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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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Ms. Lesa Semmler
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YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**Friday, February 26, 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. Norn, Mr. O'Reilly, Ms. Semmler, Hon. R.J. Simpson, Mr. Rocky Simpson, Hon. Shane Thompson, Hon. Caroline Wawzonek

The House met at 10:02 a.m.

Prayer

---Prayer

SPEAKER (Hon. Frederick Blake Jr.): Thank you. Item 2, Ministers' statements. Honourable Premier.

Ministers' Statements

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 121-19(2):
COMMUNICATIONS AND COMMUNITY
ENGAGEMENT COVID-19 COORDINATING
SECRETARIAT

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Mr. Speaker, in a crisis, consistent and timely communications are crucial. The Government of the Northwest Territories understands the critical role of communications as part of our pandemic response. It helps create safer behaviours, greater community solidarity, and, in the end, improved health outcomes.

Mr. Speaker, we have said right from the start of the pandemic that our priority is to protect the health and well-being of residents. That is why the COVID-19 Coordinating Secretariat is using every tool at their disposal to connect with residents across the Northwest Territories. In the early days of the pandemic, we launched aggressive public outreach and advertising campaigns aimed at engaging NWT residents, from our youngest to our elders. These campaigns continue today, evolving as the pandemic changes. Our comprehensive social media strategy allows our message to reach over 20,000 residents every week on Facebook and Twitter. Radio reaches residents in 31 of our 33 communities and is critical to respecting valued oral traditions. We are running radio ads, many translated into Indigenous languages, seven days a week. We have been investing in communications, but we have also relied on the northern media to share our message. Through regular media briefings and a relationship built on timely information sharing, residents are kept informed. I want to thank the media for their efforts as you have played an important part in our success.

An important part of how our government operates is building strong partnerships with Indigenous leadership and community governments. These relationships support our ability to educate and inform residents. The Chief Public Health Officer, the Minister of Health and Social Services, the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs, and I meet regularly with Indigenous leaders and community governments to share information and ensure we are hearing their concerns and working closely with them. Meetings like this are part of our communication efforts and play a valuable role. These partnerships allow us to understand what residents want to know so that we can better target our communications efforts and ensure Indigenous leaders and community governments can support their residents and help limit the spread of COVID-19.

Mr. Speaker, last month's COVID-19 outbreak in Fort Liard reinforced the importance of partnerships and communications at work in a pandemic response. Key information that residents needed to know was written in plain language and shared with community leadership, first responders, and health officials to ensure message consistency. A door-to-door campaign was launched and written materials in English and Dene Zhatie were left with residents. We ran radio ads and designed posters in both languages. The Government of the Northwest Territories partnered with CKLB Radio to run a programming, social media, and voicemail call-in campaign called Dear Fort Liard that inspired hundreds of people across the territory to post videos and messages in support of residents.

Mr. Speaker, just as important as our communications efforts is our approach to community engagement. In early January, we changed our approach to paying for isolation centres after hearing from Members of the Legislative Assembly, Indigenous leaders, community governments, businesses, and residents that we needed to reduce these costs. In response to this feedback, the Isolation Centre Policy was revised to require residents to pay for stays related to discretionary travel, which has reduced costs.

The secretariat recently coordinated check-in meetings with community government officials and key Government of the Northwest Territories departments to provide information about the GNWT's pandemic response and vaccines. These discussions also include pandemic planning in each community, potential funding opportunities, and community concerns. In response to suggestions made by community representatives at these meetings, the secretariat has produced a comprehensive community toolkit. This toolkit contains posters and plain-language fact sheets on recovering at home, safety protocols for out-of-territory essential workers, self-isolation, and many other topics. This toolkit is available online and has been provided to community governments and the Northwest Territories Association of Communities.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, the Government of the Northwest Territories has been working with the NWT and Yellowknife Chambers of Commerce and NWT Tourism to address some of the concerns of the business community. In response to suggestions raised by the Business Advisory Council, the secretariat issued a request for tender for isolation centre services, which resulted in the issuance of 76 standing offer agreements for these support services.

Mr. Speaker, every day, we see the success of our communications and engagement work in changing behaviours. This work has normalized wearing masks and keeping a safe distance from others. People understand the importance of self-isolation and following public health orders, and vaccine uptake is high. We are travelling less and staying home more. The business community has adapted, with many offering new and innovative services. We are all safer as a result of our collective efforts to limit the spread of COVID-19 to protect our loved ones and our communities. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Honourable Premier. Ministers' statements. Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs.

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 122-19(2):
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES ASSOCIATION OF
COMMUNITIES' ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Good morning, Mr. Speaker. I'd just like to start off by wishing you a happy birthday.

Mr. Speaker, the Northwest Territories Association of Communities, or NWTAC, represents all 33 of the Northwest Territories' incorporated communities. The NWTAC promotes the exchange of information among community governments, working together to reach collective goals for our communities across the Northwest Territories.

Together, they are an effective and passionate voice for community governments.

This year, due to the pandemic, the 2021 Annual General Meeting will be carried out virtually from February 25th to the 27th. If ever we had any question about the importance of building strong relationships with our community governments, this past year has clearly demonstrated how inter-reliant we are on each other. There has been a tremendous effort to work collaboratively and creatively to protect our residents and their communities against the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. These partnerships we have built are stronger because of the development of these relationships with our community governments. This year's AGM is another opportunity to further continue to strengthen those relationships.

Mr. Speaker, this is a time of complex changes in the world, especially with the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic that we are all experiencing. This meeting remains an excellent networking, information-sharing, and collaboration to achieve our mutual goals and provide community governments with a platform to focus on common issues as well as to provide feedback on Government of the Northwest Territories programs and services. I want to congratulate the Northwest Territories Association of Communities on their ability to continue with the AGM, ensuring that information continues to be shared and the work toward common goals continues to be a priority, while doing so in a manner that keeps everyone safe.

The virtual agenda for this year's NWTAC AGM is set to include many interactive sessions as well as conducting their organization's core business, such as approval of financial statements and budgets as well as the election of new directors. In addition, members will have an opportunity to approve their 2021 resolutions as well as reaffirming the resolutions from previous years. One of the highlights of every NWTAC AGM is the ever-popular open discussions with the Premier and Cabinet. I know I am looking forward to these discussions, as I am sure my colleagues are, as well. It is an excellent opportunity to hear directly from the leadership of our communities on their priorities and their concerns. This better enables the government to make informed decisions that reflect on-the-ground realities in our communities.

On behalf of the Cabinet, I wish the NWT Association of Communities well with their upcoming AGM. I look forward to being part of these discussions and hearing from communities to better understand their priorities and concerns. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

Members' Statements

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON CONTRACTS FOR NORTHERN BUSINESSES

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It has been a difficult year for many NWT residents and businesses, and as the vaccine is rolling out, it appears we are now moving in the right direction. It is now time to place our economy front and centre with the goal of ensuring northern businesses are provided every opportunity to be successful.

Mr. Speaker, the issue of economic recovery for the Northwest Territories has been a topic of discussion and rightly so. As such, my immediate concern is how this government will ensure that we can push out shovel-ready projects in businesses big and small that will provide benefit to northern businesses this construction season.

Mr. Speaker, northern-owned businesses are looking for our support when it comes to tendering and awarding contracts. It is important that this government uses the tools at its disposal to make every effort to award contracts to northern businesses. Whether we are using sole sourcing, obtaining quotes only from northern businesses, negotiated contracts, standing offer agreements, Business Incentive Policy or manufacturing policy, we must pull out all the stops and do everything possible to support northern businesses.

Mr. Speaker, everything that can be said about the need for this government to provide support to northern businesses has been said many times. What we now need is a commitment from this government not to give continued lip service to our real northern businesses but to provide our northern businesses with substantial work during the upcoming construction season. I do understand we are going through a procurement review process, but in the interim, we need to continue to find ways that support northern businesses in order to allow them to survive this pandemic. For Hay River, our businesses are the backbone of the community, and I expect that is true to many of the regional and small communities, and that is why we have to champion them. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I will have questions for the Minister of Finance.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON CULTURAL TRAINING

MR. BONNETROUGE: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. I would like to bring attention to an all-important issue facing our communities. It must be understood that First Nations peoples have faced and continue to face many battles dealing with land rights issues, housing, education, jobs, and the residential school legacy. We must also be mindful that the Liberal government agenda of 1969 in which they wanted to wipe out the Indian in our people. First Nations people have faced many obstacles and will continue to do so where as long as this government and other governments ignore the facts and the plight of First Nations in this territory and this country.

Mr. Speaker, many GNWT employees are being hired from out-of-the-territory to deliver programs and services for many First Nations peoples and communities of this North. The majority get placed into our small communities without a thought as to who they are actually dealing with. They do not know the struggles of our people, how we operate as a family system, how we operate as a community. This issue and practice has become common place with this government. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Deh Cho. Members' statements. Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON AFTERCARE

MS. SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The time most individuals spend in a southern residential treatment facility represents a small period of time when you compare the many years a person has taken to get themselves to the recovery stage. Going to a treatment facility is the biggest and most important step for many in their journey to recovery from addiction, but it is only one step that is part of their healing journey. When we look at our communities, we lack the supports required to help them remain in recovery. This creates endless cycles of homelessness, family violence, and trips to southern treatment facilities. The government's current approach to addiction treatment stops at step one. Sending people to receive treatment but does nothing to ensure people remain in recovery when they come home. This has been a longstanding barrier for as long as anyone can remember.

Mr. Speaker, this is an example of a poor investment, a one-off, fragmented, and unsustainable approach that demonstrates little progress. We are spending the money for people to go out to treatment, but we need to continue that investment in aftercare. If people have nowhere to live and there's no way they can maintain any type of sobriety, no amount of on-the-land programming

or community counselling will help. NWT research on family violence, integrated case management, and people leaving correctional facilities all tell us the issue that is a lack of client-centred supports, a lack of suitable housing, and more resources to stay in housing are needed. Good investments that have seen progress focus on providing community-based recovery and support services. It moves the focus away from one-off crises and emergency management responses towards longer term community-based addiction prevention and support.

