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The Honourable Frederick Blake Jr, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

Members of the Legislative Assembly

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Minister of Lands
Minister responsible for the Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission

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(Yellowknife South)

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YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**Thursday, February 25, 2021****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, Ms. Martselos, Ms. Nokleby, Mr. O'Reilly, Hon. R.J. Simpson, Mr. Rocky Simpson, Hon. Shane Thompson, Hon. Caroline Wawzonek

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

Prayer

---Prayer

SPEAKER (Hon. Frederick Blake Jr.): Item 2, Ministers' statements. Minister of Infrastructure.

Ministers' Statements

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 118-19(2):
IMPORTANCE OF CAPITAL INVESTMENT IN
AGING INFRASTRUCTURE

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Mr. Speaker, the Northwest Territories Power Corporation, or NTPC, provides an essential service to residents and businesses in the Northwest Territories. Without reliable electricity, many of the activities we take for granted, such as cooking, washing clothes, or using our computers, would be impossible. It is therefore critical that the corporation maintains its assets to ensure that electricity is available when it is needed and that it is delivered at an affordable rate. The vast majority of Northwest Territories residents have their homes powered by hydroelectricity. Approximately 75 percent of the electricity consumed annually is generated by hydroelectricity with the remainder generated by diesel, liquefied natural gas or solar.

Members we have heard my predecessors and I refer frequently to aging infrastructure and the challenges it creates in maintaining reliability of supply. Many of NTPC's key assets, particularly its hydro units, are reaching the end of their design life. The Snare and Taltson hydro assets have provided renewable energy to Northwest Territories residents and businesses for many decades. NTPC has been able to extend the life of these assets through maintenance and repair but has now reached a point where refurbishment or replacement can no longer be delayed. Reliability will continue to decline if we don't make significant capital investments soon. The long-term benefit of investment in hydro refurbishments is that these units can then generate clean, reliable electricity for another 40 to 50 years. The long-term health of our hydro system is critical to stabilizing the cost of energy across the Northwest Territories. However,

we need to manage decisions within an environment of limited resources.

NTPC has an extensive capital plan to improve reliability of core assets and support reduction of greenhouse gas emissions as per the 2030 Energy Strategy. Many necessary projects will financially be supported by the Government of Canada through its Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program, or ICIP. NTPC has been allocated over \$85 million through ICIP to advance several hydro refurbishments as well as other alternatives and renewable energy projects. Given a limited window of opportunity to ensure federal funding support, we recognize that it is far more cost effective to move forward with projects now rather than face ongoing emergency repairs for equipment failures. We recognize that ICIP funding will only partially off-set the costs of these capital investments. Customers and/or ratepayers will be responsible for paying 25 percent or more of these costs, which place upward pressure on the cost of energy. NTPC is working with the Department of Infrastructure to identify other sources of funding to help mitigate energy cost increases and to defer non-essential projects.

NTPC has developed a strategic plan to ensure it maintains its focus on lowering electricity rates, improving reliability and meeting its 2030 Energy Strategy commitments. The plan is based on four pillars: reliability, economic sustainability, environmental sustainability, and innovation. It outlines NTPC's approach to addressing these challenges and identifies potential growth opportunities. There will be some additional short-term capital costs that NTPC will incur, but over the longer term, the strategic plan will help reduce upward pressure on rates. This plan will be shared with Members and the public later in the year. This government understands that the high cost of living is a major concern for NWT residents. Through the 2030 Energy Strategy and NTPC's strategic and capital plans, we remain focused on our government's priority to lower the cost of power and increase the use of alternative and renewable energy whenever possible. Quyanainni, Mr. Speaker.

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

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 119-19(2):
SUPPORTING NWT HARVESTERS

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. COVID-19 has affected us all and the pandemic has highlighted why meeting these mandate commitments are so important. As global supply chains have been disrupted and economic activity has been restricted, the need for locally sourced food has become even more valuable. Northern harvesters and trappers have been deeply impacted by COVID-19. Their economic livelihoods have been affected, which is an important part of northern culture. That is why now, more than ever, we need to support harvesting and land-based programs.

Mr. Speaker, I stood here during the last sitting and announced that the Government of the Northwest Territories, through the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, had launched three new programs in the fall of 2020 aimed at supporting both families in need and harvesters during the pandemic. These programs included a country foods harvesting subsidy, harvesting training, and mentorship funding and the launch of the take a family on the land program. I am proud to say that the Department of Environment and Natural Resources was able to support all eligible applications received under these programs and has provided an estimated \$340,000 to harvesters and trappers. The funding was distributed to just over 20 organizations across the territory.

We are not done. For ongoing programs such as the take a family on the land program, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources plans to reach out to partner organizations this year to ask for feedback so that we can do an even better job next year. For the new pilot trapper mentorship program, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources is working with interested regional Indigenous governments to collaborate on the development of the program to best meet regional needs. We are working hard towards launching this pilot program in the coming weeks.

As for our fur industry, Northwest Territories trappers are well-positioned and protected from ongoing market disruption through the Government of the Northwest Territories' Genuine Mackenzie Valley Fur Program. In 2020, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources increased both eligibility and grubstake amounts to offset the challenges trappers faced due to the recent downturn in the fur industry. We will continue to communicate with trappers to show our support for the industry. The Department of Environment and Natural Resources is also continuing to work with our partners to evaluate the existing programs and

develop harvester mentorship programs that support a strong and resilient traditional economy.

Mr. Speaker, it has been a tough year for harvesters and trappers. The Northwest Territories traditional economy can and will continue to endure thanks to the hard work of these individuals. The Government of the Northwest Territories will continue to stand with harvesters and trappers and support them as part of our efforts to bolster the traditional economy, create employment opportunities in small communities, and increase food security for Northwest Territories residents. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 120-19(2):
FOOD SECURITY

HON. JULIE GREEN: Mr. Speaker, March is nutrition month, and I would like everyone to join me in celebrating next week. It is a time to highlight the importance of accessing and eating healthy food. The theme this year is "Good for You! Dieticians help you find your healthy." Dieticians support individuals to reach their nutrition goals, both to prevent poor health and to improve their overall health. I am encouraging residents to find their healthy by talking to dieticians if they have access to one. There are other sources of good dietary information, including traditional harvesters and healthy food experts in their communities who may be able to offer support and guidance in making wholesome food choices. Nutritious eating looks different for everyone; our culture and traditions are an important part of what we eat and how we eat.

Mr. Speaker, I can't talk about nutrition month without talking about food insecurity. It is a major issue in the NWT. High transportation costs, rising food prices, along with changing environmental conditions that affect wildlife harvesting are compounding this issue. Food is a vital part of culture, well-being, and health. Food security is essential to our ability to make healthy choices and live our best lives. Research consistently shows the link between wholesome food choices and healthy eating. Having access to affordable and nutritious food is a vital determinant in improving the health and well-being of our people and communities.

Mr. Speaker, addressing food insecurity is a priority for this government. We identified it in our mandate and have committed to increasing food security through efforts to support locally produced, harvested, and affordable food. It is also a key priority in our Anti-Poverty Action Plan. We have taken a whole-of-government approach to this issue through the establishment of the food security

interdepartmental working group to ensure collaboration to address this important issue.

Through our renewed Territorial Anti-Poverty Action Plan, sustainable livelihoods action plan, and the agriculture strategy, we have begun work to support residents in accessing local sources of fresh food and ensure future generations have the skills they need to feed their families. We have taken action to improve food security by introducing new and enhanced programs to support harvesters and families going out on the land. A total of \$330,000 in funding was provided for regional harvesting, a training and mentorship program, a pilot program for trapper mentorship, and assisting families to go out on the land. We continue to deliver the Small Scale Foods Program in each of the regions of the territory to assist in the non-commercial growing and production of food. This program helps underserved, remote communities, and organizations operating within them, to get the resources they need to support and promote local agriculture. We also offer funding to eligible organizations in their efforts to improve food security in their communities through a variety of programs.

Mr. Speaker, we know that addressing food security is a shared responsibility that requires a coordinated response from both the public and private sectors. It is important that we come together to identify priorities, challenges, and most importantly, solutions, to develop a path forward in our approach to improving food security. In January, the Department of Health and Social Services hosted a virtual anti-poverty round table to continue this important work. Over 80 delegates from across the territory, representing Indigenous governments and organizations, community governments, non-governmental organizations, and businesses, including local grocers and agricultural producers, discussed how to improve food security.

Experts from the NWT, British Columbia, northern Manitoba, and Nunavut shared their knowledge and experiences on harvesting and local food production, with the goal of providing long-term solutions to food insecurity that address underlying issues and empower people to provide for themselves. They talked about innovative projects that are leading the way in developing healthy food systems here in the North, as well as across the country. Representatives from the GNWT also provided an overview of the government's work on improving food security. Short panel discussions were followed by longer breakout sessions, where delegates had an opportunity to discuss what they learned, as well as share their thoughts and experiences. Delegates discussed how to build strong and sustainable systems so that hungry people had access to wholesome and affordable food. They talked about finding ways to include

traditionally harvested food in local grocery stores and how to develop community specific, culturally adapted harvesting strategies and practices to strive towards Indigenous food security.

Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to thank the Anti-Poverty Advisory Committee members for helping to plan the round table, all the presenters, and those who shared their experiences. Thank you also to all the delegates who attended. I hope everyone left with a shared commitment to creating a sustainable, healthy food system for their communities and the territory. The GNWT is currently working on a report summarizing what was discussed at the round table. I am looking forward to sharing the report with Members and making it available on the anti-poverty website later this summer.

Mr. Speaker, we all have a role to play in addressing poverty in the NWT so that residents have access to supports they need to live in dignity, with access to the basics of food and shelter so they can be full participants in their families and communities. Our commitment to ensuring residents have access to nutritious, affordable food is a critical component in advancing our poverty-reduction goals. This government will continue to actively collaborate with our partners to develop shared approaches and find innovative solutions so that we can move forward as an equitable and healthy territory. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Members' Statements

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON INCENTIVES TO WORK

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to talk about the incentive to work. Due to COVID, we have seen the economic and business opportunities put on hold or disappear. The federal government, along with this government, has provided financial support to the residents and businesses of the NWT and continue to do so during this difficult time. Payments made to those who have been chronically unemployed but were very capable of working acted as a disincentive to seek or accept employment, while others leveraged it as stop-gap and opportunity to move forward.

Mr. Speaker, what I find in the NWT is that most people of working age who want to work are currently employed. This is true in Yellowknife and the regional centres, where opportunities actually exist. In smaller communities, employment opportunities are limited and almost non-existent for some. Any opportunity for employment in a smaller

community is mostly short term and negatively impacts any government support one receives for basic needs. Because of this, there is not the incentive to accept temporary employment when one knows it will only set you back financially. It is in these communities where a living wage should be considered.

Mr. Speaker, I have talked to employers in the private sector. Many have the same concern, and that concern is that we are enabling a generation of people who have come to accept that living on government programs is not only acceptable but is now considered a way of life and a right. I do believe that there are people who are experiencing hardship, have limited opportunities, and do need government support, and providing that support to them is the right thing to do. However, there are those out there who are very capable but, for one reason or another, are not interested in joining the workforce nor in seeking training or higher education. This failing not only falls on the shoulders of those not wanting or willing to work, it also falls on our shoulders and the shoulders of parents and the community, as well.

Mr. Speaker, my expectation and hope is that all capable people are willing to get out of bed in the morning and be productive, but that is living in fantasy land as there are a few who are very capable and, for whatever reason, have no intention of ever doing that. I do have hope that there is a way to get them out of bed, off the sofa, off the games, off the cell phone, and out to work. Therefore, I challenge them: what will it take for that to happen? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON MENTAL HEALTH CONCERNS IN SMALL COMMUNITIES

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My statement today is on mental health in the small communities. A lot of people are hurting from depression with all the deaths that we have been having over the last year, with the bullying, and it all comes into a cycle. We have to step up as a government, Mr. Speaker. I asked a couple of weeks ago. How I used to do it with the youth: I used to travel, and I would bring a professional hockey instructor or someone to come into the community. We would go to the school and do school talks, and you would feed them. You are there for three or four days, but we would do that three times a year, and then you never come back. For our adults, we need help in regard to sharing circles, to bringing people in, professionals who could listen, who could help them in regard to the

hurt that has been passed on through residential schools and all that.

As an Aboriginal person, going to residential school myself, I hang on to that sometimes, and I do not use it as a crutch, though. I use it to push myself forward. I try to look at things in a positive light and try to help. With adults, again, getting teams brought in with some specialists with regard to being able to hear people's concerns and try to fix the problem and bringing them in for two or three times a year, maybe four times if it's possible, to the community, having someone there to let them know that they are not alone and we are listening to them, our government has to step up in regard to that. They have been doing a lot of good work, the teams that I see who are going around with the needles and the planes. They should be doing that now with people, bringing people to deal and cope with all the stuff that communities are dealing with.

We are having a tough time, Mr. Speaker. The communities I represent need help in regard to this, and I plan to be using that once we are able to start bringing people out into the communities, when we are accepted to come and help them. We have to look at this, as an Assembly, at the people you all represent and have to step up and ask their MLA for help in regard to doing something like this. I look forward to talking to the Minister of health at the appropriate time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MS. NOKLEBY: Mr. Speaker, I am having a computer issue. Could you move on? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Members' statements. Member for Thebacha.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON FORT SMITH REGIONAL AIRPORT

MS. MARTSELOS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today, I am going to speak once again about the issues pertaining to the Fort Smith Regional Airport. Today marks the fourth time that I have done a Member's statement about this topic in this Assembly. I spoke at length about the discontent and disappointment that the people of Fort Smith have about the changes done to the Fort Smith Regional Airport. Oftentimes, though, it seems my words fall upon deaf ears when it comes to this topic. Mr. Speaker, I am happy to share with this House that I am no longer the only voice opposing the changes made to the Fort Smith Regional Airport. I stand here today with the support of 550 people who agree with me and with what I have been saying about the changes done to our airport.

Mr. Speaker, last month, a petition was started by a small group of concerned Fort Smith residents. The petition is requesting that the Government of the Northwest Territories Department of Infrastructure restore the Fort Smith airport runway to its former specifications, in other words return the airport runway to the specifications it was before any changes were done to it in 2019.

This government, primarily the Department of Infrastructure, refuses to acknowledge that any errors or missteps had occurred regarding the changes done to the Fort Smith airport runway. I have asked the former Infrastructure Minister this very question. It was firmly denied that any wrongdoing had occurred. Mr. Speaker, I now have 550 people who would disagree with the Department of Infrastructure in that assessment. I argue that wrongdoing has taken place. Otherwise, the people of Fort Smith, would be pleased and perfectly content with the changes done to our airport. If no missteps were made, then why am I standing here today with the backing of 550 signatures who state otherwise?

In closing, Mr. Speaker, my hope with delivering this petition today is that my words on this topic will now carry more weight and meaning. I hope everyone will see that I am not speaking for myself and my own opinion about the Fort Smith airport. I will speak more about this later when I present the petition. I will have questions for the Minister of Infrastructure at the appropriate time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
SUPPORT FOR THE MINERAL RESOURCES
INDUSTRY

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In 2019, mining, oil, and gas dominated the Northwest Territories' economy by accounting directly for 21 percent of the overall GDP in the North. However, when we look at the spin-off industries and benefits, this number is much closer to 40 percent of our economy. There has been a significant downturn in mining-exploration spending due to COVID restrictions. Many exploration companies have been able to retain claims but are not able to do any work as access is cost prohibitive and will be so into the foreseeable future. The mining industry continues to be at risk. Exploration companies do not qualify for federal initiatives as they are not revenue-generating and are seasonally driven, which does not fit well with the year-to-year comparisons used to qualify. Exploration is the life blood of mining. Mines need exploration companies to develop new projects and extend the life of existing operations. Without federal recognition and

help, many exploration companies will not survive. Our government should be advocating for all companies with active exploration and mining operations in the Northwest Territories to qualify for the Canadian Emergency Wage Subsidy or any subsequent programs regardless of the 30-percent revenue reduction requirement.

