madam Chair. The aim of the corporation is to set aside a notional amount of \$15 million a year, as was noted previously. For this year that we have tabled, for this review, we are below that amount, and currently, we're utilizing some additional dollars to support leveraging the other partners. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I know the GNWT everywhere and all of our departments, and all of our arms-length ones have a massive infrastructure deficit. However, the GNWT has a financial responsibility policy that sets out how much can go into capital and covered by O and M, part of that is that the amortization has to be spent and that's linked to not letting our deferred maintenance get too out of control. When I see that we have a \$40-million deficit in bringing our current stock up to where it should be, it seems like those numbers have got out of sync. Is the Housing Corporation required to follow the GNWT financial responsibility policy?

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

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'll revert the question back to Mr. Martin. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. MARTIN: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes. The Housing Corporation, given its current corporate structure, we have an ability to manage within our overall funding sources. Our funding sources, as was mentioned previously, we have federal funding sources, we have our own source revenues, as well as GNWT resources. Those resources are allocated out between a combination of capital investment as well as O and M investment. We go through an annual business planning process each year, and we look at where those investment priorities, that mix of investment priorities, is best allocated. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Mr. Martin. Anything else? Member for Yellowknife North.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. This is the problem. I don't know to what level of oversight I should have of the Housing Corporation's budget, given it is arms-length. I have a lot of concerns with the Housing Corporation's budget and the way it does capital. Is the Minister willing to reach out to the Department of Finance and see what applying our GNWT financial responsibility policy to the Housing Corporation would look like, where the differences are? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Minister. All right. Are there any further comments or questions to this item? Seeing none, I remind the committee that the estimates for the Northwest Territories are included in the capital estimates as an information item only. The committee will not be voting on the activity total. Thank you, Members. Please return now to the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation summary found on page 64. Are there any further questions or comments? Seeing none, does committee agree that the consideration of the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation is complete? Mr. Norn.

TERRITORIES HOUSING CORPORATION -
DEFERRAL OF CORPORATION (PAGE 64),
CARRIED

MR. NORN: Marsi cho, Madam Chair. I move that this committee defer further consideration of the estimates for the NWT Housing Corporation at this time. Marsi cho, Madam Chair.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

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

---Carried

Consideration of the departmental summary has been deferred. Thank you, Minister and to your witnesses. Sergeant-at-Arms, please escort the witnesses out of the Chamber. Noting the clock, committee members, I will now rise and report progress.

MR. SPEAKER: May I have the report of the Committee of the Whole? Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes.

Report of the Committee of the Whole

MS. SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Your committee has been considering Tabled Document 181-19(2), Capital Estimates 2021-2022, and would like to report progress, with two motions carried. Mr. Speaker, I move that report of the Committee of the Whole be concurred with. Thank you.

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

---Carried

Item 22, third read of bills. Mr. Clerk, orders of the day.

Orders of the Day

COMMITTEE CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Ball): Orders of the day for Monday, November 2, 2020, at 1:30 p.m.:

1. Prayer
2. Ministers' Statements
3. Members' Statements
4. Returns to Oral Questions

- Question 358-19(2), Long-Term Care Facility
- 5. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery
- 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
 - Motion 21-19(2), Establishment of a Special Committee on Reconciliation and Indigenous Affairs
- 17. Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills
- 18. First Reading of Bills
 - Bill 17, An Act to Amend the Corrections Act
 - Bill 18, An Act to Amend the Legal Profession Act
 - Bill 19, An Act to Amend the Student Financial Assistance Act
- 19. Second Reading of Bills
 - Bill 16, An Act to Amend the Income Tax Act
- 20. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters
 - Bill 15, Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2020
 - Committee Report 4-19(2), Standing Committee on Government Operations Report on the Review of the 2018-2019 Northwest Territories Human Rights Commission Annual Report
 - Committee Report 5-19(2), Standing Committee on Government Operations Report on the Review of the 2018-2019 Annual Report of the Information and Privacy Commissioner of the Northwest Territories

- Minister's Statement 77-19(2), National Housing Co-Investment Fund
- Tabled Document 165-19(2), Government of the Northwest Territories Response to Committee Report 1-19(2): Report on Long-Term Post-Pandemic Recovery - Recommendations to the GNWT
- Tabled Document 166-19(2), Government of the Northwest Territories Response to Committee Report 2-19(2): Report on Long-Term Post-Pandemic Recovery - Recommendations to the GNWT
- Tabled Document 167-19(2), Government of the Northwest Territories Response to Committee Report 3-19(2): Report on Long-Term Post-Pandemic Recovery - Recommendations to the GNWT
- Tabled Document 181-19(2), Capital Estimates 2021-2022

21. Report of Committee of the Whole

22. Third Reading of Bills

23. Orders of the Day

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. Colleagues, this House stands adjourned until Monday, November 2, 2020, at 1:30 p.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 2:31 p.m.