Mr. Speaker, we know lack of programming that combines client-centred services and housing is at the centre of the long-standing challenges. Focused investments into individuals that support them to remain addiction-free according to their needs has demonstrated longer term and better outcomes. Not addressing this issue is what's holding the NWT government and our residents back from progress in their addictions. This is evident in our NWT statistics related to addictions that demonstrate these issues are growing. They are not getting better. Recovery starts with support. Permanent housing is the most important aspect of recovery to address these addictions. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes. Members' statements. Member for Great Slave.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES MONTH

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to fulfill a promise I made at the Dene Nahjo Forum while still on the campaign trail. In honour of Indigenous Languages Month, I would like to attempt to speak some of the language of my colleague from Monfwi. [Translation] Good morning. I am grateful to be here on this beautiful day to work with my colleagues for the betterment of the people of the Northwest Territories. [Translation ends] What I tried to say was: Good morning. I am grateful to be here on this this beautiful day to work with my colleagues for the betterment of the people of the Northwest Territories.

Today, I also wanted to represent the Indigenous people of the area in which I was born, the Sto:lo of southwestern B.C., so I wear a coat designed by Haida artist Dorothy Grant.

February is Indigenous Languages Month in the Northwest Territories. We are once again unique in that we are the only political region in Canada, which recognizes 11 official languages, nine of which are Indigenous: Chipewyan, Cree, Gwich'in, Inuinnaqtun, Inuktitut, Inuvialuktun, North Slavey, South Slavey, and Tlicho.

Indigenous Languages Month is another opportunity for the Northwest Territories to celebrate our unique culture and heritage. It is important that we preserve and revitalize Indigenous languages through their use and education as well as implementing new technology to ensure these languages will survive for generations to come.

Between 1989 and 2014, the percentage of territorial residents aged 15 years and over who spoke their Indigenous language declined to 17.1 percent. Currently, that number stands at 38.5 percent speaking their traditional language, and while this increase is great news, there is still a lot of work to be done to ensure northern Indigenous languages are no longer at risk of endangerment. We must continue to support and fund language revitalization programs to increase the use of Indigenous languages by all of our residents.

One such program is ECE's recently launched Mentor-Apprentice Program, or MAP. The goal of MAP is to connect those wanting to learn an Indigenous language with a fluent Indigenous speaker for instruction. The MAP is recognized worldwide as a successful method of reviving endangered languages. This program provides over 100 hours of training for the apprentice and the mentor, and compensation is based on the completion of progress reports, incentivising both parties to be successful.

Another strategy we need to explore is the use of partnerships with established technological giants, such as Google Translate, to make use of existing services, platforms, and apps to ensure northern language is captured digitally in order to aid in its preservation. I will have questions for the Minister of ECE in this area at the appropriate time. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON INTERNET ACCESS FOR LEARNING

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. I want to talk about adequate and affordable access to Internet services and the barriers facing students and families, especially our post-secondary distance learners.

First, on the elementary and secondary school side, in a recent Yellowknife school board meeting, it was revealed that the Internet connectivity volume shared by the three boards and Aurora College is grossly inadequate, especially given distance learning requirements imposed by the COVID pandemic. Astonishing as it sounds, YCS, YK1,

Aurora College, and CSFTNO share an Internet connection of 300 megabytes per second provided by the GNWT. Just for context, that's about equivalent to your cable modem at home. This is for four entire school organizations. This is a totally inadequate allotment, considering that there are 1700 users in YCS alone, and this usage is not streaming content or videos, just for day-to-day operations.

Even without the increased distance demands of COVID-19, providing students adequate opportunity to learn and use technology is an essential part of modern education. Failure to provide needed technical infrastructure puts our students at a disadvantage compared to learners in other jurisdictions and even within communities here. Inadequate connectivity was rated in a recent teacher survey conducted by YCS as the number one problem affecting performance and wellness. The school board also noted that routine service calls to GNWT's Technology Service Centre were not resolved in a timely manner, which adds to frustration with teachers and students. Accessibility and affordability present further problems for distance education. Even though so-called unlimited bandwidth is coming to northern communities, the \$100-plus cost of adequate home plans creates a digital divide in communities, including Yellowknife.

Likewise, students of post-secondary distance programs face increasing Internet charges that can be crippling. Although there is now a technology support grant as part of Student Financial Assistance, it is not adequate to allow for the access that students require. I will have questions for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment on putting our students on adequate and affordable technical footing. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON MEDICAL NURSING STAFF RESPONSE TO COMMUNITY EMERGENCIES

MR. NORN: Marsi cho, Mr. Speaker. I want to talk about a serious procedural loophole within the Department of Health and Social Services that I believe is endangering many Northerners in our small communities. That, Mr. Speaker, is that many medical nursing staff in our communities are prohibited from responding to emergency medical calls. This is a serious concern.

Mr. Speaker, this procedural gap ultimately showed its shortfalls in the last year alone in my riding. In June of 2020, we lost an elder in Deninu Kue who

was in medical distress, and the local nursing staff were bound by policy or procedure and were not able to respond. The elder in question was less than a few hundred metres from the local health centre. More recently, Mr. Speaker, we lost another resident who could very well have been still with us if there was a swift response to attend to their emergency. Again, there was valuable time lost because of response and transportation of a patient to the health centre.

Mr. Speaker, there is a glaring gap within the Department of Health and Social Services. If you were in a small community and called 911 right now for a medical emergency, you would need to be transported by a friend or RCMP, for example, to get the medical attention you would need. That's a problem. I do understand the need to protect our local medical staff to prevent them from being put into compromising situations. However, I strongly feel that Health and Social Services needs to step up their game and work with our communities to help prepare them in what to do in the event of an emergency.

COVID, I understand, has impacted many of our government initiatives, but we still need to do our very best to ensure that our residents get the best service and attention they can get. Mr. Speaker, I will have questions for the Minister of Health and Social Services at the appropriate time. Marsi cho.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Tu Nedhe-Willideh. Members' statements. Member for Thebacha.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON FORT SMITH CHURCH COMMUNITY

MS. MARTSELOS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today, I would like to use my Member's statement to thank and acknowledge the church community in Fort Smith. Mr. Speaker, there are three churches in my community: the Anglican, the Catholic, and the Pentecostal. The church community in Fort Smith has become a core constituency of the town itself. The church community contributes to the entirety of the community of Fort Smith. They want Fort Smith to thrive and do well, along with the rest of the NWT. The church community contributes to local events, and they share their building space with other organizations or groups when needed, such as Alcoholics Anonymous or other recovery programs.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the church community for all the work they do to help support and contribute to our community as a whole. I hold this community very close to my heart. It's important to remember that all members of any churches, or any other spiritual or religious sects, are also members of our community, too. They are our neighbours, our

friends, our co-workers, and the like. For these reasons, I thank the church community for their dedication, hard work, and the spiritual aspects of serving the amazing community of Fort Smith. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON LOWERING LEGAL VOTING AGE

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For those of you in this House who grow tired of hearing from me all of the time, I would like to try something different today and read an essay by Raven Mudford, a student at Ecole Sir John Franklin, who has been advocating to lower the voting age.

"Teenagers deserve the right to vote. They deserve the opportunity to have a say in how they enter the world of adulthood. Why, in the context of voting, do we see them as children, but in others 'young adults'? We trust them to enter the workforce, drive cars, take care of children, protest, but not influence their futures?"

"Many 16-year-olds have jobs, and as a result, pay taxes. That alone is a valid argument: no taxation without representation.

"There is a perception of apathy among teenagers, lowering the voting age would fix this. If teenagers really are prone to rebel around the age of 16, we'd see them research against their parents' points of view and lead to them making decisions of their own.

"Social media gives teenagers an early exposure to these topics, both to extremists, to people who oppose their viewpoints, those with unique experiences, and those whose ideologies align with their own. Teenagers often engage in online debates about politics. Teenagers are willing to do the research if they know it makes a difference.

"Young adults, teenagers, adolescents, no matter what you call them, deserve the right to vote. At the age of 16, they start thinking about post-secondary options and a future which will be affected by whoever is elected. We are told that the youth are the future, but when it comes down to it, they are deprived of the capability to influence it. It is so important to teach youth about politics and to give them the opportunity to vote in elections. Their futures are at stake."

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank Raven Mudford for writing that essay and for all of her political advocacy. I could not agree with her more. Places

that have lowered the voting age increase voter turnout for life. In fact, parents of teenagers who are able to vote vote more themselves. Mr. Speaker, I think a great place for us to start is our own school board elections, which have oversight of many of our teenagers and have a very low turnout. I will have questions for the appropriate Minister. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON EULOGY FOR JANA PANAKTALOK

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today, I want to give my condolences for Jana Blow in her passing in Tuktoyaktuk last week. Speaking to her mom, Barbara Panaktalok, she is survived by Barbara; her brothers, Ellery, Ross, Darcy, and Dale; her sisters, Lennette, Tina, Amanda, and Eva; her two daughters, Dana and Bobby Joe; and her grandchildren, Ricky Lee, Nicky Anne Kikoak, Jared Adam Kupon, Jolena, Selena, Marie Mabel, Jace, Anne, Joe Dale, Josie, Amelia Lena, Haisley, and Joe Matthew. Jana leaves behind nine grandchildren. She is predeceased by her dad, Joe Blow, a well-respected elder, and her sister Veronica. Jana will be missed and not forgotten. Thoughts and prayers are with her and her family and the people of Tuktoyaktuk. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Nunakput. Our thoughts are with the family and the community, as well. Members' statements. Member for Nahendeh.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON BIRTHDAY WISHES FOR SPEAKER

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is kind of just coming off from my chest here. Today is your very special day, and I greatly appreciate that you are here today with us to make sure we keep the Legislative Assembly running. I would like to ask our Members here to all get up and wish you a very happy birthday and maybe sing you the song. No singing? No singing, okay. No singing, but anyway, we wish you very much a very happy birthday, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

MR. SPEAKER: Mahsi. Mahsi. I was going to allow it today, but... just kidding.

---Laughter

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 598-19(2): CONTRACTS WITH NORTHERN BUSINESSES

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The questions I have are for the Minister of Finance. Can the Minister confirm if her department is working with other departments to ensure northern businesses are provided preference and every opportunity to participate in projects this upcoming construction season? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Hay River South. Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank, Mr. Speaker. For the upcoming season, all businesses will be subject to the existing processes that we have, which are meant to support northern businesses, including the BIP, the Business Incentive Policy, and all of the current procurement processes that exist. To the extent that we want to improve and change those processes, we did accelerate the procurement review. That is underway, and one of the very questions we are looking at is whether there are new, additional, different ways to better support those businesses. While, if there are improvements, they will not necessarily happen in time for this season, we do have some existing processes in place and are looking constantly to improve them. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Can the Minister confirm if her department in cooperation with other departments has identified any projects that can be considered Aboriginal set-asides and negotiated?