As a result of the decline in the industry, service and supply companies, many of which are northern or Indigenous small businesses, are losing out. Existing mines have been cutting back on capital projects or removing or indefinitely deferring items from their work plans. Government-mandated COVID-19 safety measures are driving up costs and reducing the already very thin profit margins for businesses that are already struggling. Last year, mining companies adapted very quickly to COVID-19, for example, sending staff from vulnerable communities home with pay and chartering direct flights to ensure southern workers are segregated from Northerners during travel. They are good corporate citizens who contribute a lot to the North, and as such, they deserve our support.

While the future of the mineral sector in the North is facing great uncertainty, as it is throughout the world, diamond mines have shown their ability to endure and project well beyond 25 years. This is exemplified by a global industry where diamond mining has been ongoing since the 1800s. With the right supports given to the exploration sector in the Northwest Territories, we can provide our residents with economic certainty through well-paying, meaningful jobs and an abundance of royalty payments, particularly in the arena of green industry minerals. It is in that arena I see the NWT playing for a very long time to come. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE CANADIAN ARCTIC
RESOURCES COMMITTEE

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. After 50 years of existence, the Canadian Arctic Resources Committee, or CARC, is ceasing operation. CARC is a public interest, research, and advocacy organization committed to environmentally responsible northern development, support for the rights of Indigenous peoples, respect for the authority of northern governments, and increased international co-operation in the circumpolar world. It was established in 1971 in direct response to the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline proposal and the Berger Inquiry. In addition to research and policy analyses, CARC's activities include public communication, advocacy,

contributions to the public policy agenda, and publishing books and reports. CARC often acts as an intervener, facilitator, and data repository, and has facilitated significant conferences on the Arctic. CARC is a registered charity operating under federal law. It is governed by a board of directors.

To quote the current chair and NWT resident, Lois Little, "There is a tendency for organizations to just keep going. We looked at who is in the best position to influence current and future decision-making in the Arctic, and we decided others were better positioned to do this, so we decided to step aside. The North is a very different place from what it was 50 years ago. Northerners have regained a lot of control over lands and governance, and they don't need us to help them to be heard any more."

There are still big questions out there about what sustainable development looks like in the Arctic, and the impacts of international problems such as climate change and contaminants. Northerners have the capacity to take on these issues and to make themselves heard on national and international stages and in new ways and places that didn't exist when CARC was born.

I am proud to say that I served as CARC's research director from 1995 to 2005. I set up and ran CARC's Yellowknife office and coordinated the Northern Minerals Program that included interventions in Canada's first three diamond mines. We helped secure benefits from diamond mining, including legally-binding environmental agreements, the genesis of the protected areas strategy, a heritage fund, and more. There were lots of mentors and great people, including Robbie Keith, Terry Fenge, Lindsay Staples, David Schindler, Tony Penikett, and many others. Much of that work continues to be relevant today. The values and spirit of CARC continue to guide much of the work I do as a Member of this Assembly. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON DEVELOPING THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES REMEDATION ECONOMY

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have been waiting patiently for this Cabinet to present its post-COVID economic recovery plan, and I'm starting to think they are at a bit of a loss. If they're looking for ideas, they have to look no further than the great constituency of Yellowknife North where \$947 million will be spent over the next 18 years remediating the Giant Mine site. However, the GNWT seems to have absolved itself of any of the responsibility to capture the economic potential of

the Giant Mine remediation project. This is to say nothing against the project team and ENR, who are doing an amazing job ensuring that remediation is done properly from an environmental perspective, but environmental scientists are not economists, procurement experts, or lobbyists, nor should we ask them to be.

If we need a model for how to build our remediation economy, look no further than what ITI does to support the mining economy. We lobby hard. We attend conferences. We have positions dedicated to supporting the sector. We mandate benefit agreements. We negotiate socioeconomic agreements. We can use this project to build an industry in our territory, but we are failing to capture one of the largest economic development opportunities in our history. It's not just Giant Mine, Mr. Speaker. It's the sumps in the Beaufort-Delta. It's the Cameron Hills. It's Norman Wells. It's Ptarmigan Mine, and hundreds of other federal contaminated sites across the North. There are decades of work to be done, and we need to demand a larger role in doing it. We need to be at the federal Treasury Board asking for northern labour requirements or management of some of the contracts. We need to be monitoring the socioeconomic outcomes of the projects and recording that data. We need to train the next generation of specialists in our polytechnic.

Mr. Speaker, the Giant Mine Oversight Board has been advocating for this work since 2016, with little success and little response from either the GNWT or the federal government. The YKDFN have recently launched a petition calling on the federal government to comply. Remediating the North's contaminated sites is an act of reconciliation, a massive economic driver, and leaves a better future for next generations. So, Mr. Speaker, let's get a plan in place and build a remediation economy that makes the North leaders in Canadian remediation. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON INSTITUTIONAL AFTER-CARE

MS. CLEVELAND: Mr. Speaker, after-care is prevention. It helps residents successfully navigate life outside treatment to reduce cyclical use of institutional care and maintain personal wellness. I say "wellness" and not "sobriety," Mr. Speaker, because after-care is not exclusive to addictions treatment. After-care is the network of relationships and community support essential to success after institutional care.

The GNWT invests a significant amount of money in the wellness of residents through a variety of

institutional care. For example, the GNWT budgeted \$35 million on supportive living in facilities outside the NWT; \$28 million to provide safe custody and supervision of adult and youth offenders; almost \$19 million on community wellness and addictions; and over \$2 million on addictions treatment facilities outside the NWT. That's over \$84 million invested in variations of institutional care budgeted in the 2020-2021 Main Estimates.

While the process of care varies, the after-care goal is the same: safe and healthy reintegration into a person's home community, rooted in personal and community wellness. Regardless of what is driving the need, whether it is to maintain sobriety after addictions treatment or remain on the right side of the law after incarceration, the pillars that build effective after-care are the same: stable housing; consistent income; and physical and mental wellness of both the resident and their family. People working to maintain sobriety after treatment often experience ongoing systemic issues that challenge their ability to maintain personal wellness. They have difficulty finding a job that can support them, face barriers to secure safe and affordable housing, and struggle to find their fit within their community and family. People leaving our correctional facilities and those with cognitive disabilities returning from institutional care face the same barriers. Our vulnerable populations are the most expensive people to not care for, and may potentially cycle through government care without proper support.

If after-care needs are consistent, why not bring together an after-care team focused on wellness to preserve the GNWT's investment in the quality of life of Northerners and its bottom line? Sourcing safe and stable housing, helping people find meaningful employment, and community involvement in establishing community-based support networks are absolutely an additional investment, but they are more affordable than cycles that find people reinstitutionalized and ultimately leads to healthier communities, and that is an investment worth making. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
TRIBUTE TO NOLAN SWARTZENTRUBER

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Nolan Swartzentruber arrived in Iqaluit in 1974, assuming assigned duties as a classroom teacher at Nakasuk Elementary School followed by tenure as vice principal at the said school. Beginning in 1978, he served as the principal in Nuiyak school in Sanikiluaq, immersing and

enjoying the lifestyle of the small traditional community, fishing for cod in Hudson Bay, watching the community boat arrive on the beach after a successful walrus hunt; observing the landing of the planes on the ice in 1978 with a herd of 60 reindeer on board, replacing a vanished caribou to be released and hunted in future years; listen to the excitement when a polar bear was spotted near the community; and standing amazed by the talents of the skilled soapstone carvers.

In 1984, the family moved westward to Fort Simpson. During this time, he served as a principal and later was hired by the Deh Cho Divisional Education Council as director. Here, below the treeline, he spent many weekends cutting deadfall, stacking firewood, and preparing for the winter. He enjoyed outdoor trips navigating the Dehcho River, loving every minute of the peaceful and pristine landscape while harvesting fish, camping, hunting moose and caribou.

During his tenure as educator, he engaged with various projects with the Department of Education, Culture and Employment in Yellowknife, served on the ECE Strategic Plan Steering Committee, ECE Teachers' Training Steering Committee, ECE's Financial Steering Committee, Principal Certification Program, Western Arctic director and superintendent/president, Association of School Board administrator. He was invited to sit at the negotiating table for NWTTA contractual agreements in 2009. He was recognized by his peers, awarded NWTSA distinguished service award.

He demonstrated an ongoing lifelong love of learning, always engaging in novel information and acquiring new skills. Hobbies included stain glass, photography, film development, woodwork, fix-it projects, and music. That which he learned, he passed on to the students and community members. He was accepting, fun-loving, friendly, always there to lend a helping hand. He vowed lasting relationships formed during his 36 years in the North.

He was an honourable man, Mr. Speaker, holding himself to high standards, and remaining true to himself and his beliefs. Central to his life and most important were his three girls: his wife, Fanny; daughter, Sharon; and granddaughter, Trinity. He was deeply loved and will be sorely missed by everybody that knew him. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Nahendeh. Our thoughts and prayers are with the family and community. Members' statements. Item 4, returns to oral questions. Item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery. Item 6, acknowledgements; Item 7, oral questions. Member for Hay River South.

Oral Questions

QUESTION 588-19(2): INCENTIVES TO WORK

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. These questions are for the Minister of education. Can the Minister tell me what his department's plan or approach is to getting those who are very capable but not willing to work off the couch and into the workforce using the tools at his disposal? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The NWT has the highest employment rate, the lowest unemployment rate in Canada, but it's not evenly distributed. We have communities where everyone who wants to work is working. Then you have small communities where there're people who might want to work, but there're no jobs. Over half our small communities have less than 50 percent employment. We have a number of different problems. In regards to the people who don't want to get off the couch, that's a tough one. How do you motivate them? I think the best way to start is to start young. ECE's doing a number of things, including career and education advisors, to help young people figure out what they want to do with their lives, show them what opportunities are available, what education they will need to get there, and all of that. I think that is going to be a boom to our labour market in the coming years. There are a number of different things that we're doing. The Member provided his questions to me earlier, and I think that I will be able to provide more of those comments as he asks them. Thank you.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: What concerns me is that, if we cannot motivate those NWT residents not willing to work, then this government, along with business, are forced to recruit from not only outside the NWT, but outside Canada. Can the Minister confirm what labour shortages exist in the NWT and how we expect to encourage Northerners to fill them?

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: I always remember when I was a relatively new MLA and the Premier stood up at that time and said there's more jobs than people to fill them in the territory. I never really thought about it that way, but that really is the truth. That's why we bring in thousands of people a year to do work. What we really need to do is ensure that our northern residents are trained to get those jobs. We might still need people from the South. We likely will, but that's okay as long as we're keeping money in the North and northern people are working.

In 2015, ECE completed with the Conference Board of Canada a labour market forecast, and at that time, it was forecasted that between 2015 and 2030, there would be 28,500 job openings in the Northwest Territories. We're doing the work now to update that to 2035. Interestingly enough, we're also looking at doing the work that we already did but also focusing on new and emerging economies, things like infrastructure projects, housing construction projects, tourism and knowledge economy, and mining and remediation. They fit in nicely with things like the earth resources specialization, the new polytechnic. There's a big labour shortage. We know we need tradespeople. I could stand up here for hours talking about all the needs we have. We need teachers. We bring in hundreds of teachers every year from the South. You're not going to get an argument from me that there's a labour shortage.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Employers are frustrated. They try and employ Northerners, but most are working. Some of those who are capable and available refuse to work. What, if any, incentives, does the Minister's department have to encourage people to get out and take a job?

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: There is a number of things the GNWT as a whole does. Supplementing wages is one thing so that employees can be paid a higher wage, things like our wage top-up program. We also have a wage subsidy program through ECE that supports employers who hire people who might need training. We help those kinds of people who need the training who maybe don't have the opportunities to get the big jobs yet. We are developing a polytechnic university in order to help train people to get the jobs they want. The plan is to make it as easy and accessible for people to get educated and get trained as we can. We have a small community employment program where we hand out millions of dollars every year to communities and businesses to create jobs in communities. There's a number of things that we're doing. I wish there was a silver bullet to address this issue, but there's not. We are casting a wide net.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Final supplementary. Member for Hay River South.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Don't get me wrong. Not all people who are unemployed are lazy. Some just need a chance. I also expect some need to be challenged as they must possess skills that they can survive off of little government support they receive or funds they receive from their parents. I would ask the Minister if there's any way we can have those capable people provide community service or work with employers in return for the monetary compensation they receive so they can acquire skills and possibly

find out what interests them and hopefully move forward with their life. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: We do have, like I mentioned, the small community employment program, which does just that. It puts money into communities to create jobs. I will also note that this is one of the reasons that I wanted to have a look and review of the Income Assistance program. The Member mentioned a few times that maybe it's easier to just not work than to work, and then perhaps, that's keeping people on the couch, so to say. Is there a way that we can use those programs to help people get passed that point, get over the welfare wall, as they say? That's something else that we're doing. Again, there's a number of wage subsidy programs. We have our Skill 4 Success initiative, which is focusing on increasing the number of people in trades, and there are programs in there that help pair employers with apprentices and get people into those programs. Basically, what the Member is asking is: what does ECE do? Everything we do is to try to get people employed, get them into the regular market. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 589-19(2):
FORT SMITH REGIONAL AIRPORT

MS. MARTSELOS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On May 27, 2020, I asked the former Infrastructure Minister about what specific directions were given to our government from the federal government about the Fort Smith airport changes. This Minister told me that Transport Canada provided this direction in a form of updated standards and regulations for airport runways. The former Minister also offered to share these Transport Canada standards with me. My question is: will our current Infrastructure Minister commit to sharing with me these standards, along with any information regarding previous Fort Smith airport runway standards? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Aerodromes Standards and Recommended Practices, which is also known as TP 312, is a public document. As a result of that, yes, I will have my office forward the PDF copy of this Transport Canada document. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. MARTSELOS: I understand the airport runway standards are only changed by the federal government, which is the entity who sets the standards by which airports are designed and operated. Can the Minister clarify whether the

Government of the Northwest Territories requested that the Fort Smith airport runway standards be changed, or were the change of standards initiated solely by the federal government?

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Changes to the Aerodromes Standards and Recommended Practices are initiated by Transport Canada in consultation with the Canadian Aviation Regulation Advisory Council. They apply to the entire country and are not specific to any airport. Transport Canada works with the International Civil Aviation Organization to maintain global consistency so any airline or pilot proceeding to an airport with Transport Canada certification knows the airport environment complies with both national and international standards and knows what to expect.

MS. MARTSELOS: Can the Minister explain how often reviews of airport infrastructure are done in the NWT? Are reviews done periodically within a set time frame, or are they done subjectively, based on the decisions of the Minister and the government of the day?

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Airport reviews are done regularly, and they are generally done in conjunction with some of the capital planning processes and when the department is planning any major upgrades.

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

MS. MARTSELOS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Department of Infrastructure insists that the changes done to the Fort Smith airport addresses both the current and future operational needs of the airport. If that is indeed the case, the Minister explain, then, why the entire leadership of Fort Smith, along with 550 citizens, disagrees with this statement? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: People need to realize that the type of aircraft that the airport is certified has not changed. The Fort Smith airport is still classified as a category IIIB airport, which is large enough to accommodate aircrafts such as a Boeing 737 or an Airbus A320 series. These aircrafts do not currently land in Fort Smith. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 590-19(2):
MENTAL HEALTH CONCERNS IN SMALL
COMMUNITIES

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My Member's statement today was needing help in our small communities for mental health issues. Is the Minister of Health willing to work with us Regular

Members and myself, in particular, to get these teams into the communities to assist our local people who need help in our small and remote communities? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Nunakput. Minister of Health and Social Services.

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We recognize that mental health is an important and challenging issue. There are, in fact, resources available right in the community. The child and youth counsellor position at Mangilaluk School is filled, and it is available to anyone who needs the help. There are some vacancies in the Community Counselling Program, but we have, as the Member may know, recently taken a new approach to community counselling so that there aren't wait lists.

He mentioned children, and I have a few things to say about children. The kids help line is available to children and youth. It's available by phone. It's available by text. It's available by Facebook Messenger. It's available by live chat online. It's a great resource. There is a lot there for kids. I also want to mention the Strongest Families Institute app. This is something that people can obtain a referral to through the Community Counselling Program. As I mentioned in my statement yesterday, there have been very good reviews about how helpful the counsellors are in that program. The Breathing Room app, which will be next of our five mental health initiatives, will be live on April 1st, and it is specifically for youth with anxiety and depression.

Finally, I want to promote the Nipaturuq magazine, which I sat here and read yesterday afternoon. It comes out of Inuvik. The third issue is all about mental health. It has first-person accounts of how people are coping with mental health challenges and how they are moving themselves into wellness. I don't know where to obtain that magazine from, but I am sure that the people in the Delta are familiar with this literary award-winning magazine produced in Inuvik focussing on mental health at this time. Thank you.

MR. JACOBSON: It sounds all good on paper with what we are providing with regards to services. We do have a shortage of counsellors in our community. The one counsellor, she phoned me the other night in dealing with issues coming up in our communities, but I'm not only talking about Tuktoyaktuk. I'm talking about Nunakput as a whole: Ulukhaktok, Sachs Harbour, Paulatuk. We needed a person, like I said, a person to come in or a team to come in to work with the community on the depression, the alcoholism, anything, anything that they want to talk about to get off their chest. We need help. A lot of people, we don't have

laptops for everybody. Not everybody has laptops and iPads and access to stuff like that. I really look forward to trying to work with this Minister to try to help our communities.

HON. JULIE GREEN: Helping communities and residents is what I'm here for. I hear the Member when he says not everybody has the tools to access Facebook, telephone numbers, and so on. There are some accommodations available through the health centre with respect to using the phone, as I understand it. Where communities don't have resident counsellors, there is a travelling team that comes in from time to time with assistance and sees people over a more intense period. I don't know if they would consider sending those teams to Nunakput. I am not sure how well-staffed the resources are there, but that's something I could certainly inquire about.

MR. JACOBSON: I want to thank the Minister for that. That travelling team that she just brought up, they should be sent into all communities, other than the central locations. The smaller communities are needing it. You know that, Mr. Speaker; you live in a small community. What we have to do is we have to start trying to help them, in regards to trying to heal them and trying to move forward because this COVID-19 has been hard on everybody. I want to thank, again, the Minister, and when are we going to get these travel teams into Nunakput since she brought it up?

HON. JULIE GREEN: I appreciate the question, but I don't have that operational level of detail with me. What I can do, what I said I would do, is inquire about when the travelling teams might be available to go to the communities in Nunakput, and I will do that on an expedited basis so that the Member has that information.

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

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to meet with the Minister in regard to working together for small communities and try to do a plan, like how I used to do it back in the 17th Assembly, bringing people into the community, as an MLA, travelling with them and to assist them and to help them. I look forward to working with the Minister. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. JULIE GREEN: I am always available to the Member for Nunakput. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 591-19(2):
EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS ADMINISTRATION
AND REPORTING

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. My questions are for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. The Employment Standards Act attempts to carefully balance the rights of workers and the interests of employers. Recently, I had a constituent raise concerns about how a simple complaint has taken more than four months to get sorted out. Can the Minister tell us whether response times are actually tracked for Employment Standards Act complaints, and can he share a summary of that information now? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. Minister of Education, Culture and Employment.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are service standards that have been developed for the Employment Standards Office, and those relate to how long between making a complaint or an inquiry and receiving a call back. The length of time between a complaint being made and a decision is not something that has traditionally been tracked. There is a wide variety of factors that determine how long a complaint would take to finalize or come to a decision. There are complaints that take one phone call to be decided upon, and then there are complaints that take months. It's feasible there could be complaints that take years because there are so many variables. Sometimes, even the complaint itself, the two parties don't agree on.

That number isn't something that has been tracked. The Employment Standards Office, in 2019-2020, there were 80 complaints received, and there were 119 payroll inspections, which is something they do; in 2018-2019, there were 79 complaints, and there were 80 payroll inspections; and in 2017-2018, there were 103 complaints and 39 payroll inspections. There was an increase in the payroll inspections, and that's because of increase in the NT Nominee Program applications. Those go hand-in-hand. At the same time, there was a vacancy for a year as well as slow-downs because people were working from home, and it's difficult to do investigations that way. There was a backlog that started building up at the beginning of 2020 and was exacerbated by an increase in payroll inspection applications later in the year. That could account for some of these delays that the Member is talking about. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. O'REILLY: I want to thank the Minister for that information. I was trying to scribble it down, but I'll catch it in Hansard. The Minister did mention that there are service standards for the employment standards section of the department. I'm wondering: can the Minister tell us whether he can share those service standards with us as Regular MLAs and perhaps even post it to the website? Because there

is no information whatsoever about that on the website.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Absolutely. It's a public document. I'm sure it's available somewhere in hard copy possibly; maybe it's up in the offices. I'm not sure, but I'll make sure that it is nice and visible so the Member can find it. I will share it directly with him, as well.

MR. O'REILLY: I want to thank the Minister for that. It's great to hear "yes" a few times, so I look forward to getting that information and seeing it on the website. There doesn't appear to be any public reporting requirements under the Employment Standards Act, unlike other territorial legislation such as the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act or other laws where complaints and decisions are made. Can the Minister find a way to make public, perhaps on an annual basis, the response times and other basic administrative information such as the number of complaints and their outcomes under the Employment Standards Act?

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: I just saw the Member's questions earlier today, and I already started those conversations with the department to figure out if there is a way that we can get that information public.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. I want to thank the Minister for that, and I look forward to a full report from him on how he is going to make that information public. Lastly, though, it's not clear how many employees there are who handle Employment Standards Act administration and complaints and how staffing and resource needs are assessed. Can the Minister explain how staffing and resourcing needs are determined for the administration of the Employment Standards Act? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Just like anything, we look at what's the need and weigh all of the different competing priorities across the GNWT, and we staff accordingly. Right now, there is a manager in the office who is also an employment standards officer; there are three inspectors; and there is a finance, collections, and information officer. In 2020, one of the inspector positions was vacant, and for the last six months or so of 2020, the finance position was also vacant. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 592-19(2):
DEVELOPING THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES
REMEDIAION ECONOMY

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I understand that ENR is the project lead on the Giant Mine and is leading much of our remediation work. There is a bit of a conflict of interest when the arm of government that is responsible for oversight and regulating contaminated sites, if I also ask them to advocate on behalf of the companies to capture benefits that they are regulating, so I'd like to understand what our Indigenous ministry is doing to build a remediation economy. My first question for the Minister of ITI is: in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and our post-COVID economic recovery plan, is the Minister willing to make building a remediation economy one of the pillars of that plan? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Yellowknife North. Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Remediation has been, is, and will be an important part of our economy in the Northwest Territories. It doesn't need to be said any differently than that. It doesn't need to be in any way fancier than that. That's just a fact, and we are already doing much work in that regard. I think already, earlier today, another Minister mentioned the importance of training and education in that respect, and there is no reason why, in fact, ENR would be anything other than supportive of that. This is one government, and we are all prepared to support this work and act with one voice. Mr. Speaker, whether it's myself or my colleague who is speaking to this question, we are all enjoined that this is an important area that the Government of the Northwest Territories as a whole needs to be aware of. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. JOHNSON: I'm glad to hear that, and I hope, in fact, we can have our entire territory speak with one voice. I think a great way to start doing that is that there is currently a petition tabled by our MP for the territory on behalf of the Yellowknives Dene First Nation calling for an apology and compensation for Giant Mine as well as supporting the Yellowknives Dene to develop the skills necessary to work on remediation contracts as well as conduct long-term monitoring at the former site. I think this is a very reasonable petition, a reasonable ask to make sure that we do remediation right in this territory. My question for the Minister is: is she willing to add her signature to that petition?

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: I think I have learned that, once one becomes a Minister, one kind of ceases to be an individual, and you pretty

much stay a Minister all the time. As a result, Mr. Speaker, I think, if the Member is asking if I would personally sign, that is a conversation I am happy to have over a coffee, but I think what the question is: what's the position of the government? Mr. Speaker, the government is also a proponent on this project. We are a co-proponent on the project. What I have done, though, is looked carefully at what is on the petition. Again, with respect to developing the skills necessary, for the Yellowknives Dene to develop the skills necessary, that should be a question that is directed at ECE. I am sure they are listening just as intently as every other department. We have a responsibility ourselves to help support the Yellowknives Dene to have those skills.

Again, with respect to procurement approaches, procurement is the responsibility of the federal government on the Giant Mine project, but we are co-proponents. We are continuing to engage with our partners at the federal government level and to ensure that we are doing everything we can and making sure they are doing everything they can to abide by the socio-economic agreements, to abide by positive procurement practices. To the extent that there are concerns and questions being raised here, there is a responsibility on our end to look at them, to engage with the Yellowknives Dene First Nation, and that is the route which I will be taking to do that.

MR. JOHNSON: I am sorry to hear that the Minister has lost her individual identity. I quite like her as a person, and I was looking forward to seeing that signature. I am glad the Minister mentioned procurement because I think what has happened is that, due to the federal government being in charge of procurement on this, the GNWT has kind of stepped back on the economic recovery role, but despite numerous requests from the Giant Mine Oversight Board to have the federal government kind of understand the North and understand our labour needs, the federal government has also kind of stepped away from capturing northern benefits here. I think a new approach to how the Giant Mine procurement is going is needed. Has the Minister approached the Treasury Board or CIRNAC or the appropriate federal agency about either allowing GNWT to take on a portion of the contracts or getting some northern labour requirements into those contracts?

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Again, it is ENR that is the lead on behalf of the Government of the Northwest Territories in terms of engaging and leading our role on this project but again working closely with ITI. Even before knowing that this might become a topic today, it turns out the Minister of ENR and I had actually been talking about the project and ensuring that he and I would have a chance to meet in the near future to check in on the

role of the GNWT, what we are doing to ensure that Northerners are seeing themselves reflected in this project. Mr. Speaker, as I have said, the procurement process here is one that is governed by the federal component, by the federal partners, but, for the moment, the project does have the following targets: northern employment of 55 to 70 percent; a minimum of 10 northern apprentices are a part of the implementation phase; expenditures are supposed to be at 65 to 75 percent. These are targets that were finalized not quite a year ago, and they are being reported on. They are being reported on publicly. There are different phases of the project, Mr. Speaker. There are different opportunities along the way to adjust. Again, not to understate the fact that the procurement process here is a federal one, we are at the table, we are involved, and the Minister of ENR and I are also going to be re-engaging and continuing to engage to ensure that we have our voices at these tables on behalf of Northerners.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Thank, Mr. Speaker. I will make sure to ask questions to ENR on this matter at another time. Part of the reason for my concern is that I know many of the people on the project team and I know the work they are doing. It's great, but there is clearly an environmental focus there, as there should be within ENR. I question some of the targets in that they are targets; they are not legally binding. They are not the kind of things you would see in a socio-economic agreement, not that the ones the GNWT currently has are binding either. Is the GNWT willing to conduct some reporting of northern labour and the socio-economic benefits? The reporting to date, the Giant Mine Oversight Board has not been satisfied with, and I do not think we have been seeing the economic recovery benefits that we truly should be getting out of this project. Is the GNWT willing to conduct that tracking? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: I think step one is going to be perhaps to bring back to the House what exactly at this stage is being tracked and to put that forward, to have that presented, so let me start with that commitment. I expect some of these, as I said, are largely publicly tracked. Let me make sure that everything is up to date and public, and we can look at what is being tracked in terms of northern employment; skill level; status, residential status, whether one is a resident of the territories or not; the training components; the number of suppliers; contract dollar value, so on and so forth, all of which is being tracked, and then work back if there is something else within that that is not adequate or not up to task. Again, the GNWT is involved. We are on the Giant Mine remediation team, and so if, as a member of that team, we are

being told that the tracking that is happening and the publication that is happening is not satisfactory, yes, I want to make sure that we fix that. I want to make sure that we are fixing the right things. I will get that to the floor of the House, Mr. Speaker, and then we can see if that is not satisfactory. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 593-19(2):
MINERAL RESOURCES INDUSTRY

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are also for the Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment. Can the Minister maybe characterize what the decline in mining operations has been in the Northwest Territories due to COVID and maybe provide a bit of an estimate of the total number of companies that are expected to work on their mineral claims this upcoming fiscal year? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Great Slave. Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. All but one of the three diamond mines obviously remained in operation, and as of last month, the third one has come back online. The major contributors to our mineral resource industry have managed to operate through COVID-19, through strenuous efforts undertaken to be compliant, to protect their workers, which I really cannot understate. As far as the exploration side, Mr. Speaker, we have six advanced projects, all of which have been at least partially if not fully active. It's the smaller explorers and the smaller exploration companies who have, as I believe the Member noted in her statement, really struggled more. Now, of course, there is an exemption for mineral resource sector workers, and some have been able to operate. That certainly is one area that has struggled in the last year. That said, for 2021, Mr. Speaker, we are expecting higher levels of activity. In particular, there is a gold operator in Sixty North Gold Mining. They are a small-scale operator, but they are mobilizing to be ready to go for 2021. We are expecting an uptick in the next year. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. NOKLEBY: I'm not going to say it's good news, but I am glad to hear some people are still working. We have been hearing from companies that there is still a gap in the relief for some of the exploration companies that are required to do work on their claims to prove their claims, including drilling. Will the Minister commit to waiving all of the mineral claim work requirements for the upcoming years until COVID restrictions are lifted?

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: At this point, relief on work requirements on the mineral resource claims or mineral claims is enacted up to March 31st of this year, 2021, so quite a large number, I think just under 200, in fact, have benefitted from that, from that relief. At this point, Mr. Speaker, there is not, as I understand it, necessarily a need for blanket relief. Many have been able to continue to do the work on the claim. What I will say is: we are going to look at it, and what we are looking at is whether and to what extent we can be doing some case-by-case relief for those who legitimately cannot get to their claims and cannot get work done on their claims. I will make that commitment to look into it and to see where it goes and get back to the Member on what the conclusion of that is.

MS. NOKLEBY: I thank the Minister for the pseudo-commitment to that. I will probably follow up myself and just explain a little better what gap I am talking about because I do have some specific items to discuss. My next question is: what is the future of claim relief? What is the department going to do to ensure that, once restrictions are lifted, we are supporting our mineral exploration sector to get back to work?

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: [Microphone turned off] ...number one, again looking at to what extent there can be some case-by-case relief in terms of the work requirements, but really could not agree more that we have good success right now with the diamond mines and really exciting early-stage exploration projects coming on, early-stage projects coming online. We do need desperately to get the exploration sector going and have it active. There is money out there. It's starting to look around to where to be spent, and we would like to see it spent in the North. This is the place, in my view, to spend it for exploration, so one of the big areas is the Mining Incentive Program. We are, again, offering that program in 2021-2022. We are seeing increases to the program again and looking to bring in those applications for that kind of support. There were some modifications made for COVID-19 and looking at what we can do to try to make that program more available, more flexible, considering some of the constraints that the exploration companies may be operating under. Again, last one on that one, Mr. Speaker, we have really excellent pathfinding services within ITI to help those early exploration companies, which are often smaller companies, to ensure that they have the supports that they need to follow the regulatory processes here, understand them, and be ready to roll when they get here.