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Under the current system, having set-asides is not one of the current tools we necessarily have. We did, of course, not too long ago negotiate the MoU with the Tlicho Government, which does include some enhancement of the way in which procurement is done on Tlicho lands. I know that there has already been quite a lot of interest from other Indigenous governments who also had economic measures in their agreements, so those discussions are underway. At present, the tools still are what the tools still are. We are, however, again in the course of the procurement review asking that very question: should there be a different way of having procurement done for Indigenous governments in the territory? Again, I am happy to have the questions asked, and I hope that in this process we will be able to identify if there is a better way of doing business.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Can the Minister confirm if her department in cooperation with other departments looked at the structure of the work and how it can be tendered so smaller businesses can benefit? What I am asking is: can contracts be broken into smaller parts to benefit smaller businesses?

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Yes, I can say certainly that Procurement Shared Services under the Department of Finance really assists other departments. The other departments are really the clients of Procurement Shared Services, but those conversations and those decisions around what is the best way to undergo a procurement, what is the best way to advance a project, including whether or not the contract can be broken up, that rests with the home department that is responsible for the project. They then work with Procurement Shared Services to do the procurement of it. However, that exact conversation of how to do it, how to best serve the businesses, that is a conversation that is happening. It is going to continue to happen, and Procurement Shared Services will very happily then enact whatever those decisions are. The short answer is yes, but that is the long answer of how.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the Minister for those answers since I only gave her the questions a few minutes ago. This question here, maybe she will not have the numbers at her fingertips, but can the Minister confirm: what is the estimated total budget for projects this construction season? Thank you.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Our 2021-2022 capital budget is over \$500 million, including a budget for the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation; in 2020-2021, our capital spend was already \$293 million, so money is getting out the door. There were some challenges last year, no doubt, with COVID and some of the challenges that would have imposed in terms of supply, in terms of exemptions for people moving in and around the territory. The capital budget we have now is significant. All departments are very conscious of the fact that, number one, we need our infrastructure to grow and, number two, we want to support northern businesses. With a large budget on the way and this spring season certainly coming down the pipeline, I am confident that we will be seeing increases in spending in terms of our procurement and our capital over the next few months. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 599-19(2):
CULTURAL AWARENESS TRAINING

MR. BONNETROUGE: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. I recently had a conversation with the chief of Deh Gah Got'ie First Nations at Fort Providence regarding cultural awareness of the health centre staff. The chief has stated that he has no faith in what they do, stating, "They do not understand us. They are going strictly by the book." This is alarming, especially when you are dealing with First Nations peoples. Can the Minister of Health and Social Services commit to providing cultural awareness training to all existing staff and new hires to health centres in the territory? Mahsi.

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

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have a Cultural Safety Action Plan in effect at this time, and there have been a number of pilot projects that have determined what the best method is of providing this information to Health and Social Services staff. Now that there have been 13 of these pilots that have taken place, there is a model that has been settled on. It will be compiled into a framework, and the framework will be available to us this summer, the summer of 2021. I just want to say that, before it is rolled out to us, this framework will go to the NWT Health and Social Services Authority leadership council, which is comprised of community membership from wellness councils across the NWT, so there will be an opportunity for on-the-ground input into the cultural competency framework when it is finished. Thank you.

MR. BONNETROUGE: Mahsi to the Minister for that information. I'm not sure if I heard correctly if there was a timeline provided for providing the training on the ground.

HON. JULIE GREEN: I didn't provide a timeline because I don't have one.

MR. BONNETROUGE: I thank the Minister for that. We hope to see a timeline here soon because this is becoming an all-important issue for our communities in the Northwest Territories, especially dealing with First Nations peoples. I just wanted to relay some of my experiences. I had taken the cultural awareness training session for one day as an employee of the then Public Works and Services department. I found that this training was missing very valuable information, such as the history of the First Nations people in this country; the significance of the signing of the treaties; the residential school legacies and the continual generational traumas related to that; the 1969 Liberal Government White Paper; and a host of other facts that are significant in order to provide a cultural awareness training

program. That is very important to our northern people and our cultures. Can the Minister commit to consulting with First Nations as to the content of the cultural awareness training and possible moderators?

HON. JULIE GREEN: The Department of Health and Social Services is certainly on board with the "nothing about us without us" approach to providing services and policy frameworks and so on. It's my understanding that the cultural competency training within Health and Social Services has been led by Indigenous people who are of the NWT and are very alive to the history of Indigenous people in the NWT and want to represent that in the training that they're giving. As well, this week, many of my colleagues on this side and I participated in a video launching the cultural competency training that is going to be offered through the HR function of the Department of Finance called "Living Well Together." This training is another iteration of ensuring that people are well-informed about where they are and who they are living with in terms of their history and their culture.

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

MR. BONNETROUGE: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker, and I'd like to thank the Minister for her insight into the type of training. What I'm hearing is that it's just a generic document, generic training by some staff that we don't know who they are. Because each community has a unique history and situation with the people that they deal with, it's very important that we get the insight of the community leaders from every community. It's very important because we're dealing with a lot of things that this government pulls out and puts into our communities, such as Child and Family Services, where they are basically taking children away from our people. We have people within the community who are family members of those people who should have first rights of refusal to that child, when they are being taken away, so I really, really encourage the Minister to look into that aspect and to include every First Nation in this document. Mahsi.

HON. JULIE GREEN: I'm not sure what more I can do for the Member. The training that I just mentioned offered through HR is rolling out right away. It's mandatory. It has been developed by people who are Indigenous and knowledgeable in this field. I realize that what he is pointing to is some kind of a disconnect between what the government is developing and what is being received in the community. What I want to say is that everything is set to go, so this disconnect, I hope, will disappear very rapidly. If it comes to our next session and that hasn't happened, I would

certainly be interested to hear that from the Member. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 600-19(2):
TREATMENT FACILITIES

MS. SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Minister of Health and Social Services. She mentioned on Wednesday to my colleague that there are staff in place to connect people when exiting treatment with counselling and other support. How many staff are doing this important work, and where are they located? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes. Minister of Health and Social Services.

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For the most part, this is the continuum that happens with treatment. The access to treatment is facilitated by somebody who is a counsellor, often in the community counselling program. They could be in a non-profit like the Tree of Peace here in Yellowknife or in the Ingamo Hall in Inuvik, and as soon as that person is referred and accepted into treatment, there is an expectation that planning for after-care begins immediately. The counsellor will begin that after-care planning, will be in discussion with the client while that person is in treatment, and connect with that client as soon as they arrive back in their home community to ensure that there is a continuum of services to help that person to remain sober.

The Member talked quite a bit about housing. We know that housing is absolutely crucial to maintaining sobriety. Unfortunately, we don't have enough housing, as the Member well knows. We are looking at the possibility of creating transitional housing units for people who are coming out of facility-based treatment and other forms of treatment, but that is a commitment that will take some time to accomplish. Thank you.

MS. SEMMLER: Thank you to the Minister. Will the Minister commit to having staff being proactive? If they are government staff and this is the department that falls under her, they are the ones sending them out, or if we're paying for them to go out for treatment, proactive in connecting with all residents exiting treatment facilities to ensure that they have some sort of process and follow-up and support coming from treatment.

HON. JULIE GREEN: In order to go to facility-based addictions treatment, it's necessary for a referral to happen from somebody who is a physician, a counsellor, whether that's in the non-

profit sector, in the friendship centres, or within the community counselling program. There is a relationship that is established there that goes from the referral, includes check-ins during the treatment duration, and then follows up when the person exits. This is a program standard. This is not something that is optional for counsellors. We expect this to be done in each and every case. The thing that does happen, though, is that people come out of treatment and they don't take up that relationship again. They don't follow up with their appointments and other contacts that have been made on their behalf, and they are adults. They can make that choice. It's not a choice that we would want them to make. We want them to continue to be sober, having invested 28 or 48 days into their sobriety program. At the end of the day, they have to be committed to the follow-up, and we are there with the resources.

MS. SEMMLER: I thank the Minister for her answer. I can honestly say that, in theory, I know the department has a lot of good solutions, but at the frontline, these don't necessarily follow through. There are gaps. The worker that is on the other end who has nowhere to turn falls short. What is the process used by staff to support individuals leaving treatment who are facing homelessness or inadequate housing? Are staff able to act as pathfinders to navigate how to access housing programs?

HON. JULIE GREEN: The point of which they are looking for housing is really outside of the Department of Health and Social Services, but having said that, we do recognize the importance of housing to maintaining sobriety. The counsellor would connect people with the housing authority where, honestly, they're likely to see a huge waiting list, and also to connect them with Income Assistance, where they may be able to obtain market housing if it's available and have that paid for through the Income Assistance program, along with the other benefits that that program provides.

To me, this is a systemic wraparound that needs to happen with this person exiting treatment. We are certainly very central to this, but we also need supports from ECE and housing, for example, to provide the kind of support that we would like to see for people exiting facility-based treatment.

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

MS. SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know that the health department has recently launched a survey for people who have engaged in addictions services, and I am hoping that we do get some good responses as to what I have been saying. People who have gone through the system are feeling that they have been dropped, kind of, at the

end. Indigenous people, I have said it in this House before, have a hard time trusting health systems, have a hard time trusting the counselling system. It's not culturally appropriate to some. Some people, once they have sobered up, they don't want to go to the counsellor if it's somebody that they know. We have heard that time and time again. Mr. Speaker, will the Minister commit to ensuring there is some sort of wraparound support so that people are successful in their recovery? I hope that this survey will be able to help the Minister do this. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. JULIE GREEN: As I said, this is a continuum of services that is required by people who are accessing treatment. We are, as a department, actively involved with integrated case management and the integrated service delivery initiatives so that we are, in fact, able to provide this seamless care approach to people coming out of treatment.

With respect to the survey, I am delighted to say that, in the first week it was offered, we had in excess of 300 responses. We certainly look forward to more by the end of March. This survey is available in hard copy at the health centres, and it is also available online. It is specifically for people who have been to treatment and who have some thoughts about what was successful for them and what wasn't, and how they can identify gaps in services and give us advice about how to close those gaps. I am confident that this one-of-a-kind survey will provide us with some very valuable information. That information will be collated and put into a report, and that report is due at the end of May. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 601-19(2):

NORTHWEST TERRITORIES INDIGENOUS
LANGUAGES ON GOOGLE TRANSLATE

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Minister of ECE. When I was lucky enough to be able to still travel through Europe, I used Google Translate a lot to order food and not get myself lost. My question for the Minister: is there an online translation tool such as Google Translate to assist students in oral proficiency of Northwest Territories Indigenous languages? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Great Slave. Minister of Education, Culture and Employment.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Not that I am aware of. I know that there are a number of apps that can help students learn or act as dictionaries, but as for an online translator, I am not

aware of any. Specifically, Google does not have Indigenous languages in Google Translate. Thank you.