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

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do agree with the Minister that the department has

some really great staff to help out with the exploration industry. What I didn't hear the Minister say was that she is going to be a real loud squeaky wheel with the federal government to get more money for our mineral exploration sector, so I will just take that as a given, and I will continue to work with her on that. My last question is that it is my understanding that a critical minerals and metals action plan is being developed for the Northwest Territories. Can the Minister comment on the timeline for the completion of this plan and any others that the department might be working on with Indigenous organizations or governments? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: I have used every platform I think I have had in the last several months to talk about critical minerals and why the Northwest Territories needs to be on, and is on, the value chain for critical minerals, and why everyone should be paying attention to that fact, to federal partners all the way through exploration companies. We have extremely good critical mineral resources here in the Northwest Territories and an extremely good place for those who are particularly looking at green energy. This is the place where you want to come because of the ESG factors, environmental, social, and governance factors. This is the place to go. I have been saying that loud and clear on a number of fronts; now I get to say it here, so thank you to the Member for giving me that chance.

More specifically, right now, Mr. Speaker, we are part of the federal government's Canadian Minerals and Metals Plan, one of which is a component involving critical minerals. Specifically to the Northwest Territories, we want to align with that plan. The federal government has started it. We are looking within the next year, within roughly the next 12 months, to have our own plan in line with what's happening with the federal government so that we can best utilize whatever resources they might put towards their plan but, in addition to that, Mr. Speaker, continuing to work with regional governments so that there can be regional mineral development plans. There are resources within ITI to support regional governments who may want to develop their own plans, and that is a great opportunity for them to learn about the industry, to make themselves accessible to the industry. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 594-19(2):
TOILET FACILITIES ON HIGHWAY NO. 1 AND
HIGHWAY NO. 3

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to talk about mining but in a different context. This question would be for the Minister of ITI, and I

would ask the Premier not to jump up and try and answer. Can the Minister of ITI provide an update on where the department is with providing toilet facilities for truckers and visitors travelling Highways No. 1 and 3 as fuel and freight is heading to the mines? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Mr. Speaker, I read quick, but I don't read that quick. As it is, Mr. Speaker, the Member had asked me this question, or I think I had overheard him asking this question to the Premier, and so I have gone of my devices to inquire with the departments. Mr. Speaker, I can assure the Member there is a plan. I don't have the details in front of me fast enough to read it, but there is a plan. We are going to work with Infrastructure in order to ensure that the toilets and outhouses are being cleaned regularly. I will provide the details of that plan to the Member in writing, Mr. Speaker.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: This comes up year after year. I am sure that, next year, we won't have to have this discussion because there will be a plan in place. I hope that, every time the Minister walks by a washroom, she thinks about it. I thank her for her answer.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: I also don't want to have to answer questions about outhouses for rest of our tenure here. As I said, I know that Infrastructure and ITI have been working together for years. It's not a new problem. It has become acute, given what's happening with COVID-19 and some of the restrictions put on those who are such a critical part of our supply chain. I can assure the Member they are being cleaned every two weeks. We are looking at whether or not that needs to be increased. Again, as I said, with COVID-19, I have had it confirmed to me that we are going to have, between ITI and Infrastructure, an assessment done on patrolling the facilities to ensure that they are maintained to the standard that they should be for their use.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: The type of facilities we have, I think, are inadequate. It just seems to be in January, February, and March, when the trucking season and material and fuel is going into the mines. Just to show some respect to the people who are travelling the highways and trying to provide us with the services that we need is to look at a different type of facility that actually has some heat in it and has somebody cleaning it, as well, on a daily basis. I would ask the Minister to commit to at least taking a look at some other options that we could possibly use that would make it a little more comfortable for the people using them.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: As it turns out, some work has been done in that regard. A permanent heated type of facility would be about \$150,000 per unit, and we have right now about 10 pullouts from the border to Yellowknife. We are looking at \$1.5 million, Mr. Speaker, which may not seem significant, but is not insignificant and would certainly have to go through the budget planning process. Whether there are other options, I will certainly inquire to see the extent of the inquiries that we have made and whether there is anything else that can be done. Not to make light of the whole situation, these people are working in our supply chain. They are providing an essential service. I certainly do take seriously that they need to have a dignified way of doing this essential work that we are asking them to do.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Final supplementary. Member for Hay River South.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to hear the answers. I look forward to, going forward, what the department comes up with. It's not just for truckers. When we are finished with COVID, we are going to have visitors up here, and we get the same complaints during the summer time. We just have to look at a better way of handling it. Whether we need one at every pullout, I'm not sure. I'm not sure how often people have to go to the washroom. I'm sure not too many times between the border and Yellowknife. Whatever works, I am willing to listen to solutions. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Again, this is another time where this is a whole-of-government approach. We have ITI that does the wayside parks and Infrastructure that does the highway pullouts. Again, we are conscious that there needs to be a solution, and it needs to be ready and in place before the season begins so that we are not having to have this conversation every budget session in January or February. I will certainly commit to the fact that the plan can be laid out a little more clearly, and we will make sure to do that, as I say, well in advance of the season of next year. In the meantime, regular cleaning every two weeks, regular monitoring by one or the other department, we'll sort that out, will be happening. If, in fact, there are truckers or others trying to use the facilities in the next while and they are having difficulty, to the extent that it's because of COVID-19, there are 811 numbers, and to the extent that it's other matters, we certainly will take those inquiries and figure out a solution. They are essential workers. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 595-19(2):

AFTERCARE AND SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My questions today are for the Minister of Health and Social Services. The department's business plan identifies that they are working to develop after-care programming with the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation. I am wondering where the department is at with this work and how soon we can expect to see a made-in-the-North after-care program that includes supportive housing. Thank you.

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

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question. The department does, indeed, have a mandate commitment to establish nine transitional housing units for individuals returning from addictions treatment. The timeline on this commitment is completion by fall of 2023. Work is under way. The jurisdictional scan, research into best practices, and the scan of existing services have all been completed. These pieces of work will be used to inform the development of an NWT model for these transitional homes. To achieve an item of this nature, we need to work in an integrated manner with my colleagues in housing, ECE, MACA, and Justice. The department is currently designing an intradepartmental approach to the development of this model, and the development of the model is anticipated to happen next month followed by consultation with stakeholders through the spring. The model will then be finalized and put in place for planning purposes by the summer of this year. Thank you.

MS. CLEVELAND: I am wondering if this review that the Minister is speaking of will also include supportive living for people with mental health and addictions but also their families, supportive living directed towards families?

HON. JULIE GREEN: Specific programs for individuals with mental health and addictions is out-of-scope for this supportive living review that the Member referenced. However, we do recognize that individuals may have co-occurring disorders. That is to say, they may be disabled and also have an addiction, and that will certainly be considered in the main work around mental health and addictions recovery.

MS. CLEVELAND: I hope that will include families, as well, because people with mental health and addictions and disabilities and addictions are also parents, and coming by supports for families in the North is a very big challenge for people. One of the priorities of the 19th Assembly is to increase the number and variety of culturally respectful

community-based mental health and addictions programs, including after-care by providing services for individuals with addictions, such as Wellbriety and AA programming. This is to reduce the number of returns to treatments and increase the length of time between treatments, as well. The timeline identified for this deliverable was spring 2021 for that work to begin. I'm wondering, what improvements to after-care support services can residents expect to see in 2021, and do these improvements include supports for families or after-care for supports for families? Does it include matrix programming, or does it include life skill development, as well?

HON. JULIE GREEN: That was about 10 questions. I'll do what I can here. Certainly, the department is on track to deliver a number of programs at this point. We are preparing to roll out our peer support program, which provides money on an application basis to communities to set up things like AA and Wellbriety groups to assist people in retaining their sobriety. This work is on target, and we'll start on April 1st of this year.

In addition to that, the department continues to work with Indigenous governments and Indigenous government organizations to assist them in accessing the On-the-Land Healing Fund. Of course, we know that that has a wellness and addictions treatment focus and is a flexible fund that can include families and after-care as a focus. That fund has been in place since 2014-2015. The funding is available during each fiscal year, so there will be a new opportunity to obtain funding after April 1st of this year.

There is work going on to establish a managing alcohol program in the NWT as well as a model for better access to detox at the community level, that is to say, outside of the hospitals. The timing on this commitment, these two commitments, managed alcohol and medical detox, are to be completed by 2023. It's anticipated that, even though some of these items are not going to be implemented immediately, they will be in development, and if they can be expedited, that will certainly happen. I think that what's really important to understand in this area, and I'm sure my colleague is aware of, is that these are big and complex issues. It takes time to address them. We are working through the issues that we know need to be addressed and to improve the quality of the services that we provide. As I say, if we can get to them sooner than we think, of course, we will.

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

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I apologize for my wordiness. I'm trying very hard to concentrate, but all the talk of

toilets from Mr. Simpson, I regret the water I drank today. Will the Minister commit to working with the Department of Justice to bring together after-care support team that focuses on wellness for all NWT residents that are returning from institutional care back to the Northwest Territories? Thank you.

HON. JULIE GREEN: After-care support is, obviously, a shared responsibility. We talked about transitional housing and how we would need to partner with ECE, Justice, MACA and housing in order to bring those transitional housing units to life with appropriate programming. We would certainly be continuing our relationship with Justice on services like the Wellness Court and integrated case management as well as the integrated service delivery initiative. I think what I need to understand from the Member is more specifically how having yet another level of integrated service would serve clients more effectively than the services that we already have either in place or in development, how they would be different and why it would be valuable to put yet another layer of integration into place. What I will commit to doing is to having further conversations with the Member to understand what she's proposing and the value that it would add to the work already under way, and I'm available to do that at her convenience. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 596-19(2):
TOILET FACILITIES ON HIGHWAY NO. 1 AND
HIGHWAY NO. 3

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. I want to follow-up with some questions about outhouse facilities between the border and Yellowknife because I've had the displeasure of using some of those back in January myself, coming back. I don't want to get into all the dirty details here, Mr. Speaker. Look, I raised this five years ago in the house with the previous Minister of ITI. Photographs were shared from other members of the public, and it was very distressing to see this. I see from the COVID-19 statistics report that, peak periods, there's 1,200 vehicles going through every two weeks. Having these facilities cleaned out once every two weeks is just not going to cut it, Mr. Speaker. What is the Minister prepared to do about this now? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, when we prepare for session, when you prepare through the year, this is something that I had flagged even before we came into session. It is something that the deputy minister of ITI, deputy minister of Infrastructure are already

working on together. They know it is an issue. As I've said earlier, I was not here five years ago, and I certainly didn't have the awareness that this became an issue. It is an issue. It happens every year. It happened every year, every time the facilities freeze up. The Wayside Parks fall under ITI. The roadside pullouts fall under Infrastructure. Yet, between the two, I fully acknowledge that we come here every year and face this issue.

The two departments are now working together. The two departments have just been told, thanks to the questions asked earlier, that I expect a plan. I expect that my colleague is likely going to feel the same, lest she have to stand and answer the same series of questions. Between the two departments, we're going to come out with a plan together so that we don't have to come back year over year. I realize doing this every two weeks is difficult and arguably not enough, not sufficient, but let's figure out what is sufficient, what is the problem, where are the issues. I don't have that information. Is it every single facility? Is it the Infrastructure facilities? Is it the ITI facilities? Is it used because of COVID? Is it increased use or reduced use with COVID? I don't have that information. We are going to get it. We are going to have a plan. We are not going to be answering questions next year during budget session about outhouses, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

MR. O'REILLY: I just want to quote something from Hansard, June 2, 2020. Gee, that's a little over a year ago. Me saying this in the House, Mr. Speaker: "If the Minister digs down into her pile from the previous Assembly, she will see that there were a number of complaints about the 60th parallel outhouse in particular. I don't know what it was like this spring, but there were photos sent to me. They were shared with the previous ITI Minister. The Minister made a commitment to try to improve the cleaning regimen, so I don't know whatever happened, but if the Minister digs down far enough in her pile, she'll find all of that in files with her department, I'm sure." That was more than a year ago with a previous Minister. This has been flagged a number of times in this House. Why can't the Minister just amend the contract and double the cleaning regimen so that it's at least done once a week right now?

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: I'm not going to double a contract on the floor of the House. That's not an appropriate way to solve this problem, but I am going to solve this problem because it is a year-over-year problem. I completely agree. I am happy to be put in my place and on my heels on this one. That's fine. I have committed to coming up with a plan. I am committing to coming up with a solution, whether it is because we have increased cleaning regimens, whether it's because we have increased monitoring of the various facilities, whether it's both.

I'm not sure. If it's just the 60th parallel, that's easier. Those are the kinds of things that I need to have information about, so we can make a targeted and quick assessment and solve the problem immediately.

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

QUESTION 597-19(2):
A NEW DAY PROGRAM

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Earlier this month, I gave a Member's statement about the men's A New Day program. It's a healing and wellness program for men who use violence in their intimate relationships. I am under the understanding that the existing contract for this program is up next month, and I am wondering if the Minister of Justice can please let us know what the plans are for this program. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Kam Lake. Minister of Justice.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With all the talk about outhouses and A New Day program, it feels like I am back in the 18th Assembly. As the Member noted, the contract for A New Day program was a four-year contract that ends at the end of March. The Department of Justice will not be renewing that contract. The contractor has been informed of this. The plan is to transform the program into more of a community-driven model and making that money available on an application basis. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. CLEVELAND: Does the Minister have any information as to when this money will be made available or when the terms of reference will be available, as well?

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: A call for expressions of interest will be released in April. Any proposal will be looked at by a men's healing fund committee based on the application guidelines that we are developing. That work is under way.

MS. CLEVELAND: In 2016, there was a men's A New Day evaluation report done. I am wondering if there will be an evaluation report done on the work that has been done by the John Howard Society since then and if either of those reports will be used in order to form the terms of reference for the financing going forward.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: This is still quite early in the process. Of course, we want to use the results of reviews to inform how we want to go forward. I think that it has been maybe six or seven years now that this program has been running in different forms. Still, a lot has been learned. I think we can see that

there have been some issues with the program over the past few years. We have seen the length of it is a problem. It's probably not the best program to be run in the North. We will try and avoid those pitfalls. That being said, we want this to be community-driven and really empower local communities to come up with some local solutions and assist where we can.

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

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am wondering if the Minister will commit to consulting with the Standing Committee on Social Development for the terms for that expression of interest, so that local, community-driven MLAs can have some input into that. Thank you.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: I can send those off and request feedback from the standing committee, but the plan right now is really to have it community-driven and not have it necessarily dictated. That being said, there has to be some sort of structure around it, so we can definitely collaborate in that sense. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Colleagues, our time for oral questions has expired. Item 8, written questions. Item 9, returns to written questions. Item 10, replies to the Commissioner's address. Item 11, petitions. Member for Thebacha.

Petitions

PETITION 1-19(2):
RETURNING FORT SMITH REGIONAL AIRPORT
RUNWAY TO FORMER SPECIFICATIONS

MS. MARTSELOS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to present a petition dealing with the matter of returning Fort Smith Regional Airport runway to former specifications.

Mr. Speaker, the petition contains 550 signatures, including 127 electronic signatures and 344 written signatures of Northwest Territories residents, and Mr. Speaker, the petitioners request that the Government of the Northwest Territories return the main airport runway at Fort Smith airport to its former width for reasons of public safety and economic growth.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I have a short presentation. Further to my Member's statement earlier today, this petition was started in January of 2021, and it contains a total of 550 signatures. There are 352 handwritten signatures, along with 198 electronic signatures, and 79 signatures came from people residing outside of the NWT, though I will add that most of the outside signatures came from people

who used to reside in Fort Smith or were born and raised in Fort Smith.

Mr. Speaker, I must admit that today, as I present this petition, I am feeling a sense of validation in my ongoing efforts to restore the Fort Smith airport runway to its former specifications. As I said in my Member's statement, I am no longer the lone voice vocalizing support to restore the Fort Smith airport runway. I am now joined with the support of 550 people who agree with my efforts. During our caucus retreat last year, Mr. Speaker, a meeting was held on August 31st. I just want to recap that meeting. This email was sent that very night after the meeting by Brian Harrold, who is the owner of Northwestern Air Lease.