MS. NOKLEBY: It seems to me it would be very smart to approach a good, large company like Google who may want to look really good in helping a small jurisdiction want to preserve their language. I am going to follow up with the Minister on that. Google Translate does have 108 languages available on their site. Have we actually approached them at all to add our Indigenous languages to their site?

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: As for the GNWT, I don't believe that we have approached them. Perhaps other Indigenous governments have. I think that's an interesting idea. Just imagine if we could get nine Indigenous languages onto Google translate. That would be something. I look forward to following up with the Member on this one.

MS. NOKLEBY: Great. I'm a firm believer in not reinventing the wheel, and like I said, it could be a good PR move for Google. The deadline for the MAP applications that I mentioned in my statement was November 20, 2020. Can the Minister speak to the uptake of this program and what the success rate of applications was? How many pairs of mentors and apprentices do we have?

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: I believe this is the third year that the program has run. In the first year, there were 30 pairs. In the second year, there were 40 pairs. For this intake, there were 60 applications, and 40 were accepted. We have 40 pairs in the Mentor-Apprentice Program. It is very popular, and it is growing in popularity every year.

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

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I look forward to learning more about the mentorship program and its success. Lastly, I would like to know if there have been any modifications or issues with administering the program due to COVID-19 restrictions? Thank you.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: As far as I know, it hasn't been affected by COVID-19. It hasn't been put on hold. It is going forward full force, and it doesn't seem to be held up whatsoever. It's a solid program, and I think that the people who are participating in it genuinely enjoy it. The language speakers genuinely enjoy transferring their language. People enjoy learning it. I am hopeful that, for years to come, this is going to be a key part of our revitalization initiatives. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 602-19(2):
RESPONSE TO MEDICAL EMERGENCIES IN
SMALL COMMUNITIES

MR. NORN: Marsi cho, Mr. Speaker. Going back to my Member's statement about medical emergencies in small communities. It is a really growing concern. A lot of these times when our government workers have a way of doing the work, there is usually a written procedure or some sort of directive that is given to them to help guide them through their duties. My question for the Minister of Health and Social Services here is: will the Minister be able to share with us when and where a written procedure, or a procedure otherwise, was put in place that prevents community medical staff from responding to emergency calls outside of our local health centres? Marsi cho.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Tu Nedhe-Willideh. Minister of Health and Social Services.

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am just going to talk a little bit about the role of community health nurses, and then I will give the specific answer the Member asked for. It's important to know that community health nurses are not first responders. First responders have a different skill set. Community health nurses are not permitted, under NTHSSA policy dated November 6, 2019, to leave the healthcare centre in order to provide emergency services. What we do recognize that exists in many NWT communities is a gap in service that relates to ambulances and first responders. That involves going to the injured person and transporting that person from the site of the injury to the health centre. This is something that is in MACA's mandate. I know it's a long-standing problem that I have heard questions asked in the House during this sitting about, and my colleague has said that she is working on it.

I want to give a clarification that community health nurses do leave the health centre when it is their role to provide things like homecare and services to clients in their homes. This is non-emergency service. This would be scheduled service that relates to meeting the needs of people who can't meet them themselves on an ongoing basis, so of course, the community health nurses do leave the health centre to provide that service. The NTHSSA policy is dated November 6, 2019. There were some policies in place that were similar prior to the amalgamation of the health boards, and I am happy to provide the Member with a copy of that policy for him to review. Thank you.

MR. NORN: Yes, thank you very much for that. I'd like to take a look at that document. I think it's important that we have open lines communications with our small communities and our service on how we deal with these calls. Like I said, I want to make

sure that our residents get as much as we can out of our government departments. That leads to my next question: how do we increase community opportunities for first aid training or for first responder training in the NWT?

HON. JULIE GREEN: First aid training is within the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs, and I'm certainly interested in working with them to understand what it is they provide. At this point, it's not a Health and Social Services role, so I don't have the specifics the Member is looking for.

MR. NORN: I'm starting to get a little better, clearer picture right now. Maybe when I have time, maybe I will have some more questions for our Minister of MACA, but maybe I'm hoping the Minister could probably help, maybe answer, and shed some more light on this. Is the Minister able to answer if first aid or first responder training is tracked in the NWT at all, in any way, shape, or form?

HON. JULIE GREEN: This training is not provided within the Department of Health and Social Services or the health authorities, so I don't have the information the Member is asking for. He may be able to get that from MACA.

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

QUESTION 603-19(2):
LOWERING LEGAL VOTING AGE

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment who I know has plans to bring forward the Education Act, and as part of that, my question is: would he show support for students and allow them to vote in their school board elections at age 16? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Yellowknife North. Minister of Education, Culture and Employment.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This isn't something that's currently on the radar, but I'm not opposed to the idea. I think that it's not a bad idea, actually, allow having 16-year-olds vote for school board reps. That being said, there are implications in terms of administration. The DEA right now, they share their election with the municipalities, and so there are enumerations that are shared. You have to be a certain age to vote in a municipal election, and if now we're adding another cohort of people, there are those costs, as well. It's not like it's just something I can sign off and do. There're other acts involved, but that being said, I'm happy to have the discussion. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. JOHNSON: Yes, I hoped to also ask questions of the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs, so maybe if we change the enumeration there, then, they'll line up. I think the other option here would be to give the school boards the option of whether they want to lower it themselves and let them decide. As part of the Education Act, is the Minister willing to reach out to the DEAs and see if they have any input on lowering the voting age or any of the changes to how they run their elections?

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Yes, I can bring this up with the local school boards. I meet with the chairs of the DEAs and DECs on a regular basis, and we are soon to start engaging formally on the modernization of the Education Act. I will be engaging with them, and really, if anyone, any resident of the Northwest Territories thinks that this is a change that is worthwhile, then they can provide that input, as well. I'm not only asking the school boards; I'll ask anyone in the territory.

MR. JOHNSON: No further questions, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 604-19(2):
INTERNET ACCESS FOR LEARNING

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. My questions are for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. I noted in my statement that YK1, YCS, CSFTNO and Aurora College share the same meagre bandwidth through a data feed provided by GNWT for all four institutions. Can the Minister confirm that he's aware of this problem, and what is he doing about it? 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. I am aware that everyone in the territory has bandwidth issues. There are bandwidth issues here at the Legislative Assembly. There're bandwidth issues at my office in Hay River that's on the government Internet. There are bandwidth issues at my house. I know there's bandwidth issues, and yes, I'm aware that schools also have them. It's been brought to my attention. ECE works with the school boards and with the Department of Infrastructure as a facilitator because it's not ECE who operates the Internet, who invests in the infrastructure. That's a different department, but we do act as that intermediary, and we bring those concerns forward. I'd like to say the four schools in Yellowknife -- I'll leave it at that. There's some technical stuff I don't want to get into it because I

don't want to get it wrong, so I'll perhaps leave it for my colleague at another date. Thank you.

MR. O'REILLY: I want to thank the Minister. I know he's a fabulous facilitator, and I look forward to him working even harder on this issue. I mentioned dissatisfaction that has been expressed by teachers, the poor response times for Internet and technology issues that GNWT's supposed to help with. Will the Minister take this up with his colleague the Minister of Infrastructure and make sure that service affecting our educational needs receive the necessary attention?

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Already done.

MR. O'REILLY: I want to thank the Minister. I'm on a roll here. I better keep going. As bad as the situation may be here in Yellowknife, I'm sure it's much worse in other regions and communities, and it creates a real digital divide here. Can the Minister explain what his department is doing to ensure accessible and affordable Internet access for all of our students?

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: This is a topic discussed frequently around the Cabinet table. ECE doesn't have responsibility over this. Of course, the Minister of Finance is often answering questions about this in the House. The Minister of Infrastructure is responsible for the government infrastructure, but I have conversations with both of them. At the national level, I have conversations with the other Ministers of education of Canada, and we've approached the federal government about the need for investments in broadband infrastructure. The Student Financial Assistance program has provided a monthly technology grant of \$100 to help students access funding. Students who attend Aurora College were eligible for a one-time grant to help set up Internet.

There's a number of different things that we're doing. We also need to look at how Internet is being used in schools. We need to monitor it. There is hardware in place for that, and I think we can be more effective with using that. We also understand that you don't need Internet for everything in schools. Yes, it's great, but I think most people in here got through school without using the Internet in every single class, for better or for worse, but it can be done. Through blended learning, we can also mitigate some of those challenges.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. I want to thank the Minister for that. Sure. I recognize that this issue cuts across many departments, but this is becoming a real issue for low-income families and post-secondary students. Unless our

students have access and affordable Internet, education is not universal. I want to ask the Minister, within his authority, what is he doing to remove barriers related to Internet accessibility and affordability for families and students? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: I would just be repeating everything I said. Maybe I jumped the gun and answered the question too early, but the Member can refer to my last answer. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 605-19(2):
LOWERING VOTING AGE FOR MUNICIPAL
ELECTIONS

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think I got a bit of a win from the Minister of ECE about looking into lowering the voting age for the Education Act, which covers our school boards, but I think this step is also appropriate at the community level. My question is for the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs. Is she willing to support our youth and lower the voting age for municipal elections? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Yellowknife North. Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs.

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Since the voting age was reduced in Canada in 1970 from age 21 to 18, there have been many attempts to lower the age voting group, including recent discussions nationally about the federal elections. In the Northwest Territories, this has not been brought to us as a concern from NWTAC, but it doesn't stop us from having that discussion. I will be meeting with NWTAC this weekend. We will be discussing topics around elections in the Northwest Territories, and I will bring this up at that table. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. JOHNSON: Yes, I have canvassed this with a few mayors and a few communities, and I think there is a mixed response. I think one of the solutions there is just simply give our municipalities more control over their elections and more control over residency requirements, age requirements, or how they want to run their own elections. As part of bringing this forward to the NWTAC, and I'm happy to hear that from the Minister, can the Minister also bring forward lowering the voting age to 16 or at least giving municipalities an option to make that choice themselves?