It says: "Dear Frieda, just a quick recap on our meeting today. Thank you for inviting Minister Simpson and for listening to our concerns. As I had mentioned at the meeting, the narrowing of the airport has had several impacts on the town and Northwestern Air Lease. When Northwestern Air Lease had decided to start a flight training school, we had predicted some of our mitigations for a safe operation at a 200-foot-wide runway. This allows the students significantly more room for error on takeoffs and landings. As we had discussed, by narrowing the runway, the number and type of large aircraft that could be used in the event of an emergency evacuation has been severely limited.

"I understand that the Boeing 737 manufacturer states that the Boeing 737 aircraft can operate from a narrower runway. However, both WestJet and Air Canada have procedures that will not allow their aircraft to land on any runway narrower than 149 feet. This is why Fort Smith is no longer usable as an alternate airport due to bad weather. This means that the only 737 aircraft that can take part in an evacuation would be the Canadian North 373-200. This will limit the aircraft that would take part in an evacuation and would leave the evacuation to the military and Canadian north for the large aircraft, and the rest would have to be with ATR's Dash 7s and Dash 8s. This could mean a large number of aircraft trying to depart or arrive in poor conditions." This was an excerpt from the whole email that was sent by Brian Harrold.

Mr. Speaker, there is one aspect of this petition that was particularly concerning for me and for several other interested people who considered to sign this petition. I was told by a number of Government of the Northwest Territories employees that their supervisors had discouraged them or were trying to prevent people from signing this petition. Upon hearing this, I reached out to the Minister responsible for Human Resources and asked her if this was, in fact, true. She told me that there was no such direction given. This indicates a serious lack of clarity from the Department of Human Resources

about the Government of the Northwest Territories signing this petition. This petition is not going against any government policy. This petition is about the safety and economic wellbeing of the community of Fort Smith.

My duty to present this petition to the Government of the Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly on behalf of the amazing community of Fort Smith is an honour. I appreciate all the support I got from the community and will continue to work extremely hard to find solutions to this unnecessary situation with the airport. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Thebacha. Petitions. Item 12, reports of committees on the review of bills. Item 13, reports of standing and special committees. Item 14, tabling of documents. Minister of Justice.

Tabling of Documents

TABLED DOCUMENT 320-19(2):
GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHWEST
TERRITORIES RESPONSE TO COMMITTEE
REPORT 4-19(2): REPORT ON THE REVIEW OF
THE 2018-2019 NORTHWEST TERRITORIES
HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION ANNUAL
REPORT

TABLED DOCUMENT 321-19(2):
GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHWEST
TERRITORIES RESPONSE TO COMMITTEE
REPORT 5-19(2): REPORT OF THE
INFORMATION AND PRIVACY COMMISSIONER
OF THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

TABLED DOCUMENT 322-19(2):
FOLLOW-UP LETTER FOR ORAL QUESTION
559-19(2): FASD SUPPORT SERVICES IN NWT
CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following three documents: "Government of the Northwest Territories Response to Committee Report 4-19(2): Report on the Review of the 2018-2019 Northwest Territories Human Rights Commission Annual Report;" "Government of the Northwest Territories Response to Committee Report 5-19(2): Report of the Information and Privacy Commissioner of the Northwest Territories;" and "Follow-up Letter for Oral Question 559-19(2): FASD Support Services in NWT Correctional Facilities." Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Tabling of documents. Minister responsible for the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation.

TABLED DOCUMENT 323-19(2):
FOLLOW-UP LETTER FOR ORAL QUESTION
502-19(2): SENIORS HOUSING

TABLED DOCUMENT 324-19(2):
FOLLOW-UP LETTER FOR ORAL QUESTION
538-19(2): NORTHWEST TERRITORIES
HOUSING CORPORATION SAFE AND SECURE
HOUSING

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table the following two documents: "Follow-up Letter for Oral Question 502-19(2): Seniors Housing;" and "Follow-up Letter for Oral Question 538-19(2): Northwest Territories Housing Corporation Safe and Secure Housing." Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Tabling of documents. Item 15, notices of motion. Item 16, motions. Item 17, notices of motion for the first reading of bills. Item 18, first reading of bills. Item 19, second reading of bills. Item 20, consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters: Bill 3, An Act to Amend the Public Highways Act; Committee Report 8-19(2), Standing Committee on Rules and Procedures Report on Motion 5-19(2): Referral of Point of Privilege Raised by Member for Monfwi on March 10, 2020; Committee Report 9-19(2): Standing Committee on Rules and Procedures Report on the Chief Electoral Officer's Report on the Administration of the 2019 Territorial General Election; 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; and Tabled Document 286-19(2), Main Estimates 2021-2022, with the Member for Hay River South in the chair.

Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. Committee wishes to consider Tabled Document 286-19(2), Main Estimates 2021-2022, with Health and Social Services. Mahsi.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you, committee. We will take a short recess.

---SHORT RECESS

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): I will call the committee back to order. Committee, we have agreed to consider Tabled Document 286-19(2), Main Estimates 2021-2022. Does the Minister of Health and Social Services have any opening remarks?

HON. JULIE GREEN: Yes, Mr. Chair, I do.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Please proceed.

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am here to present the 2021-2022 Main Estimates for the Department of Health and Social Services. Overall, the department's estimates propose an increase of \$74.8 million or 14.3 percent over the 2020-2021 Main Estimates. These estimates support the mandate objectives for the department while continuing to meet the Government of the Northwest Territories' fiscal objectives to prioritize responsible and strategic spending.

Highlights of these proposed estimates include:

- \$34.6 million for the COVID-19 Coordinating Secretariat;
- \$13.1 million for initiatives, which include resources to increase front-line capacity in Child and Family Services, resources to continue with the establishment of the NWT school and community child and youth care counsellors in our communities, and resources to expand Healthy Family programming;
- \$10.7 million to address forced growth;
- \$9.2 million for projects in partnership with federal agencies such as Indigenous Services Canada, including the Northern Wellness Agreement and the First Nations and Inuit Home and Community Care agreement; and,
- \$8.5 million to fund 24/7 operational staffing costs in Health and Social Services programming, forced growth at Avens, and the expansion of the dialysis unit in Hay River.

The department is also planning for a \$558,000 decrease due to sunseting agreements with funding partners.

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

- increasing supports for meeting health and wellness needs and priorities of Indigenous people;
- supports to increase mental health services to youth in schools and communities throughout the NWT;
- increased supports for mental wellness and addictions recovery; and
- improving early childhood development indicators through expansion of the Healthy Family Program to support expecting parents and parents with young children.

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

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you, Minister. The committee has agreed to forego general comments. Does the committee agree to proceed to the detail contained in the tabled document?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): The committee has agreed to consider the activity "COVID secretariat" first. Does the Premier wish to bring witnesses into the House?

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Yes, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you. Sergeant-at-Arms, please escort the witnesses into the Chamber. Madam Premier, please introduce your witnesses.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. With me today, I have Mr. Russell Neudorf, the associate deputy minister of the COVID secretariat, and Ms. Jeannie Mathison, the director of finance with Health and Social Services. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you. COVID secretariat, beginning on page 176, with information item on page 178. Questions? Member for Great Slave.

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am looking at page 178 at the active positions. Could the Minister or the department tell us how many of these positions were hired from the North versus how many were people brought from the South? Thank you.

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. As committed to when we met with standing committee, 100 percent of the staffing for the COVID secretariat are from the North, either P1s, P2s, or some of them are not priority status but are residents of the Northwest Territories. No southern people were hired for the COVID secretariat. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Can the Minister tell me how many of these employees for the enforcement team are ex-RCMP officers? Thank you.

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The enforcement task team, I will turn over to the deputy minister to get more on the RCMP officers, but there were qualifications that were needed with the enforcement, Mr. Chair. The task force enforcement team are literally knocking on people's doors and handing out verbal warnings, written warnings, or tickets. It was really critical that we have people who have some kind of training in enforcement to ensure the safety of residents and the safety of our enforcement team. Mr. Chair, I can turn it over to our deputy minister to speak more on how many are ex-RCMP. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you, Premier. Mr. Neudorf.

MR. NEUDORF: Thank you, Mr. Chair. As the Premier had indicated, because of our need to hire people quickly and not having time to train them up, we needed to hire people who already had some enforcement background. I'm certainly pleased that we were able to do that in the hiring. I do not have the exact details about the number of RCMP. We will commit to provide that to the Member.

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

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you for that, reiterating the Premier's point again. Thank you. I look forward to getting that information. Can you speak to how much money was spent relocating people around within the territory to take these positions, i.e., people being moved to the Beaufort-Delta region rather than hiring locally there? Thank you.

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I will ask Ms. Mathison if she knows exact numbers. We did try to hire as much as possible

from the regions. For example, in the Beaufort-Delta, when I went up to Fort McPherson, all of the border patrol staff were actually from the communities. Mr. Chair, the amount of money that we had spent, I would have to turn it over to Ms. Mathison if she has that.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Ms. Mathison.

MS. MATHISON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I don't believe any expenses were incurred for relocation. Thank you.

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

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Rather than the monetary amount, I would like to get a feel for how many people did move around. I know that there have been people who were hired from out of the region into that region. I just want to know if there is a way to characterize that happening, but it doesn't sound like it. Maybe I will follow up, then, with the Minister at a later date. Thank you. I'm good.

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I will take that as a comment, and the Member is going to follow up.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am just looking at the 2020-2021 revised estimates, \$31 million. We passed this in a supplementary appropriation, but I know, since that time, a number of cost-saving measures have gone on. Do we have a forecast of how much we will actually spend on the COVID secretariat this fiscal? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The forecast that we are going to actually spend in this new coming year, 2021-2022, will be \$34,589,000. However, Mr. Chair, as Members are aware, we do provide variance reports every month. Since we did change the isolation, we are no longer covering for discretionary travel, vacations. We are seeing a savings. We are also seeing a savings by combining the 811 and Protect NWT. Right now, I think we are looking at probably a surplus of around \$6 million. However, Mr. Chair, that may fluctuate day to day, but we are seeing savings. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I heard the Premier say that the \$34 million budgeted for this fiscal, assuming we went a full fiscal, would actually be about \$6 million lower. Can I just get an updated figure of the \$31 million we budgeted for the fiscal we are presently in, how much of that we got back from the federal government? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I will answer that question, and then I will turn it back to my deputy minister, if appropriate. My notes said \$6 million, but she has a different figure. What I would like to say is that right now we got money in bundle 1 from the federal government, and we are just getting bundle 3 for this fiscal year from the federal government. At this point, we are at about 80 percent of our funding for the COVID secretariat being supported by the federal government.

The other thing that I would like to say with that is that the federal government has stated over and over that COVID-19 is one of their major priorities for the upcoming budget. We have already initiated conversations with them. They have already told us to get our ask in. I do assume that another substantial amount of funding will come for the COVID secretariat and not only the secretariat, but for health in general and all of the expenses around COVID-19. Thank you, Mr. Chair, but if I can turn to the deputy minister for clarification on the surplus.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you, Premier. Mr. Neudorf.

MR. NEUDORF: Thank you, Mr. Chair. For next year's budget, the 2021-2022, the original budget when we brought forward the COVID secretariat and the idea for it was \$40.4 million. Since that time, we have learned about the actual operations and what it might cost and made some adjustments. The budget has gone down by that \$6 million to \$34.6 million, which is the number up for discussion here. The Premier also talked about the current year's budget, which is \$31.6 million in the current year. The last variance report that we sent to MLAs showed about an \$800,000 surplus. We do expect that that variance, that surplus is growing, will grow, mainly due to isolation centres and the isolation centre payment policy that we brought in. The next variance report will be sent out very shortly. Thank you.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. We are budgeting for a full year and hoping that we do not need a full year. It would be nice if COVID was wrapped up, but a lot of that is beyond our control. Can I just get a sense of what's going to happen, say, if we wrap this up in September, use half a year's fiscal? How do we plan to make sure that the 150-or-so staff in the COVID secretariat do not simply lose their jobs? Will they be transferred back to other positions, or are they on short-term contracts? Can I just get a little update on that, how we are staffing the COVID secretariat in light of it having to end? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Some of the people, quite a few of them, actually, are new hires. There are some people who were transferred from departments and chose to stay with the COVID secretariat. Those people who were transferred within government departments will go back to their government departments. They are on a leave, but they still have jobs. The other people who were hired for the COVID secretariat started out either as casual and we just actually, because of the agreements with the union, I think that it made a couple of years back when I was the Minister, we have turned them into term employees. The last set will be up to one year. I think we are all tired of COVID, so hopefully, we will be able to wrap up. We are not sure, no one is sure, when COVID will end. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Is there a formal kind of wrap-up plan being created for the COVID secretariat, and when would we be able to see that? I think that some of the things that I would like to see is a bit of evaluation of why the COVID secretariat was needed, whether its role was actually worked when we said this is going to combine all the things; it's going to stop things being done off the side of its desk -- it took a lot of authority out of the emergency management organization, so I think a wind-up plan, and will that be done and a review of how well the COVID secretariat actually did and what it claimed to do, which was to kind of centralize all of the communications and functions in response to COVID-19? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Absolutely. I did hear Members. I try to work with Members as much as possible. We have kind of had an oral wrap-up plan that said, once the

CPHO eases measures, we would do that. I heard the Member, so we will be working on a formal wrap-up plan. However, we are not assuming anything is going to happen, at minimum, until the end of September, until all jurisdictions are vaccinated. The other thing, too, is we are not even sure right now with the new variants that are coming whether the vaccines -- there is all kinds of research that has to be done on the health side for the CPHO to be able to determine whether we will be able to do that.

However, we will do a wrap-up plan that we can share with Members when that is done. The other, too, is an evaluation. Absolutely, that was critical for us. I am hopeful that I will never see another pandemic in my lifetime, but it would be very irresponsible for a government to have gone through a pandemic and not have a game plan. We had nothing when we started and when we hit this pandemic, so a major part of the work after the restrictions are eased will be for the COVID secretariat to do an evaluation and a game plan -- I am not sure of the right terminology, Mr. Chair, but a plan that says, if ever a pandemic hits again, this is what we shall do as a government. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Can I have some clarification? My understanding is that, when we passed the initial COVID secretariat supplemental, about half of the money was isolation costs. I understand we have been getting those variance reports; we are \$800,000 under budget, meaning we have a surplus. When I look at the numbers here, I assume fees and payments \$15 million is mostly the isolation centres. However, now, this fiscal, we are being asked to pass \$12 million in fees and payments. Can I get clarification of whether that fees and payments line is the isolation centres? If it is, why is it not significantly lower considering we are not paying for as many isolation centres? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I do know that the isolation centres do fall within that line item, but for more clarification, I would like to turn it to Ms. Mathison.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Ms. Mathison.

MS. MATHISON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The budget for 2021 was based on eight months, and the Member is correct in that the isolation centres are under fees and payments. There is a reduction in

the budget for isolation centres when you factor in the eight months versus 12 months. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Member.

MR. JOHNSON: No further questions. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Questions? Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. Yes. My colleague from Yellowknife North asked a number of questions I wanted to pursue. I know that Gahcho Kue mine is closed temporarily, and over 100 workers are in the isolation centre here in Yellowknife. Who is paying for those workers while they self-isolate here in Yellowknife? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Actually, I am really glad to answer this question. Not only is the mine paying for it, but as stated earlier in the House -- I believe it was someone, Ms. Nokleby, who stated that the mines are good corporate citizens. Gahcho Kue mine has actually been extraordinary. When they had the outbreak, they went down into kind of a lower, almost a care and maintenance with them. They evacuated people. They covered all the costs, Mr. Chair. Not only are they covering the costs of the isolation centres, they also have had their own security at the isolation centres to watch the people that they are isolating, which, in fact, actually helps us because they are using the same facilities. It doubles the security. Of course, they are looking at their own, but they are covering 100 percent of the costs. I cannot be grateful enough. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. That is good to hear, that the mine is covering their own costs. Do we cover the costs and then bill them, or are they paying directly? How does that actually work on the ground? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. My understanding is that they are paying it directly. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Okay, thanks. That is good to hear, as well, so we do not have to be worried about trying to recover costs later. Like my colleague from Yellowknife North, I was a bit surprised that the fees and payments were not a little bit lower, but I do want to acknowledge that there have been some cost savings even from what was predicted in the supplementary appropriation that we passed in -- I guess it was probably in October, November, from what I see here now in the main estimates. With vaccinations rolling out and so on, do we anticipate further cost savings in this area over the course of the next several months? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. That is a difficult question to answer. I would love to say yes. However, Mr. Chair, as stated earlier, not knowing what these new variants coming from around the world and not knowing the research yet, according to my understanding from the CPHO, not knowing if people who are vaccinated can still transfer COVID-19, having no vaccinations yet for children under 18, and not having the research yet if this vaccine is going to work on all of the variants, although some of them have shown positive results, I cannot say for sure, Mr. Chair, if our isolation centre costs will go down until that research comes in and we know exactly what we are dealing with. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair, and thanks to the Premier for that response. I am not sure I am going to ask the right party this question, but yes, when there are reports issued now about COVID cases, I have had to ask: are we actually routinely testing for the variants, or when a case is reported, does that happen as a routine course now? If that information could be added to the public health advisories when they're issued, that would be really helpful because I know it was even raised on CBC Radio by callers yesterday. I don't know who to address that question to. Thanks, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am going to ask the Minister of Health and Social Services if we're testing for the variants on every test that we do for COVID now. Thanks, Mr. Chair.