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: I will bring this up at the table, looking at lowering the voting age to 16, but I

also want to just inform the Member that, as the Northwest Territories, we do recognize northern youth in politics. We do have the Northern Youth Parliament program here at the Legislative Assembly, and also MACA does provide leadership opportunities for our surrounding communities. Not only that, we do also get into the schools, as well, and look at how we can further support our young people and encourage them into career choices and also looking at the appropriate programming. I am open to looking at innovative, different ideas and looking at pursuing that. Should our youth want to pursue further education in political science, maybe that could be something that our department could possibly work with stakeholders throughout the territory on and possibly look at some opportunities for our young people in the Northwest Territories.

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

QUESTION 606-19(2):
ACCESS TO INTERNET FOR STUDENTS

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. My questions are for the Minister of Infrastructure. I just want to follow up on questions I had for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment about access to the Internet for students. In my statement, I mentioned the low bandwidth that is shared between four educational facilities in Yellowknife. Can the Minister confirm that she is aware of this problem and what is she doing about it? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, I was made aware of this probably about 40 minutes ago. It is something that the Department of Infrastructure, as well as the Minister of Finance, as she is responsible for the bandwidth, we heard concerns from the Member regarding Education, Culture and Employment and the need for online schooling. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. O'REILLY: I'm glad that the Minister became aware of this problem 40 minutes ago. It's a long-standing issue, and I'm surprised that it has taken her this long to recognize that it is an issue. I mentioned earlier that there is dissatisfaction amongst some of the teachers with regard to Internet and technology issues that GNWT should be helping with. Is the Minister aware of these issues and what is she going to do to help speed up service calls related to educational needs?

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Yes, I am aware. That was his question, so yes, I am aware. Network capacity and Internet access is the responsibility of the

Department of Infrastructure, that is correct, our Technology Service Centre. We've been working closely with the TSC throughout the year to facilitate the exchange of information and support between TSC and the department of education. To this end, we have shared concerns from some of the schools in the territory and provided updates on the work to address some of the connectivity issues, which, in turn, we have passed along, where appropriate.

MR. O'REILLY: I want to thank the Minister for that. I think I heard an explanation of the problem, but I didn't actually hear any solutions. As bad as the situation is here in Yellowknife, I'm sure it's much worse in the regions and communities, which creates a digital divide. Can the Minister explain what her department is doing to ensure accessible and affordable Internet access for all of our students?

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: As a longer-term solution, TSC has been working on an RFP for increased Internet services for some of the education bodies, and perhaps some of the other departments in the GNWT.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. That's great. That's a solution. The RFP is out there, but I'd like to know when the RFP is going to close and when the Minister is going to report back to the House on progress on this issue. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Like I said, I was made aware of this 42 minutes ago. I don't have much of the details on the RFP or let alone some of the timelines on where we're at with this RFP. However, I will commit to getting back to the Member with further information on where we're at with this. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 607-19(2):
ADDITION OF MICHIF AS OFFICIAL LANGUAGE
OF THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to talk about language, and specifically the Michif language. We have recognized languages here in the Northwest Territories, and Michif isn't one of them. I'd like to ask the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment if it's something that we are considering including as an official language because I understand that the Minister's grandfather was a speaker of Michif and he didn't pass it down to the Minister's father, who

could then not pass it on to him. I would just ask the Minister if he has considered, and if this government has considered, if Michif could be a language that could be included as an official language in the Northwest Territories because I have also had the concerns that it's not from other constituents in Hay River and throughout the Northwest Territories. Thank you.

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

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So far, there hasn't been a movement toward making Michif an official language. I think I actually had these same questions in the last Assembly. From my understanding, there is a relatively small number of speakers in the Northwest Territories, and I think there are some speakers who might be speaking Michif who identify as speaking a different language. Perhaps there needs to be more research around this. I know that the Standing Committee on Government Operations is undertaking a review of the Official Languages Act, and so this is something that can be pursued in there. I'm happy to look further into this and have further conversations. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: I'm pleased to hear that he is willing to look at it, because there are approximately 300 Michif speakers in the Northwest Territories, while some of the other official languages have only 500 or 600. I think it's an important part of the Northwest Territories because it's language that helps identify who we are. That's more of a comment than anything. I will bring this issue up in the House at a later date, and I just wanted to give notice that I would.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: I am happy to have the conversation, like I said. I know that there are people who are very passionate about Michif language in the territory, and they are working to revitalize it. While there may be two- or three-hundred speakers now, that does not mean that, in the future, that number is not going to grow. I would love to see it grow, and I would love to see more than just a few vibrant Indigenous languages. I am happy to have that conversation and move forward.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Oral questions. Item 8, written questions. Item 9, returns to written questions. Item 10, replies to Commissioner's address. Item 11, petitions. Item 12, reports of committees on the review of bills. Member for Kam Lake.

Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills

BILL 12:

AN ACT TO AMEND THE APPRENTICESHIP, TRADE AND OCCUPATION CERTIFICATION ACT

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Your committee would like to report on its consideration of Bill 12, An Act to Amend the Apprenticeship, Trade and Occupation Certification Act. Bill 12 received second reading in the Legislative Assembly on October 29, 2020, and was referred to the Standing Committee on Social Development for review. On February 10, 2021, the standing committee held a public hearing with the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment and completed its clause-by-clause review of the bill. Mr. Speaker, the committee reports that Bill 12, An Act to Amend the Apprenticeship, Trade and Occupation Certification Act, is ready for consideration in Committee of the Whole. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Bill 12 will be moved into Committee of the Whole. Member for Kam Lake.

BILL 13:

AN ACT TO AMEND THE INTERPRETATION ACT

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Your committee would like to report on its consideration of Bill 13, An Act to Amend the Interpretation Act. Bill 13 received second reading in the Legislative Assembly on October 29, 2020, and was referred to the Standing Committee on Social Development for review. On February 9, 2021, the standing committee held a public hearing with the Minister of Justice and completed its clause-by-clause review of the bill. Mr. Speaker, the committee reports that Bill 13, An Act to Amend the Interpretation Act, is ready for consideration in Committee of the Whole as amended and represented. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Kam Lake. Bill 13 will be moved into Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters. Thank you. Member for Kam Lake.

BILL 14:

AN ACT TO AMEND THE SECURITIES ACT

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Your committee would like to report on its consideration of Bill 14, An Act to Amend the Securities Act. Bill 14 received second reading in the Legislative Assembly on October 29, 2020, and was referred to the Standing Committee on Social Development for review. On February 11, 2021, the standing committee held a public hearing with the Minister of Justice and completed its clause-by-clause review

of the bill. Mr. Speaker, the committee reports that Bill 14, An Act to Amend the Securities Act, is ready for consideration in Committee of the Whole. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Kam Lake. Bill 14 will be also moved into Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters. Reports of committees on the review of bills. Item 13, reports of standing and special committees. Item 14, tabling of documents. Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs.

Tabling of Documents

TABLED DOCUMENT 325-19(2):
FOLLOW-UP LETTER FOR ORAL QUESTION
549-19(2): FRONTIER LODGE

TABLED DOCUMENT 326-19(2):
FOLLOW-UP LETTER FOR ORAL QUESTION
554-19(2): FUNDING FOR BUS SERVICE IN
REINDEER POINT

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table the following two documents: "Follow-up Letter for Oral Question 549-19(2): Frontier Lodge;" and "Follow-up Letter for Oral Question 554-19(2): Funding for Bus Service in Reindeer Point." Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Tabling of documents. Member for Tu Nedhe-Willideh.

TABLED DOCUMENT 327-19(2):
ARTICLE FROM INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF
INDIGENOUS HEALTH – URBAN LAND-BASED
HEALING: A NORTHERN INTERVENTION
STRATEGY

MR. NORN: Marsi cho, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table this article from the International Journal of Indigenous Health entitled "Urban Land-Based Healing: A Northern Intervention Strategy." Marsi cho, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Tu Nedhe-Willideh. Tabling of documents. Member for Frame Lake.

TABLED DOCUMENT 328-19(2):
LETTER DATED FEBRUARY 23, 2021, FROM
GIANT MINE OVERSIGHT BOARD TO MINISTER
OF LANDS REGARDING GIANT MINE SITE LAND
USE PLANNING

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. I wish to table the following document. It's a letter from the Giant Mine Oversight Board dated February 23, 2021, to the Minister of Lands, with

regard to Giant Mine land use planning. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. Tabling of documents. Item 15, notices of motion. Item 16, motions. Item 17, notices of motion for 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 feel nervous with Ms. Semmler watching me. I will now call Committee of the Whole to order. What is the wish of the committee? Mr. Norn.

MR. NORN: Marsi cho, Mr. Speaker. Committee wishes to consider Tabled Document 286-19(2), Main Estimates 2021-2022, Department of Health and Social Services. Marsi cho, Mr. Chair.

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 Committee of the Whole to order. We will continue on with health and social programs. Minister, do you have witnesses to bring back in?

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

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Sergeant-at-Arms, will you escort the witnesses in, please? Minister, would you like to reintroduce your witnesses?

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. With us today is Deputy Minister Bruce Cooper and Director of Finance Jeannie Mathison.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you. Committee, we will continue on with health and social programs, beginning on page 179 with information on page 183. Questions? Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes.

MS. SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. My questions are regarding the line item under Child and Family Services. There is an increase of \$4 million. I know that it is probably due to the increased staffing that we see, but is there any work being done in that department for collaboration with Aboriginal governments on them taking over, or assuming parts, or a planning process, to children in care, assuming that part of the department? Thank you.

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

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I want to make sure I am on the right page. Could the Member please say which page she is referring to?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Member.

MS. SEMMLER: One-eighty.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): One-eighty?

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you. As the Member said, we have hired a number of additional staff in Child and Family Services to improve services to families who need additional support. That is reflected in the budget here. With respect to Indigenous governments creating their own regime for taking care of Child and Family Services, we are very supportive of that. We are prepared to collaborate with Indigenous government organizations and the federal government to make that happen. It's federal legislation that enables this to happen, and the federal government has announced funding available to Indigenous government organizations to pay for the cost of engaging in this process. Thank you.

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

MS. SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. My question was: is there dedicated staff within this funding to

have that engagement in this budget with Indigenous governments, especially the ones who are saying they want to do this? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. At this point, we have expressions of interest from two Indigenous government organizations, and the lead on that is the territorial director of Child and Family Services. It's my understanding that, at this point, there isn't a need for additional staff, but we certainly don't want to hold up the process. The legislation provides timing for coming up with agreements once the negotiations officially start. If it turns out that we are not adequately staffed, we would certainly address that with a supplementary, if necessary. Thank you.

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

MS. SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Going on to the next area, I am going to go into is the hospital services. It's more so within the whole hospital wellness, mental health, addictions. In this budget here, I'm looking at community mental health. I'm looking at all of these different areas. Hospital services, \$142 million. I know this has been raised in the House over and over again. There are issues with medical travel navigation. There are issues with Indigenous patients not trusting the service. They are not getting the answers. They are not getting the direction that they need. They are not getting the support that they need to navigate through our healthcare system. Is there any place in this budget to have Indigenous patient advocates or people in the department to navigate our residents through? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you. I will just say that the hospital services budget is spread through several different categories in this budget, and this particular one is about in-patients. That is what the Minister is referring to in terms of Indigenous navigators. We do have people in navigator positions at this point. There is a question about whether it would be a good idea to have more people in this position, and that is something that we are interested in exploring further.

That may or may not be connected to medical travel. What I mean by that is that, in a separate review of medical travel, which is in a different section, we are looking at the escort policy. The patient navigator may supplement that or assist patients as they come to all of the hospitals, no

matter where they come from, but we are not really at a stage yet to say exactly what is going to be offered and where. This is one of the areas that the department is working on. Mr. Chair, I would like the deputy minister to continue on with this answer, please.

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

MR. COOPER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. There are a number of things that we are doing to ensure that we remove barriers to access. There are services that we provide in terms of interpretation. As the Minister referenced, there are some navigation services. We are in the process of rolling out a fairly significant reform to how primary healthcare services are delivered, and very much that is happening because we have heard stories from people who believe they are not being properly understood by their provider; they don't feel safe in the way that services are being provided. We are working to reform primary healthcare very much to improve patient experience and improve access to services. There is a fair bit of resource in this budget that is designed to solve the problem that navigation would be designed to address. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MS. SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I know I have raised it in the House, and I know we have health navigators who know where, if you need an application, you go here; if you need this, you go here; and you phone them and you know that. However, a lot of our elders and a lot of people who are coming into our hospitals from the small communities, Indigenous people, even within Yellowknife facility, that's a scary facility; even for somebody coming out of Inuvik, that's a scary facility. It's a big facility. You can get lost in there. That's more of a comment.

We keep talking about how, in order to bridge this gap between cultural safety and cultural awareness by having Indigenous nurses trained and hired; we talk about it for the teachers. This is not happening. There must be a way that we bridge that gap to have Indigenous nurses as pathfinders in these hospitals, as somewhere where people can feel safe and trust that they will help them. Indigenous people, I have found, even with my time, is that they don't like to ask questions. They don't want to push people. They don't want to bother anybody, and then you wonder why a lot of our people have cancer, and they wait too long and these types of things. Like I said, that's more of a comment.

I want to move down into the family violence prevention. I'm looking here, since 2019-2020,

there is \$4.020 million, and then, in the 2020-2021, there was \$4.174 million; it hasn't really changed much. It's \$4.178 in this main estimates. I know we just recently got the intimate violence report. I am just wondering if there is a response within this department, if there's money or there's staffing allocated, in this family violence prevention, or if it's mixed between different departments. I guess it's up to the Minister to explain that, to address this issue within the territory. We know it's one of the highest in Canada, in the Northwest Territories, of family violence, and these are the ones that are reported. There are many that go unreported. I'm just wondering, in this budget, how are they planning on addressing that? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you. I am going to give two kinds of answers here. The first is specifically to family violence shelters. That's what this line item is for. In 2019-2020, there were new standards adopted for family violence shelters and a new funding model. While it looks like it hasn't gone up much, it actually did go up just right before the numbers that are in this budget. This pot of money is spent on the five shelters that we have in the NWT.

In terms of family violence prevention, that issue is really a whole-of-government issue. Health and Social Services has started to have conversations with Executive and Indigenous Affairs, where the women's secretariat is, and with Justice and other departments that deal with family violence, to talk about a whole-of-government approach to reducing those numbers. That would be a more strategic approach. What you are looking at in the budget here is the frontline approach. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you, Minister. We will now go to Mr. Norn.

MR. NORN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just looking at page 180 on Child and Family Services, just in regards to my riding, I know that social workers, child protection workers, have a very, very tough job. I commend those guys because I understand there are very high turnover rates on that just because of the mere stress of the job. I know that, in one of my communities, in Deninu Kue, there was recently a change in staffing that left a position open. I am just wondering if that position was going to be filled in Deninu Kue. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. This budget is at a very high level. It represents spending in big categories and not at the regional

or health centre level. I don't have a specific answer to the Member's question. I will say that we do not contemplate eliminating any positions anywhere, so if there is a vacancy, then I am going to say that it will be filled. Thank you.

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

MR. NORN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you. That was good to hear. I mentioned in my Member's statement earlier that there are a lot of service gaps, and we try to make sure that we are always keeping on top of it and making sure that we don't have vacancies for extended periods of time because that means that our residents will go without some valuable services. Forgive me, too, that I have kind of inserted myself here right in the middle of this. If I am being repetitive here, my apologies. The other part of my question here: is the Department of Health and Social Services, in terms of mental health supports, are they working with the department of education and schools to promote mental health services and helping get mental health supports for students? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The child and youth care counsellors program is a joint initiative of Education, Culture and Employment and the Department of Health and Social Services. It's a four-year phased-in project. In the next fiscal year, the one that starts April 1st, these positions will be available in the South Slave. That's the last year of the four-year implementation in the South Slave, is the target there. That means that there will be counselling positions that are trained to a different standard than the current school counsellors, who will be available to help children and youth, whether they are in school or not in school, and they are available year-round. They're only tied to the school schedule. That is a program that we have on the go right now, and I'll just, through you, Mr. Chair, ask the deputy minister if he wants to add anything further to that. Thank you.

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

MR. COOPER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. This is an example of really strong interdepartmental collaboration. Both departments have a written agreement in place. We've got collaboration taking place at the executive level and at the staff level to ensure that the child and youth care counselling program is successful. I think, out of all of the positions, we have at this moment only one vacancy, so we've been very successful, as well, in recruiting people to these positions. What we're

hearing is that it's a very valuable and valued service. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MR. NORN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. That's really good to hear. One of the biggest things I notice, especially when you have one department working on any sort of initiative, there always tend to be things lost in translation, so I'm glad there is some sort of agreement there to make sure that there are some clear lines and clear responsibilities because anytime there is something missed, then the whole think kind of runs amok. I'm glad to hear that there is some collaboration. Right now, even in times of COVID, mental health is a real issue now, and we have to make sure that we keep on top of it and not be so knee-jerky. I think it's really important that we keep on top of this. Just moving along a little bit, Mr. Chair, am I allowed to ask questions on page 181?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Yes.

MR. NORN: There's a line here, medical professional development. I'm not sure exactly what that is. Can the Minister just describe what those funds are for professional development? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The only information I have here is the description on the page that it is a grant to the NWT Medical Association for the professional development of eligible NWT physicians, so I'll ask the deputy minister if he can provide some additional information on this. Thank you.

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

MR. COOPER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I don't have much to add. This is just part of the support that the department provides to the medical profession. In addition, we also provide physicians with support, as an employer, to engage in medical professional development through our human resources and staffing line. Thank you.

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

MR. NORN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Where I'm going with this is: one of the biggest things, in terms of medical treatment and medical services for our small communities, and I guess for all our communities in the territory, is that, if you want to effectively treat somebody or offer them the best service you can, you have to fully understand what

their culture is like and what cultures are like in small communities and understand that. I think that would make a lot of our medical professionals better practitioners and help them hone their craft. It's a little tougher if you just insert somebody from the South and put them in, say, a small community and they don't quite understand kind of the ins and outs of that. My next question is: I don't know if this has been asked, but has there been more work done on cultural sensitivity and cross-cultural training in their department? Thank you.

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

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes, the department has been working on cultural safety initiatives since the 2013-2014 fiscal year, and what we have focused on, to define what we're talking about with cultural safety, is initiatives that are designed to address inequities experienced by Indigenous residents when accessing our health services, to improve early childhood development indicators, enable seniors to age in place, and increase the number of mental health and addiction program supports. What we want is: we recognize that, because of historic factors, Indigenous people may not be accessing the healthcare system as much as they need to. The Mental Wellness and Addictions Recovery plan addresses this issue, and the specific Caring for Our People Action Plan sets out how we're going to accomplish cultural safety within our healthcare system.

There were a number of pilot activities that the department carried out to try and understand what worked best. They did 13 of these, and they have now finished with their pilot phase and are developing a framework on cultural competency which will be introduced in the Legislative Assembly once it has been endorsed by the NTHSSA leadership council. This is really, in my opinion, well on its way to being embedded in the everyday work of the department that people take this training and they learn about the operating environment from a cultural point of view. What we are looking for as a result of this is that more staff are trained in cultural competency and that patients express greater satisfaction with the services that they have received. When those numbers start to go up, we'll know that we have started to meet our targets in this area. Thank you.

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

MR. NORN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you for that response. I'll just finish up with a short comment. I think we need to start collaborating more, working with our Indigenous governments and working at the community level. Yes, I support my colleague from Inuvik Twin Lakes on having

kind of those buffers to help bridge those cultural gaps, and I'm hoping we see some more work done in that area. Mahsi cho, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you, Member. I'll take that as a comment. Next, we'll go to Mr. Bonnetrouge.

MR. BONNETROUGE: Mahsi, Mr. Chair. I'm sure the Minister is well aware of my concerns about the local health centre and the staff issues there. Many of my people, my community members, have complained to me about the goings-on within the health centres. They are questioning the competencies and experience of staff, particularly nurse practitioners, the nurses, within the health centre. I'm wondering if there is a bare minimum of qualifications required to work in a small health centre. I wonder if the Minister could enlighten me on that. Mahsi.

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

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I want to express some concern about us identifying people who are working in small communities in a limited number of jobs. I don't think it's fair for us to discuss their competence or qualifications in this forum. They are not here to defend themselves. We don't have the level of detail, because this is a high-level departmental budget, to provide that level of information. We have standards for health professionals, standards of education and experience that they have to meet, and there are also professional qualifications that are set out by the Registered Nurses Association and the NWT medical association. This is an area in which we want to provide qualified care, obviously, but I'm not going to be able to discuss the qualifications of people who work in the Member's community. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Yes, and if we could, keep the questions to the line items and to the budget itself. This is not a forum to name people, especially in the smaller communities where everybody knows everybody. Mr. Bonnetrouge.

MR. BONNETROUGE: Thank you for that, so I will dispense with my line of questioning in this area here. We had concerns that there was no communication with the community at all from any of the workers there, whether it be nurse practitioner, social services, community. There is no interaction with the community whatsoever. Anyways, so that is leading to a lot of problems there. I am just wondering on the next page, page 181, the Child and Family Services items there, I know they have a group out of Yellowknife who provides that service. I am just wondering if there is

any future look into having First Nations take over a file like this in the communities. Mahsi.