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's my understanding that all the tests are now sent south for sequencing, and as of this time, we have no variants. Thank you.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair, and thanks for that. Can that information be added to the public health advisories when they're issued, about whether it's a suspected or a confirmed case is a variant or not? Right now, it's not part of the public health advisory when they're issued. Thanks, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. This is under the responsibility of Health and Social Services, so I'd like to defer that to the Minister of Health and Social Services. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The content of the public health advisory is solely at the discretion of the Chief Public Health Officer, so I have no ability to influence the information that it includes. Thank you.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Great, thanks. I know that the Minister -- we want an independent Chief Public Health Officer, but maybe the suggestion might be made. Maybe she's listening in, and she might listen to what I'm saying. I'm hoping that that kind of information can be added because it is causing some public concern. It was raised on the radio yesterday. In any event, I do want to move on to another area here, and it's with regard to enforcement. There were some issues raised in the public about this. I just would like to know what kind of training do each of the public health officers receive when they're designated under the Public Health Act? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Can I get clarification in the question again?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you. Member, can you clarify that?

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. Is there standardized training provided to the public health officers when they're designated under the Public Health Act with regard to COVID?

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes, I believe there is, but I'd like for Mr.

Neudorf to be able to expand on that, on the training aspect. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Mr. Neudorf.

MR. NEUDORF: Thank you, Mr. Chair. First, in terms of training, it's important that we hired people with experience so that they were already brought up to speed on kind of the general principles around enforcement and appropriate conduct. When we bring them in, we do designate them as public health officers, and there's training around confidential information that comes with that. We have, as well, organized kind of a three-day training session for all of our officers, as well, around orders and the public health requirements. Thank you.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. When a public health officer conducts a visit or an inspection, do they do this on their own, or are they always accompanied by another officer or another, say, somebody with a liquor or cannabis commission or Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. As stated earlier, the enforcement is probably, of all the duties of the COVID secretariat, is one of the most at-risk because they are actually giving out verbal warnings, written warnings, or tickets, and people don't always take that very, very well. Yes, Mr. Chair, no enforcement officer is going to either knocking on doors or in businesses or anywhere, other than that two phone calls, on their own. We always send two members. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. That's exactly what I'd hoped to hear and would expect from our public service and our leaders, so thank you very much for that. In general, is there a written inspection report provided to a business owner after an inspection is conducted? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Premier.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I will turn it over to Mr. Neudorf, but before I do that, I want to state that it's very important that Protect NWT and 811 have the autonomy to be able to do their jobs. At no time, as the Minister of the COVID secretariat, do I actually give any direction to Protect NWT or 811 on their

enforcement practices, who they ticket, what they're ticketing, although, Mr. Chair, I have said that I will stand behind each member in their decisions. On that, I'd like to turn it over to the deputy minister for more information. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you. Mr. Neudorf?

MR. NEUDORF: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes. When our inspectors go out and we do an inspection of a business, they will always provide a written inspection. There are times, depending on the nature of the business and the inspection, that someone from WSCC or a liquor inspector might accompany our enforcement officers, as well, just depending on the particular issue at hand. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you. Questions on this section? Any further questions? No further questions, please turn to page 177. Health and Social Services, COVID secretariat, operations expenditure summary, 2021-2022 Main Estimates, \$34,589,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agree.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you. Sergeant-at-Arms, please escort the witnesses from the Chamber. We'll take a five-minute recess.

---SHORT RECESS

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Does the Minister of Health and Social Services wish to bring witnesses into the House?

HON. JULIE GREEN: Yes, please, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. On your left is Deputy Minister Bruce Cooper and on your right is Director of Finance Jeannie Mathison.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you. Committee, we will defer the departmental summary and review the estimates by activity summary, beginning with administrative and support services, starting on page 172 with information item on page 175. Questions? Member for Kam Lake.

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I am going to start off with the line item for the French language services. I'm wondering if there is a matching line item for Indigenous languages. Thank you.

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

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. There is a Tlicho cultural coordinator who is listed in the same area, but to the best of my knowledge, there is not a separate coordinator for each Indigenous language. I'll just confirm that by asking the deputy minister if that, in fact, is the case. Thank you.

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

MR. COOPER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes, indeed. We do not have a corresponding category for Indigenous translation. We track French-language services in this way because it is linked to some of our federal funding. We get funding that offsets some of these expenditures. Thank you.

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

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Would interpretation for any Indigenous languages also be found in this budget, and what line item would it fall under? Thank you.

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

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'll ask the deputy minister to answer that question. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Deputy Minister.

MR. COOPER: Translation services for Indigenous languages are integrated in our health system, so you'll find it in our hospital services budget line.

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

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Since we're not in the hospital services section, I'll come back to that one when we get to the appropriate place, then. My next question is in regard to the Health and Social Services Authorities funding. I'm wondering if this is the appropriate place to ask about the deficit for the NTHSSA. Thank you.

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

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I don't believe that this is the right area. I think that this doesn't represent the entire grant to the health authorities, but I'll ask Ms. Mathison if she can tell us more particularly what portion of their budget this figure represents. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you. Ms. Mathison.

MS. MATHISON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes, the funding for the health authorities is distributed throughout all the activities, so pieces of their deficit would be showing up in various activities. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I can either ask here or I can wait and ask my questions where the big chunk of the deficit sits, which is in Health and Social Services programs, so at your call, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Wait until the later. Wait until the deficit area. Any further questions?

MS. CLEVELAND: No.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Questions? Member for Great Slave.

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm just wondering, I look at page 175, the active positions, and just note that all of them are in headquarters here in Yellowknife. I'm just curious if the Minister can speak a bit to whether or not there is any opportunity to move any of these positions outside of the capital and put some of this employment into our smaller communities. Thank you.

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

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. These 82 positions in administration are out of a total workforce of over 1,800 people between the department and the health authorities, all of whom are represented in this budget. The department exists primarily here in Yellowknife, and then, of course, the health authorities are the front-line delivery for the programs. They exist in every community. Thank you.

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

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes. I do appreciate that there is a huge chunk of employment in this department that is not in Yellowknife. However, as we have adapted to COVID, we've seen we've been able to move to a more virtual and online world, so 82 positions that all sit in headquarters. Perhaps at some point, there could be a look to see if any of those could be moved out to communities, to give opportunities to people in other locations to rise up through this program. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. JULIE GREEN: I'll take that as a comment. Thank you.

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

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm good.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. As part of the department's business plan under this section, one of our goals was to increase local residency and implement our residency full-time. I always support increasing residency, and I believe the goal is to go from two residencies a year to four. Can I just get an update on when we expect to accomplish that, or whether we already have? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Could the Member please expand on what he means by "residencies"? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Member.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The medical residency pilot, I believe, is about allowing doctors to do their residency in the North. Right now, we do two placements, I believe, a year, and the department's goal is to have four doctors completing their residency. That's my understanding of what the pilot program initially was and its intentions. Thank you.

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

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thanks for that detail. Yes, I am aware that there is a plan to increase that, but I am not sure about the timing. I will turn to the deputy minister for that detail, please.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Mr. Cooper.

MR. COOPER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. We are early in the process with the two residents, and certainly, we will be evaluating this. We don't have a firm date for expansion, but certainly, we are seeing lots of interest in coming here and anxious to do so in the coming years. We don't have a firm date for when that will happen.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you. I would encourage the department to get a firm date. I know there are more and more people looking to do their residencies in the North. We actually offer quite a great practice experience for doctors. There are more and more benefits, such as student loan remissions available for doctors willing to come north. Another area in the department's business plan in this section is to increase employee engagement and satisfaction. Part of that work was to do staff surveys of all of the people in the department. Can I get an update on whether that was work we were already doing or when we will begin that work? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thanks, Mr. Chair. I note these aren't really budgetary questions, but we are prepared to answer any and all questions about the work of the department. I will ask the deputy minister to answer this, please.

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

MR. COOPER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. As part of the work in developing a comprehensive human resource strategy, there is engagement planned with staff. There are some surveys that have been completed. There is some data that already exists from program evaluations, which is being reviewed by the staff at the health authority. In addition to that, there is a group being compiled which is made up of frontline staff, and we are looking for deep representation throughout the authority. That will help guide us through other engagements that we will do to ensure that the strategy, once developed, is representative of the issues that staff have identified.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. My understanding is that the human resources function for the health authority actually lies within the Department of Finance, and there is a goal to kind of create a few units that work together. I am looking at the \$6 million a year we plan to pay to human resources. I see last year that it has gone down \$400,000, and it was gone down \$700,000 from the actuals. To me, if one of our mandate items is to work on recruitment and retention, there are quite a lot of priorities under the human resourcing of health for this department. Why has that budget decreased? Thank you.

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

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you. I think that there are a number of things that are happening in here. They don't actually relate to that HR unit that you are speaking of, to the best of my knowledge. My knowledge is not as great as the deputy minister's knowledge, so let's ask him.

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

MR. COOPER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The question is in terms of what's happening with, I believe, a revised amount of \$400,000, if I'm understanding the question correctly. There was a supplementary appropriation of \$400,000 in order for us to engage in work force planning. This was, if I recall correctly, funding that was being made available to support Aurora College in the establishment of programs to ensure we have staff to serve our elders in long-term care and the community. That explains that swing. In this budget, you'll see both the occurrence of some of the money that we got through the supplementary process in the summer appearing at the same time as an increase. Some of that is what is captured here for this work force planning that we are doing with Aurora College as a flowthrough. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. My understanding is that this is the unit that is kind of responsible for updating our long-term care projections. I know, in the capital budget, we passed a number, but the department is looking at adjusting some of the numbers. Also, I believe there are some lessons, perhaps, to be learned from COVID-19.

Every time we bring on a long-term care bed, obviously, there is more funding needed within the operations budget. Do we have increased funding for long-term care in this? Sorry if I'm wrong about where we would find that. Due to the capital budget requirements to build more long-term care beds, we increased the funding for the actual in operations budget. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you. Long-term care is its own activity area. Could we return to that question when we get to that activity area?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): We can. Member.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I heard the deputy minister say that we are just starting to conduct some of that staff survey work, and we are starting to roll out staff satisfaction. Do we have

current staff satisfaction measures right now for the department? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Minister.

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you. I will ask the deputy minister to answer this.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Mr. Cooper.

MR. COOPER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I do not have that information with me. I would have to inquire.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you. The human resources function here, which actually lies in the Department of Finance, is being asked to do a lot of very specific health information, including recruiting nurses, travelling, staff satisfaction surveys across the department. We plan to measure the decreased caregiver distress. There are a lot of metrics to be done in human resources. It's very specialized work for health. To date, I have been concerned that, perhaps, the general HR function is not up to that, and it really should be in the Department of Health and Social Services. I want to be confident that the \$6 million here being sent over to Finance is the right amount. Can I get a commitment from the Minister that whatever current information we have on staff satisfaction can be provided to committee? Thank you.

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

HON. JULIE GREEN: Yes. We are looking to the expertise of the Department of Finance to assist us in recruiting and retaining staff, per our mandate commitment to increase the resident work force by 20 percent within the life of this Assembly. That is a collaborative enterprise led by the Department of Finance but including people from Health and Social Services. I can't make a commitment to provide you with the information you're asking for because I have no concept of whether I'm going to give you a page or a library. I need to understand that level of detail before I make that commitment. Once again, not to belabour the point, this is not a budget item. We came prepared to answer budget items. Thank you.

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

MR. JOHNSON: I'll try again. When I look at the department's business plan in here, there are service level metrics to be devolved. There are employee engagement and satisfaction to be devolved. There is employee turnover to measure. There is long-term care to be measured. There is

employment engagement service. Fifty percent of the department is supposed to be surveyed. I have no sense of whether that work has been done or is done. I have no sense of whether this is the adequate money to do it. Perhaps, as a start, if I could get the Minister to commit to what is being done by the Department of Finance in regards to, I'll call it, the priority to improve work force engagement and develop strategies aimed at improving hiring practices and retention. What is being done by Finance versus health? If we could get a commitment of the breakdown of who is doing what work, that would be helpful. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I will work with my colleague, the Minister of Finance, to provide a very high-level overview of what tasks are being undertaken at this time. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you, Minister. If committee can keep the questions to the budget itself, it would be appreciated, even though the Minister has somewhat committed to answering other questions, as well. Thank you. Are there any further questions on this section? No further questions. Please turn to page 173. Health and Social Services, administrative and support services, operations expenditure summary, 2021-2022 Main Estimates, \$53,007,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you. Health and social programs, beginning on page 179, with information item on page 183. Questions? Member for Kam Lake.

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I'll come back to my questions, I guess to start off, about languages. I am wondering: how much is spent on translations for Indigenous languages within NWT hospitals and health centres on an annual basis? Thank you.

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

HON. JULIE GREEN: I see which item it's in, but I am just going to check here and see if I have that level of detail. I don't see that I do, so I'd like to ask Ms. Mathison to answer the question, please.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you. Ms. Mathison.

MS. MATHISON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. That's a level of detail, actually, that I don't have with me, as well. Those expenditures show up in the authority

budgets, which they submit to us in a very detailed fashion, so we don't have that here with us. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I think it would be worthwhile as a request, if we're going to isolate French-language services in healthcare, I think it would be worthwhile also showing how much we're spending on Indigenous languages translations in healthcare, as well. One of the conversations that we hear a lot about these days is systemic racism and if that exists in our healthcare systems or not, and I think people being able to access healthcare in their Indigenous and traditional languages is quite important to make sure that everybody is getting information that they need. That's why I'm asking these questions right now, is to understand how people are being supported in their traditional languages within their community in healthcare. I'll move on, still staying within hospital services. I'm wondering how much, every year, is paid to NWT hospitals in out-of-territory services and if there is currently a deficit on that. Thank you.

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

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you. Just to go back to the money spent on Indigenous languages, the issue here is not that it isn't happening. It's the way it's reported. The money for French-language services requires a particular kind of reporting because it's provided by the federal government. The Indigenous-language interpretation would be provided by the GNWT, so it's not reported in the same way. That doesn't mean to say it can't be discovered or reported in the future, so that's something to explore. With respect to the amount of money that is spent on out-of-territory services and what the deficit on that might be, I don't see that level of detail on the page that I have. Again, I'll turn to Ms. Mathison and see if she has it. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Ms. Mathison.

MS. MATHISON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The department's expenditure on out-of-territory hospitals is in another activity further down the way. We spend \$32 million in out-of-territory hospitals, but it's not represented on this page. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MS. CLEVELAND: Sorry, Mr. Chair. That's why I had my hand up. I meant residents from out-of-

territory who are having medical work done here. Thank you.

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

HON. JULIE GREEN: Again, I'll turn to Ms. Mathison, please.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Ms. Mathison.

MS. MATHISON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Services to non-residents, we have increased the budget for that this year by \$1 million to cover the increased costs associated with us providing services to those non-residents who do attend our facilities. I am searching the page here for the actual budget on that item, but I don't have it handy. However, we added \$1 million to the budget for this year. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. To confirm, is that money that is always reimbursed to the territorial government annually, or is there sometimes money that we end up having to swallow? Thank you.

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

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you. The situation with providing services to people from other jurisdictions in Canada is that there is a provincial-territorial committee that meets annually and sets the rate for the costs of that care on a daily basis, and then the different provinces and territories bill one another for the costs of the care based on the number of people who come here and require care here. The jurisdictions are billed, so, for example, if someone came here from Alberta, became ill, was hospitalized for 14 days, there would be a set rate that is already agreed and Alberta Health Services would be billed for the 14 days of care that their resident received. Thank you.

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

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Does anybody owe us money? Thank you.

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

HON. JULIE GREEN: I feel sure the answer is yes to that. I don't know if Ms. Mathison has that level of detail here, but let's see.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Ms. Mathison.

MS. MATHISON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. There is always a lag in the billing. Other jurisdictions have up to a year to pay us after we send them the bill, but we don't have any that we are not expecting to receive payment for. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Do we owe anybody money?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Minister.

HON. JULIE GREEN: I'm going to say it's on the same basis, that, undoubtedly, because of the lag in billing, we have some outstanding debts. We pay our bills.

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

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. That's good news, and that's what I like to hear. My next question is in regard to population health. I see that population health has had a significant decrease, and I'm wondering what this decrease accounts for. Thank you.

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

HON. JULIE GREEN: What my notes say here is that, in the 2019-2020 budget, the budget was not fully spent, mostly because of some federal funding that lapsed. Then in the 2020-2021 budget, we had funding from Health Canada related to cannabis, which has now sunset. There are some other details about what goes on here in public health, and part of that was covered with a supplementary appropriation that was passed during this fiscal year and included things such as \$70,000 for meat inspection regulations; \$94,000 for enhanced community-based monitoring of seasonal influenza; \$40,000 from the Northern Wellness Agreement; \$10,000 from the On the Road to Wellness during- and after-cancer diagnosis funding; substance abuse and addictions program, \$174,000. The biggest portion of this is the COVID Safe Restart funding agreement, which provided \$2.472 million, and so we don't have an equivalent amount of COVID restart money in these main estimates. I don't think that the number for COVID funding has been settled on for the next fiscal year. Thank you.

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

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. One of the things that catches my ear on that one is the cancer diagnosis funding. One of the things that I find we are hearing about and reading about a little bit more is the amount of people who

are not seeing physicians on a regular basis with COVID. People are avoiding doctors' offices. They are avoiding health check-ups, especially in the North where our health check-ups mean that we have to travel. Sometimes, people have to come to regional centres, sometimes Yellowknife, and sometimes, they end up having to leave the territory. I am wondering if there is discussion about increasing this line item kind of in anticipation of people not being diagnosed and potentially having to be treated farther down in cancer diagnosis and the additional cost of that or if there are discussions around that happening at the Minister's tables. Thank you.

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

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. My recollection is that this fund is going to sunset at the end of next month, and it is federal money. I am not sure if an additional or new fund with a similar focus is being contemplated. I will ask the deputy minister for that information. Thank you.

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

MR. COOPER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. This was one-time funding for a very small project, and so, no, there is nothing else being contemplated in that space. However, to the broader question of cancer prevention, chronic disease management, and ultimately, diagnosis and treatment, the diagnosis and treatment side would show up in the broader growth within the healthcare system should that happen. Being mindful of the dynamic of people avoiding or not going to physicians or nurse practitioners for check-ups, there was a lot of work done earlier in the pandemic for people to review their panels and to be doing outreach and to implement virtual care. I know the primary care team have been very mindful of the risk that has been articulated and are working to try to prevent that from happening by good connections with their folks. Certainly, we are not waiting for it to become a treatment issue, trying to use good triaging and good connection with patients to do outreach. Thank you.

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

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I am going to end up leaving the conversation of the deficit to somebody else because I am just trying to be mindful of the clock here. The adult support services line item, I see that that's fairly consistent with what it was last year, and I am wondering if that line item includes the FASD diagnostic clinic.

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

HON. JULIE GREEN: I don't think this does include the FASD diagnostic clinic, but I will turn to Ms. Mathison to confirm that.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Ms. Mathison.

MS. MATHISON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. No, it does not. This line item is funding that we give to the NTHSSA to support contracts that they enter into with NGOs for support services for adults. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MS. CLEVELAND: Can the Minister let me know where the adult FASD clinic falls within the budget, please? Thank you.

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

HON. JULIE GREEN: I will ask Ms. Mathison to tell me that. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Ms. Mathison.

MS. MATHISON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. My apologies. I should have added that, as well, to my last answer. That falls within the health centres. It's probably a mix of health centres and hospitals, depending on which community the supports lie, but it's between those two objects there. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you. Member for Great Slave.

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would like to look at page 181. I am looking at the contributions generally to NGOs and other organizations to support Northwest Territories residents. I notice that we are really stagnant to our standard budget and not a lot of line item increases, other than the Health and Social Services Authorities funding. I am disappointed to see that. I think that we have had a lot of conversation around mental health and addictions supports and such. I know that NGOs are really good at making their money stretch and are being very effective in our communities, recognizing that a large portion of them are in Yellowknife. However, that does spill out to other communities. Can the Minister speak to why there is no increase to the amount of funding to all of these programs, given that people are starting to really feel the effects of the isolation of COVID-19? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Minister.

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you. The core mental health services are provided by the NTHSSA, the Tlicho Community Services Agency, and the Hay River Health and Social Services Authority. These grants and contributions are primarily community-based funds, such as the Anti-Poverty Fund is available by application by communities across the NWT. The Child and Family Services contribution is to the Foster Families Coalition. The community-based suicide prevention is brand new this year. We haven't had a chance to find out whether that's the right amount of money or not. The community wellness initiatives, that's another community-based fund which we've just started advertising for applications for. These are primarily funds that are available for people to apply for, like peer support and on-the-land. They are not generally supporting specific NGOs like the Spruce Bough, the Yellowknife Women's Society, or the YWCA. These are more funds that we provide to communities to do their own programming. Thank you.

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

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you for that. That doesn't really answer my question. As all of these groups are where these projects or this funding can be accessed by these community organizations or whomever, that, to me, seems like an area where we would want to be focusing more money, given the current situation of what's going on, particularly if this is something that different organizations can access. The conditions around them could be made a lot more flexible, given the restrictions of COVID and the inability of a lot of organizations to operate in the same way that they have in the past. Maybe they could be accessing some of this funding to help them adapt their programming to be virtual and things like that. I just would like to reiterate that I find it extremely disappointing that we are not supporting more of the funding that would allow for non-governmental people to access money to provide supports to our people because I often hear the GNWT is failing at doing this themselves. I do recognize it is a growing problem across the country and the world, and most healthcare systems are taxed in dealing with it. Thank you.

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

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I will take that as a comment.

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

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you for that, Mr. Chair. I am just looking at the active positions. Again, seeing that there have been 10 positions added to the headquarters, again, not to the regional offices,

could the Minister maybe speak to why a decision was made to increase headquarters staffing versus putting those positions elsewhere? Thank you.

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

HON. JULIE GREEN: I have to find what page that is. Here it is. I'm just going to reiterate a point I made a little earlier. The department provides the administration, policy, legislation, communications, and oversight functions for what the health authorities do. It is, just by default, here in Yellowknife. There are 12 new positions. I see here that there is a Healthy Family Program regional coordinator in Hay River and another in Inuvik. The others are, as the Member said, based here. It doesn't mean that they do all of their work here, but it means that they are, within larger groups, additions to other initiatives. It wouldn't be easy to put one person out in Behchoko, for example, with these kinds of programs. They need to be working within a group of people. For the community-based monitoring of seasonal influenza, it wouldn't make sense to put an epidemiologist in Behchoko when all of the other epidemiologists are in Yellowknife. That's the reason that almost all of these new positions are located in Yellowknife and not in other places. Thank you.

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

MS. NOKLEBY: Yes, I appreciate that, that there would be specialist-type situations or positions that would need to be with their fellow. I think we talked about that a lot in engineering collaboration. However, some of the items that you listed that these new positions are covering have to do with the administration. They have to do with things that sound very computer-oriented, very much sitting at a desk, I would just maybe again, as a comment, urge the Minister to consider, given our priority and mandates to increase employment in small communities, that we look at thinking outside the box and looking to have virtual collaboration instead of always in person. Thank you.

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

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you. I will take that as a comment.

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

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

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

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just in regards to page 179, it's all based in, the community healthcare clinics in my riding, I'm hoping to make sure that the adequate doctors visit in the community more. Then it's kind of in regards to -- especially for the cultural, in regards to the community groups for languages, too, for translators that are coming in. Where are the translators? Do they have them on call in regards to for the doctors because a lot of our elders, they won't say anything in regards to when they're being talked to. Proper interpretation, is that being done? I'll start off with that. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you. I want to do something a little unusual and ask the Member a question. What happens now? If somebody appears in one of your community health clinics and they need help with interpretation, who helps?

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I don't know what staff in the communities, who do they call? Is it a number they call? I don't even know that because we never -- in Tuktoyaktuk, per se, I have elders in Ulukhatok that need translation. Are there people that are hired in the communities to do that? Are they on an on-call basis, or they're full staff? Thank you.

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

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thanks for that explanation. I don't know the answer to that, so I'll see if the deputy minister knows. Thank you.

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

MR. COOPER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. We have two primary ways of supporting interpretation services. We've got interpretation available at and through the Stanton Territorial Hospital for seven official languages. We also have, for after-hours -- while Stanton will provide an outreach and I believe they're on call, as well, there's also after-hours translation available through CanTalk, which is a specialized service that is available 24 hours a day by phone or by email or by Internet, and they offer services throughout the territory. Of course, through the relationship between the provider and the family, there's also work that can be done to ensure that family members may be able to participate in and be part of that group that help with the translation, if necessary. Thank you.

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

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you. Just in regards to that, thank you for that. Are all dialects covered in regards to Inuinnaqtun, Siglit? Are those covered in this CanTalk? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'll turn again to Mr. Cooper.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Mr. Cooper.

MR. COOPER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Inuktitut and Inuinnaqtun, forgive me if I've mispronounced that, but those are two through CanTalk, and we have Inuvialuktun in addition through the Stanton service.

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

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I thank the Minister for that. I've got a little bit of issues that I have, to get to a point like with prevention with the nursing station into the hospitals, that interaction with the health centre in the hospital, say, of Inuvik. How does it work in regards to making sure -- I'm having a lot of people with cancer that are too late, stage 4. I have a couple of individuals that I heard of in my riding. How does that work in regards to follow-up to making sure that they're being seen. I know that when they're in the system with Alberta, when they go down, come here, they get assessed, or in Inuvik, and then they get sent out. Some of them are, the wait time is too long. Is there any way to start shortening that up in regards to services for them because the cancer, when they're coming back, it's stage 4. You can't come back from that. I just need, could we try to work on time in regards to service for the communities? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you. I recognize that that's a terrible diagnosis. It's frightening. In terms of the service that is provided in Alberta, I don't know what ability we have to influence that. It was my understanding that, once the patient was connected with an oncologist at a place like the Cross Cancer Institute, that they took on the case, then, and the timing and the follow-up. I don't know if we have, as a health system, a way to speed that up. I'll look to the deputy minister. He may be more familiar with this. Thank you.

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

MR. COOPER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. We do have two cancer care navigators that support when a person has been diagnosed with cancer, they are

there to support, helping the person navigate the clinical pathway. Offering virtual appointments where possible, and they work with the patient, with their family, and the healthcare team, including bridging between here and, of course, the Cross so that they can support them throughout their journey. That's the intention of those two positions. I would add we also have a medical oncology social worker who also can play a role in helping.

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

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just regarding that, has any thought been given, Madam Minister, in regards to the healthcare advocates in regards to helping patients who can't really speak out for themselves, the healthcare advocate that we brought up two weeks ago in the House here? Is there any thought given to that, trying to promote that? One or two in the Delta, five here in Yellowknife, but is there any way to do that? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you. It's my understanding that the cancer-care navigators have an advocacy function, but I think what you're talking about is more about the general patient navigator, not only those with a cancer diagnosis. Yes, that's an interesting question, and I understand that some work is going on to look at the possibility of instituting that kind of a service. It would be part of our providing culturally safe and confidence-building service to Indigenous people, and it may also help with the request that we get for escorts, non-medical escorts, that if people got off the plane and saw someone they recognize from their community, that would be very reassuring to help them get connected with the services they need. I don't think there's a specific date on which this is going to come into place. For more about this process, I'd ask once again the deputy minister to expand. Thank you.

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

MR. COOPER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. In addition to the patient navigation services through CancerCare, we are making changes to the way primary healthcare is delivered, creating interdisciplinary teams. The hope of that is that individuals will have support to be able to navigate. We're sort of early day with that. We've got 10 teams rolled out here. We've got two demonstration projects, Fort Smith and Fort Good Hope, beginning. We certainly are looking at this question of how to support people with advocacy, with navigation services, and the authority is taking a

look as they are standing up more services and improving the patient experience. They have established an office that is looking at this through their quality division, and so I do expect that we will see more thinking on this question in future business planning. Thank you.

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

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just in regard to that, teams, again, that's what we need in regard to community health and wellness. That's what we need to be doing, especially small communities, remote communities. My last question is about the escorts. Is there a way to let our community health centres know how an escort is approved? If the doctor approves it, it's approved. Correct? If not, they need clarity on that, and it should be brought into our health centres across the territory in regard to that. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. JULIE GREEN: Yes. I understand the Member's question. As the Member may know, we are currently doing a mini-review of medical travel that will be done by the end of March, and it is looking at the question of escorts. It's looking at why escorts are sometimes approved and sometimes they are not approved until the appeal. It's also looking at things such as the knowledge base that medical staff have for recommending escorts. That is an issue that we are aware that we need to provide more clarity on, and we hope to be able to do that by the end of March. That's the intention. Thank you.

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

MS. MARTSELOS: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm looking at page 180. Just for clarity, Mr. Chair, the Fort Smith Health Centre would come under community clinics and health centres? Am I correct?

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

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'll ask Ms. Mathison to confirm that. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Ms. Mathison.

MS. MATHISON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Member.

MS. MARTSELOS: My question is: community clinics and health centres, the budget went down.

That's all the small communities, and I guess we're not considered a hospital. We're considered a health centre. The budget went down by almost \$2 million. I'm just wondering, especially now that we've been through a pandemic and are still in a pandemic, why would budgets go down in community clinics and health centres? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you. What I see here is that this budget has some fluctuation in it. In the current fiscal year, it bumped up because of COVID restart money. That's why it's at \$79,841,000 for this year. We're not anticipating, or at least not budgeting, for the COVID money for the next fiscal year because that hasn't been firmed up yet. There is no reduction in services. This does not represent any loss of nursing positions or other services to community clinics and health centres. It's puzzling to me about why that budget is a little bit smaller than it was in the actuals, but also in the main estimates for 2020-2021. I'll ask Ms. Mathison if she can explain that for us. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you. Ms. Mathison.