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

HON. JULIE GREEN: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chair. The Assembly of First Nations worked with the federal government to develop a child and family services law that became law in January of 2020, and this provides for sovereignty of First Nations to provide child and family services care. We, the Department of Health and Social Services in the NWT, fully endorse this law and the sovereignty of First Nations to provide this care, and we are more than happy to collaborate with them and with the federal government in having communities take this jurisdiction on and provide child and family services care that meets both the national requirements and local expectations. As I mentioned to the Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes, two jurisdictions have expressed an interest in taking this area on, and the federal government does have money to assist these jurisdictions with capacity to negotiate and create their own regime. This is an area that we are very interested in seeing develop over the next few years. Thank you.

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

MR. BONNETROUGE: [Microphone turned off] ...questions.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): As there are no further questions, please turn to page 180. Health and Social Services, health and social programs, operations expenditure summary, 2021-2022 Main Estimates, \$337,150,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you. Long-term and continuing care services, beginning on page 184, with information items on page 187. Questions? Ms. Semmler.

MS. SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just looking at the program detail, homecare and support services, it's very obvious we have gone from, in the 2020-2021, \$11 million, and then it increased to \$20 million, and it is remaining status quo. I know that they were talking about putting more home support workers, more hours into home support workers in the communities. Is that what that money is, or what is in that extra \$10 million?

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

HON. JULIE GREEN: Yes. Thank you. Yes, the Member is correct. The biggest portion of this

increase, \$8.4 million, comes from the First Nations and Inuit Home and Community Care funding from the federal government, and it's reflected in various categories through this budget. One million dollars is for staff to pay for unfunded elements of the collective agreement in this area. We also have a very innovative program going with Aurora College where we are doing some workforce planning with them to train people to work in long-term care as personal support workers and nurses, and so we are collaborating with Aurora College and providing some funding for that. We are also addressing again a staff funding shortfall at Avens, so that comes out to \$11.3 million. Thank you.

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

MS. SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Within that homecare and support services, and I see that there is long-term care and supported living, the Minister has said that there is training with the college. Within the department, is there staff looking at addressing the issue with the job descriptions where a lot of Aboriginal people who are taking Aurora College are finding they are hitting a barrier when they do not have the one year of experience as to entering after they have just finished taking the personal support worker and have been working in their practicum within these facilities? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. JULIE GREEN: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would like to refer this question to the deputy minister. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Deputy Minister.

MR. COOPER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes, there is work happening to address the job design. Job designs are in the process of being reviewed to ensure that we can look at those barriers. There has actually been some recent experience in the Beaufort-Delta where there are certainly some lessons learned and some amendments made in a couple of cases to positions on scope of practice particularly to ensure that this was adequately being addressed. We are taking lessons learned from that experience and looking at job design and job descriptions to ensure we get it right. Thank you.

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

MS. SEMMLER: Yes. Thank you. Also looking at long-term care and supported living, my colleague and I, we had discussed this, and we have heard the stories over the past year. I addressed it, I think

it was in the fall time, and I addressed it in the spring time sitting, that a lot of our elders are in long-term care. I know we have opened it up so some of them can have one visitor and things like that. Within this fund, within this budget, is there extra funding in there or are there COVID dollars that the Minister is accessing to try to get extra community staff or support so that some of the elders who are in our long-term care are not being left alone? Because we have heard the stories of the families. I have seen the pictures of people visiting outside the window. We are lucky in Inuvik that it's ground level, and they could stand outside the window. That is not the case for most long-term cares, so I am just wondering if there is, in this budget here, because it is ongoing. We are losing our elders, and our elders are lonely in these facilities. Is there money in this budget for extra staffing or some safety mechanisms to try to have them be able to see more family and visit or things like that? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. JULIE GREEN: Yes. Thank you. This is really a heartbreaking situation for elders. They tend to have a smaller social circle as they age, and COVID, of course, has made that even smaller. This is really not a budgetary issue. This is an issue of public health, and what I have heard the Chief Public Health Officer say is that, when most of the population has received a second dose of COVID-19 vaccine, it will be possible to relax internal restrictions, internal in the NWT, and that may include things like visiting long-term care centres. Right now, that does not happen because it is considered to be too risky. That is why there is only one designated person who goes in. In terms of this budget generally, this budget does not provide for spending related to COVID because we do not have any money that is related to COVID that goes beyond the end of this fiscal year. However, if the situation drags on and it looks like finances are an issue, I think that we would certainly revisit this area.

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

MS. SEMMLER: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Okay. No, I just wanted to make sure. We look at and see the homecare. We see long-term care. When you're in a community the size of mine, you see people working in long-term care, going from house to house. They would have different jobs. They have different circles, and then they have family circles. They take precaution to go in. I get that the CPHO has put these rules in place to protect our most vulnerable elders, but on the other hand, I also think there's some mechanism in there for maybe some extra support for that so that people are able

to do the things that the staff are doing to go in and visit and have that. It's almost been a year, Mr. Chair, and I'm looking at this budget. I don't know if that's going to have anything to do with it, but if there's money in there for extra PPE or anything like that for family members and maybe some, if they want to have more family to see them, a space where people can go in and meet individually so that it's more regularly, if that's going to cost more? I don't know. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you. I think for me, I'm really waiting to get to the point where most people have had their second shot, and we have a better understanding of not only of our immunity, but whether the vaccine is effective in stopping the transmission of COVID so that we can return to life as normal, in so many ways, and especially in this way. What I can say is that, while nothing is planned now, this time last year, nothing was planned either. We can change our minds and come back and meet the needs that we see through a supplementary appropriation. Thank you.

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

MS. SEMMLER: Thank you to the Minister for that, and this is more just, the last is just a comment. We've heard really good success of uptake of vaccine in our small communities, which is great. We don't have that for our regional centres, and that's where our long-term cares are. That just extends that time. Being in the regional centre, I do know a lot of people that are hesitant to even get the first or second, like to even get vaccinated. I think that poses the issue, and that's why I'm raising it because our small communities are getting vaccinated at high rates than our regional centres. Thank you. It's more of a comment. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you, Member. Minister, would you like to comment?

HON. JULIE GREEN: Sure. The month of March is going to be a very big month for first doses, if required; second doses, for sure. There will be vaccines available in just about every community in the NWT. I'm really hoping that, by the end of March, we will have good uptake in the regional centres. I know that there are various people and organizations, like Hotii ts'eeda, even the NWT Association of Communities, who are really promoting getting vaccinated, and I appreciate those efforts. I think that all of us who are working from an evidence-based decision-making point of view need to encourage vaccination. It is the single

best thing that the person can do for themselves, even the Queen said so. Thank you.

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

MS. SEMMLER: No further questions. Thank you.

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

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just wanted to start by saying I'm glad to see the increase in funding to the seniors fund. I think that's always worthwhile and just hope that there's also a mandate for a push alongside of that to ensure that the services are expanding out into the communities and are not just Yellowknife-focused, especially with additional money. I did notice that the respite fund -- maybe I could just first ask: there's a bit of a bounce around in numbers there, and perhaps, maybe the Minister of the department can speak to why the actuals were so low in 2019-2020 versus the revised estimates for last year and then, of course, the proposed estimates? Thank you.

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

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'd like to refer this question to the director of finance. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Director.

MS. MATHISON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. On the respite fund, the increase that we see there in 2020-2021 reflects a supplementary appropriation to reflect the First Nations and Inuit homecare, community care funding that we've received. That funding is not there in the budget in 2021-2022. It is distributed elsewhere for other purposes. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm really glad to hear it's not disappeared for the upcoming year. When I look at the disabilities fund and then the respite fund, as well, just being a little less and such, I'm just wondering, as we see a change in how long-term care facilities are looked at as a result of COVID and then, as well, our mandate and priority to age in place, I'm just wondering if the department is tracking potential trends in keeping seniors at home or people with disabilities at home as opposed to group home situations and whether or not we're going to have to increase funding in these areas to support organizations doing that? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Minister.

HON. JULIE GREEN: Yes. Thank you. We recently completed a long-term care bed study, and for that, we used 10 years of data that tracked what age people were when they went into long-term care and what level of acuity they were at in terms of service need. We have a pretty good idea of when people need to move out of their independent living. We also, of course, provide homecare throughout the NWT, so there are metrics about how many people require homecare and what kinds of services they need. For more detail, though, I'll ask, Mr. Chair, if I can refer this question onto the deputy minister.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Deputy Minister.

MR. COOPER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. This has been one of the primary areas of policy development within the seniors area, so we are very much looking at the future demand that is going to be with us for the continuum of care for elders and persons with disabilities. When it comes to carrying for people in their own homes, we did the home and community care review. We've got some projections in terms of the growth that's coming there. We are testing out some new methods even within this budget to teach us new elements of the continuum we may need to grow in the future to meet that demand.

When it comes to long-term care, the Minister has spoken to the primary work that we're doing there, the beginnings of that work. When it comes to persons without disabilities, we're embarking upon a review now, a supported living review. It's gone to market now, and we expect to have a proponent selected in April. We will be looking more fully at this question about how we need to improve the network of community services and the options that are available here so that people can be cared for with dignity in their own communities and also identifying the possibility for being able to repatriate individuals who may be being cared for elsewhere. There's the full continuum of care for the full population of people who are dependent on others for care that we are examining and projecting and working on from a policy perspective. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm really glad to hear all of that and would welcome, at any point, more information on that and to have feedback, et cetera, as well. One of the things that I remember discussing when I was campaigning was the idea or trying to come up with ways of increasing Indigenous businesses in small

communities. Also, I was thinking around the lines of keeping elders at home, as well. Is there a potential or has the department considered creating small businesses in communities where there is like a small boarding home or such that the development corporation takes on and runs and then the department contracts the services for the care for the elders to that group? There's a business creation program. Then there could also be a training component for local youth and young adults that, then, they can learn to take care of their elders, which is a skillset that can then be transferred throughout Canada if they do decide they don't want to stay in the North. I just think this is an area where we really are going to have to think outside the box, and it's always been a story that, when I've travelled through the North and into communities, that's really heartbreaking because you hear it time and again. A good friend just recently lost his father who spent the last few years in Norman Wells when the family was in Tulita. I just wonder if that's an area, perhaps, maybe the department is interested in looking at, is sort of an Indigenous-run, small boarding home for supportive care? Thank you.