MS. MATHISON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The adjustment down in 2021-2022 is as a result of a change in the budget for amortization, which is to explain the use of the facilities. It's the depreciation on the assets that are being used in the delivery of these programs. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MS. MARTSELOS: Mr. Chair, I'm wondering about the Fort Smith clinic. There are a few things that I feel that are not there that we had before. I know that they are trying to get a speech therapist; I know that for sure. We used to always have a dietician. We don't have one anymore. A dietician is very important. We have lots of seniors in the community, and the population at large. I'm just wondering about the dietician. The other area that I want to make sure is stabilized in the Fort Smith Health Centre is the lab services. We had full lab services there, and I know that we are going to be doing the blood work again. With everything else in there, we have to have very stabilized lab services. We come from a fairly large community. We're one of the four, maybe the smallest of the four, but I just feel that we have to make sure that people have to be able to go there and have the proper lab services and not have to come over here to Yellowknife just for some of the lab services that were offered before. That's very costly. I just want

to know the answers to some of those questions. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. This budget is at a very high level, so it doesn't speak specifically to what's going on in Fort Smith, and I don't have that detail with me. That would really be part of the Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority budget, to say what money was being spent in the specific areas that the Member asked about. We have spoken in the House before about Fort Smith lab services, and there is a switch from laboratory services to point-of-care tests. That transition is well under way, so almost all of the services that the Fort Smith lab had previously, it will have again. I think that some of the positions that are vacant are vacant because it's difficult to recruit people to those positions. It's not because we don't want Fort Smith to have them.

Those are my general answers. As I say, this budget is really at a very high level, so it's hard to provide that drill-down to the Fort Smith Health Centre in particular. One way you could do that is to take it into question period and ask me those questions there, and that would prompt me to get that level of detail to offer. Thank you.

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

MS. MARTSELOS: I'll turn to page 181, then, and go to Health and Social Services Authority funding. That went up by \$22 million, so my question is for clarity. Everybody is equal in the territory, and we all expect the same services everywhere. I know it's very difficult. You can't have a large hospital in a small community, but it seems like we're always making sure that the Health and Social Services Authority funding, it went up by \$22 million. It puzzles me how these budgets are presented because I just feel like it could be done more simply, so that we all understand very easily because I'm very good at numbers. Then there are hospital services over here, and then there is the Health and Social Services Authority. I just want more clarity, Mr. Chair. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you. Just to say, again, this is a very high-level budget, so it does not have Fort Smith-specific information in it. What I want to say is that the budget for the current fiscal year was subject to a supplementary appropriation for \$21.4 million that had to do with the dialysis unit expansion in Hay River; mental health and addictions funding; safe restart funding; Child and

Family Services, this was hiring some additional staff in that area; also, the child and youth care counsellor. Those are very general numbers. I do not know if Ms. Mathison can offer anything more specific, but could you please call on her, Mr. Chair?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you. Ms. Mathison.

MS. MATHISON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The line that she is speaking to, on page 81, the Health and Social Services funding that showed the increase there of over \$15 million, that is to reflect all of the programs in this activity. For example, it's showing increased funding for Child and Family Services, for child and youth care counsellors; we have forced growth for supplies in here; we have additional funding for the authority, Health and Social Services Authority in general to appropriately staff 24/7 operations. There is a wide variety of reasons why that increase there is \$15 million for this year, some of which is likely allocated by the NTHSSA to Fort Smith for the health centre and for the staff there. However, yes, as the Minister said, we don't have that level of detail here with us today. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MS. MARTSELOS: [Microphone turned off] ...questions.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes. I just want to start with a general comment of: I recognize main estimates are largely set by the Department of Finance and how they are set out, but this is \$337 million on three pages, which makes it larger than any department. Maybe just ECE total department budget is there. I know that the reason for that is not really intentional; it's a Finance thing and how the department is organized. I think probably a look needs to be done and, when we table the budget, some more information on how we are spending \$337 million be provided both to MLAs and the public because it can be very difficult to understand. Starting with the big picture, can I have an update of what the projected deficit for the NTHSSA will be this year, this fiscal? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am not sure that I have a projected deficit yet. I do not know that they have done their budget. I think they are waiting for us to finish our budget. The last

figure I have for the deficit was \$120,700,000. Thank you.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I understand there are some plans to run a deficit-reduction plan. Are we expecting that this main estimates that we are looking it for 2021-2022 will actually add to the deficit, or are we now budgeting enough that the deficit will essentially stop? I am not expecting us to pay off the \$120 million, but is it going to get bigger this fiscal, as well? Thank you.

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

HON. JULIE GREEN: Yes. Thank you. Based on the budget for this fiscal year, which had a deficit budget, the NTHSSA had a deficit projected for this fiscal year, then I am going to say that we are going to continue to grow the deficit for the time being. What we are trying to do is to reduce the size of that deficit to zero through the health system sustainability plan, which we have spoken about here, so what we are trying to do is understand the drivers that are adding to the deficit and address those and reduce them, obviously, so we get to a point where we are not budgeting with deficits for the health authorities. Thank you.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Admittedly, my understanding of why the health authority is able to run a deficit in the first place is not fully understood. Are there any plans to simply not allow them to run a deficit and then, if they needed to, come back through a supplementary appropriation process so that there is a little bit more ongoing tracking to this House? When they wrack up debt, it's not like it's a different debt; it's still the GNWT being held, and I think, at one point, we are probably going to have a conversation about whether that \$120 million of debt is written off and brought into the GNWT. I do not really see the point in making them pay it off. I would like them to get to zero and adding to it. Is it possible, or is there a reason that health authorities have to be able to run deficits and we cannot simply let them rely on the supplementary appropriation process like every other department? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. JULIE GREEN: Yes. Thank you. I will start this, and then I will turn it over to Ms. Mathison. We have a very generous set of core services that are offered by our health authorities, and we need to ensure that we can continue those services now

that we have them offered to our residents. We cannot say to people, "You could be out of work in March because we think that we will be out of money by then." The real question facing the health authorities is: what is the scope of our core services and what are the extras? Are we going to continue to fund all of the extras and continue adding to our deficit, or are we going to limit services? Are we going to ask people to pay for services? How are we going to manage the drivers on our health spending, which are substantial for us and all across Canada, which is why you hear news stories all the time about the Premier is negotiating with the federal government for an increased Canada Health Transfer. I, personally, am not a budget person. I do not see a way of reducing the deficit to zero and then working with supplementary appropriations when these are now all core services that we are funding. However, that is an amateur view, and Jeannie Mathison is a professional, so we should hear from her.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Ms. Mathison.

MS. MATHISON: Thank you. No pressure. To the Member's question around whether or not it would be appropriate to address the shortfalls through supplementary appropriation, I would suggest that the answer would be: supplementary appropriations are meant for unknown, uncertain, like in a given year, and authorities have been experiencing these deficits for some time now and that is the reason why they are budgeting for them. We do come forward on behalf of the authority in instances where they have budgeted, and we can very clearly articulate where they have overspent their budget. For example, medical travel, we typically come forward for that because we can very clearly lay out what they had budgeted and what was to be spent and then forecast; similarly, with adult southern placements, for example. In those cases, yes, the department does support the authority in going for supplementary funding, but generally, we are at the state of still not understanding all of the drivers of the deficit. Until we are at that point, we cannot address those funding shortfalls. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Thank, Mr. Chair. Yes. I guess that makes sense to me. We are not going to cut off core services anytime, but we have a yearly fund of fires to supplementary appropriation, which can range from \$4- to \$50 million and have large fluctuations. I think probably there is some room to have that conversation later. However, I wanted to switch to, I believe this is the funding for the Office of the Public Guardian. Can I get a clarification of whether there has been an increase to the Office of

the Public Guardian? I note the department has a goal of decreasing the wait list for the number of people for guardianship. There is also some talk of reforming the act. Some people with disabilities do not presently qualify for guardianship, and they probably should. I think there is quite a bit of work and that this backlog has been a long time coming. Have we increased the budget for the Office of the Public Guardian somewhere in this \$337 million? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. JULIE GREEN: Yes, thank you. The Office of the Public Guardian is actually in adult support services, and the staff there is the public guardian and an assistant. I don't think there is a budget increase, other than through the collective agreement, for this office in this fiscal year, but I will just turn to Ms. Mathison for additional information. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you. Ms. Mathison.

MS. MATHISON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. No, there is no increase for the Office of the Public Guardian in this budget. Thank you.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would like to see an increase for the Office the Public Guardian, but I guess I am even more concerned in looking at the business plan. We have asked them to do quite a bit of work, and they are already backlogged in getting people into guardianship. Is the department, somewhere else in this budget, providing policy support to that office so that they are not tasked with decreasing their wait list and completely reforming public guardianship? Are we providing policy support? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you. I think that they were doing intake through contract services. I don't know if that's still the case, because that detail isn't on this page, but let me ask Ms. Mathison if that is the case. The Deputy Minister... [Microphone turned off]

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

MR. COOPER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. We have been, for the last number of years, providing some in-kind support through staff and actually assigned staff, a couple of years ago, to participate in helping the office find some process improvements to

streamline processes. We continue to have staff members who are supporting the office with their time. That's how we have been dealing with some of the workload issues. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. There is a lot of work that needs to be done there, and if the department has been providing it in kind or through contract services or just leading the support, perhaps an internal reallocation to actually give them another staff person is long overdue, especially if we are going to meet the business plan goal of lowering that wait list. I wanted to move on to the FASD diagnostic clinic that MLA Cleveland started on. This is another one of those areas. Can I get the total budget of the FASD diagnostic clinic and whether there has been any increase to that? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. JULIE GREEN: I have to find out which category it is in. Maybe it would be more efficient to ask Ms. Mathison to answer this question. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Ms. Mathison.

MS. MATHISON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I don't have the details on the exact budget number for the FASD clinic. There were resources added to the department's budget a couple years back to increase the capacity there, but the exact budget amount would be a budget of the authority. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. Is this the part of the budget where midwifery services are found? Thanks.

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

HON. JULIE GREEN: Yes. Apparently, this is where they are found.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. This sort of goes back to my colleague from Yellowknife North, not knowing where to ask questions with this department the way that the budget is set out. I will stop there. Is there any funding in here to carry forward the implementation of the territorial midwifery program? Thank you.

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

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you. If I recall correctly, there is an intention to hire another person who will carry out the planning that has started for expanding that service, but for certainty on that, I will ask the deputy minister if he could speak to it. Thank you.

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

MR. COOPER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. There is funding in this budget for midwifery, obviously. We have a territorial manager that was hired in March of 2020 and is currently engaged in design work to help build the vision for the territorial program, lay the foundation for the midwifery teams to come, and we do have recruitment ongoing for a midwifery position in Yellowknife. Job evaluation is currently ongoing, but we expect that will be out soon. This is money that would have been in prior year allocations. What we are doing is, with the benefit of those resources, we will engage in a bit more planning over this year, which is a wise thing to do when you have new resources and the evolution of primary healthcare the way it has been. We are going to have an opportunity to revisit our business case, and we expect to have this work completed by May of this year.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair, and thanks for that information. The difficulty is that I see midwifery services as a long-term investment that will help us avoid costs, actually, down the road. I think this is probably the 17th time I've raised it in five years. I had understood that we were kind of stalled, and there wasn't any new funding in here. I think that's what I had confirmed. This work to sort of reassess where we're at and have a more focused plan or whatever moving forward, that's only going to happen in May. Is it the intention, then, of the department to bring forward a supplementary appropriation to start to complete the territorial program? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I don't know about a supplementary appropriation. It maybe could be included in the next budget. There is actually quite a bit of work that needs to be done here to make sure that we are taking into account the primary healthcare reform and the teams that are being created, that we take into account the number of staff who are currently involved in births who are not midwives, that we look at our

sustainability plan, that we continue to budget for a deficit in the health authorities. It sounds fussy, but there is a lot of work still to be done. In order to get more information to you about that work, we have committed to updating the 2017 plan by June. We have implemented five of 10 recommendations. There are five left. We want to give you that information to understand what work is still required before we start hiring midwives proper to deliver that service. We don't have questions about the value of the service. That is not a question. The question is how we are going to resource it. Thank you.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks. I appreciate that. The problem is this is the way to resource it. We are dealing with it right now. If we don't have any money built in even in a contingency kind of way, I am worried it is going to slip again. That's the dilemma I'm in as a Regular MLA. I am sure we are going to continue this discussion, but I did want to move on to the stabilization plan for the NTHSSA.

I raised this with the Minister, and my mind's kind of fuzzy; it might have been yesterday, and the Minister said that the plan was really not a public document. It was really an operational sort of document. The offer had been made to us as Regular MLAs to get a briefing on it, which I am happy to accept. It's out there in the public that there is a \$120 million deficit, and my view is that this is chronic underfunding of the system over many, many years. This is not something that just kind of cropped up in the last two or three years. I don't understand the secrecy around this plan and why we wouldn't be able to share parts or all of it with the public, to be more transparent and open about how we're going to try to address this as a government. What is the Minister prepared to do to try to make this a more transparent process? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you. The Member is correct. I did say that it's an operational plan, I did say that I would brief the committee, and I did say that it would not be made public as a plan itself. I think that, once the plan has been made operational and we have a better understanding of what the cost drivers are and what kinds of changes need to be made, then you will be hearing about those specific changes. For example, we just had a conversation about what is a core service and what isn't a core service. I think that that's the kind of conversation that we're going to want to have with the residents of the NWT, so that there is an opportunity for input and buy-in to the work that

we're undertaking. However, that is what we're offering. It is not a secret process. It is the way that the authority is looking at stabilizing its finances, and that's not a public process, any more than us having a look at how you manage your family finances is a public process.

We need to be able to do that work and then come with the findings and ensure that people understand what those are, what kinds of compromises need to be made. Make no mistake, there will need to be compromises. We cannot continue to increase the deficit at the level that we've been increasing it. We are going to have to make some tough choices here, and there will be unhappy people. I absolutely guarantee it. I'm not happy about that, but in order for us to make the coat out of the cloth we have, we're going to have to cut some things. What is that going to look like? Honestly, I don't know. I want to hear from you about what you think it is going to be, but adding on and adding on and adding on is just simply not in the works. Thank you.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. Yes, I appreciate what the Minister said, but if you want the public to have confidence in what we're doing, we need to open the books a little more, I think. This is not about me straightening out my finances; this is about public money, and where difficult decisions have to be made, the public has a right to weigh in about how those decisions are made. I think we've got to find a way to allow for some public input and greater transparency in the whole effort moving forward. I think that's all I've got on this, Mr. Chair, but I'd like to move that the chair rise and report progress. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): The motion is in order. The motion is non-debatable. All those in favour? Opposed? One opposed. The motion is carried.

---Carried

I will now rise and report progress.

Report of Committee of the Whole

MR. SPEAKER: May I have the report of the Committee of the Whole, please? Member for Hay River South.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Your committee has been considering Bill 3, An Act to Amend the Public Highways Act; Committee Report 8-19(2), Standing Committee on Rules and Procedures Report on Motion 5-19(2): Referral of Point of Privilege Raised by Member for Monfwi on March 10, 2020; Committee Report 9-19(2),

Standing Committee on Rules and Procedures Report on the Chief Electoral Officer's Report on the Administration of the 2019 Territorial General Election; 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; and Tabled Document 286-19(2), Main Estimates 2021-2022, and would like to report progress, and Mr. Speaker, I move that the report of Committee of the Whole be concurred with. Thank you.

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

---Carried

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

Orders of the Day

DEPUTY CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Rutland): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Orders of the day for Friday, February 26, 2021, at 10:00 a.m.:

1. Prayer
2. Ministers' Statements
3. Members' Statements
4. Returns to Oral Questions
5. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery
6. Acknowledgements
7. Oral Questions
8. Written Questions
9. Returns to Written Questions
10. Replies to Commissioner's Address
11. Petitions
12. Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills
13. Reports of Standing and Special Committees

14. Tabling of Documents
15. Notices of Motion
16. Motions
17. Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills
18. First Reading of Bills
19. Second Reading of Bills
20. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters
 - Bill 3, An Act to Amend the Public Highways Act
 - Committee Report 8-19(2), Standing Committee on Rules and Procedures Report on Motion 5-19(2): Referral of Point of Privilege Raised by Member for Monfwi on March 10, 2020
 - Committee Report 9-19(2), Standing Committee on Rules and Procedures Report on the Chief Electoral Officer's Report on the Administration of the 2019 Territorial General Election
 - 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 286-19(20), Main 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. This House stands adjourned until Friday, February 26, 2021, at 10:00 a.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 6:02 p.m.