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

HON. JULIE GREEN: Yes. Thank you. The reason that the long-term care is offered in regional centres is that we need some efficiencies in the number of beds and the number of staff for the 24/7 responsibility, so it's turned out that, in the smaller communities, we just can't get to that economy of scale to provide for full supportive living, which would include nursing care as well as care aides. In terms of whether there has been any discussion to create a business or training component to situate in small communities, I am not aware of that, but I will ask the deputy minister if he is. Thank you.

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

MR. COOPER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. In a way, we are testing a proof of concept about being able to partner with local community through the paid caregiver pilot program. That is actually in this budget. We do have, I think, five agreements in place; I may have that number wrong. We are certainly very interested in working in partnership with local community groups, anybody who is interested to try new approaches to care. We are going to be entering the evaluation phase in the next year for that, and I know that we are looking forward to taking lessons learned and innovating forward. Thank you.

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

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am glad to hear that, too. I get that there is a certain degree of technical expertise that is required for certain types of facilities. However, even if it's a matter of a senior who has a dilapidated home and, therefore, now they are getting moved out of it into a long-term care facility, if they don't need a large degree of care, I don't see why we can't have a lesser, sort of, care worker or lesser-educated care worker there to help them. That's great, and I look forward to learning more about the paid caregiver pilot program. It never made sense to me that we make people go out to work so that their family member can then have someone else come in that the government then pays for to look after them. Glad to hear that. My last questions are just around the active positions. I noted that we have gone up four positions, and I am reading it right today if I wasn't yesterday. It's all-in headquarters. My question would be: are these all administrative functions for the department or administrative roles that do need to be in one place, as we've said, or are some of these employees actual care and support workers for patients or long-term people? Thank you.

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

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. These four positions are funded under the First Nations and Inuit Home and Community Care funding. The first is a senior nursing consultant. The second is a project manager. There are two health planners in continuing care. All of these positions are located at headquarters where the rest of our policy functions are located. Thank you.

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

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I will just get in one last plug to always try to put some of those positions out in the communities if we can and work on our mandate priority. Thank you.

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

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. The Minister spoke about a report on the network of community services available to individuals in communities, a report that's being worked on this spring. I am wondering if the Minister can give a little bit more detail about what that report is going to be about or the project that the RFP just recently went out for. Thank you.

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

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would like to refer the question to the deputy minister. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Deputy Minister.

MR. COOPER: Thank you. I believe what is being referenced is the supported living review, and that has just gone out to market. The outcome of that particular review will be advice regarding options that are available for caring for persons with disabilities or who need intensive support in the community.

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

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Thank you. I just wanted that clarification. My next question is in regards to the First Nations and Inuit Home and Community Care agreement. I understand that some of that is found within the respites one, but under the revenue stream, it shows that there is almost \$8.5 million coming in with that agreement. I am wondering if the Minister can speak to where else within the budget that money falls. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Minister.

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would like to refer the question to the director of finance.

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

MS. MATHISON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Most of the money, yes, you're right, is under this long-term care. There would also be some additional funding up under admin and support services where some of the staff for the department are supporting the efforts related to activities supporting homecare, for example, the rollout of the interRAI information system that is going to help support some of the work that we are doing to understand homecare delivery. There is funding in admin and support services related to that, as well. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. The money that falls under the long-term care, is it just given to long-term care facilities? Is it given out based on application? Is it automatically given out based on size of the long-term care facility? Thank you.

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

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. There is only one non-government long-term care facility in the NWT, and it is Avens. There is a small

portion of a supplementary appropriation that was included in the current fiscal year to assist them. Otherwise, to the best of my knowledge, this money goes to the long-term care that is operated by the GNWT throughout the NWT. Thank you.

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

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. As the number of seniors within the territory increases, especially over the next decade, we might see more people, similar to staff at Avens, interested in participating in long-term care throughout the Northwest Territories. Is the Department of Health and Social Services reviewing the amount of financial assistance that it provides to non-government supportive living for seniors? Thank you.

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

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you. There is only one service provider in that area, and that is Avens. Avens, I know, is reviewing its own set of services as it moves forward with its independent living offering at the pavilion. We are also, of course, looking at additional long-term care beds in the Stanton legacy hospital. This is an area where there is some chum going on at the moment, and we continue to collaborate and try to figure out how to support one another to provide the best service to seniors. Thank you.

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

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Given that we are in a pandemic and that the costs associated with the pandemic are much higher, is there talk right now about providing further financial support to places like Avens to account for the increase in cost to care for seniors at this moment in time? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Minister.

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you. It's my understanding that the Department of Finance is leading the negotiations, or perhaps it's the Premier, or maybe it's both, who are leading the collection of information and negotiations with the federal government for additional pandemic response money. Those negotiations are not complete, so that money is not included in this budget at this time. We did provide for pandemic-related spending to Avens during the course of the last year. Thank you.

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

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. My next question is in regards to the workers that work in the long-term care facilities, especially with the personal support program. It's a great program, and one I definitely fully support. I think it's great for people to be able to help care for family members. I believe the program at Aurora College is 10 months long, where they can go, get training, help care for seniors and people who are important to them in their life, and I am definitely supportive of that. One thing that I believe Ryerson does is: if you're taking a nursing degree through Ryerson University, they actually have it structured so that, following your first year of nursing, you finish that first year as a personal support worker. I'm wondering if the Minister of Health and Social Services is working with Aurora College to potentially pursue that so that all of our nursing students are personal support workers. That way if, for some reason, they need to take a break from nursing, they can walk right into employment; or if they need some summer employment, it's another way to get into the community and get working right away. Thank you.

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

HON. JULIE GREEN: I don't see that there is a linkage between those two programs, but I'd like to refer this question to the deputy minister, please.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Deputy Minister.

MR. COOPER: Thank you. Yes, this the concept of laddering, and while that is within the purview of ECE, we do have a good relationship with Aurora. This is something that we have talked about and flagged, certainly the nursing professionals have, but I can't speak in terms of what the outcomes of those discussions are. Thank you.

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

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I'm wondering if the Minister, or perhaps the deputy minister, could give me a good idea of a timeline of when to follow up on that question. Thank you.

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

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

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Deputy Minister.

MR. COOPER: I'm not certain. We don't have anything specific. There are ongoing discussions, but whenever the Member would like, I think.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you. That will suffice, that answer? Member.

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I'm wondering if the disabilities fund includes any funding toward FASD diagnostic in the Northwest Territories. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Minister.

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I don't think that this is the right category for that question. I think that we talked about the respite services in the previous health and social programs category, but I'll just ask the deputy minister to confirm that. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Deputy Minister.

MR. COOPER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. That's correct. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Member.

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I will always look for a way to go back.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Any further questions? Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. Mr. Chair. It's been a long week; I'll try to get the gender right. I take it this is the part of the budget that the paid caregiver leave program falls under. Is that correct?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Minister.

HON. JULIE GREEN: Yes, I think that's this part of the budget. Thanks.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. I know that there is a pilot program in progress. Can we just get a bit of an update of where that program is at? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Minister.

HON. JULIE GREEN: Yes. The program exists in five different communities at this point. There is a limited intake of spots, but I think that most of them have been taken up and that there is evaluation planned for the next fiscal year in order to determine the future of the pilot program. That's a very high-level answer. The deputy minister would be able to offer quite a bit more. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Deputy Minister.

MR. COOPER: Thank you. Yes, indeed, we do have pilots ongoing in Behchoko, Yellowknife, Dettah, Ndilo, Tuktoyaktuk, and Hay River. We have individuals who have been accepted: five in Behchoko; eight in Yellowknife; two in Dettah and Ndilo; eight in Hay River; and there are some issues in Tuktoyaktuk. We've got a capacity for five; there is still some work ongoing to hire the caregiver there, but as of last week, they are in the process of hiring. As the Minister said, we are finalizing an RFP to hire a contractor this spring to undertake an evaluation framework and to conduct the evaluation of the program over this summer, and that will help inform our business planning for next year. Thank you very much.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. Look, I'm very supportive of the pilot program. I'd be happy to see it made permanent in some way. After the evaluation, is it the intention of the department to work this into the next budget cycle or look at a potential supplementary appropriation? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Minister.

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you. It's my understanding that the evaluation will point the way forward and this will be incorporated into the budget planning for the 2022-2023 fiscal year. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks. Nothing further.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Any further questions? That concludes this section. Please turn to page 189. No, sorry. Please turn to page 185. [Microphone turned off]

---SHORT RECESS

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): I will call the committee back to order. Please turn to page 185. Health and Social Services, long term and continuing care services, operations expenditure summary, 2021-2022 Main Estimates, \$59,088,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you. Out of territory services, beginning on page 188. Questions? Ms. Cleveland.

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I am wondering if the Minister can let us

know how many people are living in residential care outside of the Northwest Territories.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Minister.

HON. JULIE GREEN: Sorry, Mr. Chair. I was not ready. Could the Member please repeat that?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Member.

MS. CLEVELAND: Absolutely. I am wondering how many people are living outside of the Northwest Territories in residential care. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Minister.

HON. JULIE GREEN: Yes. Thank you for the question. I do not have that information to hand. I will look towards the deputy minister and see if he does.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Deputy Minister.

MR. COOPER: Thank you. We have 114 clients who are currently in supportive living placements who are in contracted out-of-territory facilities, and we have 50 clients who are within supportive living places within the Northwest Territories.

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

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much. I am wondering how many of those people living outside of the territory are due to cognitive disabilities. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Minister.

HON. JULIE GREEN: Yes. I would like to refer that to the deputy minister. Thanks.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Deputy Minister.

MR. COOPER: I do not have that level of diagnostic classification with me. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Member.

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. How many people are considered children?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Minister.

HON. JULIE GREEN: Yes. Thank you. Once again to the deputy minister.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Deputy Minister.

MR. COOPER: There are 32 children.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Member.

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. This is something that has been raised as a concern by multiple community members within the Northwest Territories to multiple different MLAs. I know right now, and I am thankful, that the department is doing a review on residential care, hopefully with the goal of repatriating a number of NWT residents to the Northwest Territories. I am wondering if the Minister can let us know when this review will be completed.

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

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you. I understood the deputy minister to say that the RFP is out or about to go out and that the results would be ready by the end of the year, but perhaps he could be more specific. I would like to refer the question to him.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Deputy Minister.

MR. COOPER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. We expect the results by December 31st.

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

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much. I really appreciate that, and I know that social development is very much looking forward to being able to review that report with the department and with the Minister. Can the Minister provide information about the scope of the expression of interest that has gone out? Does that intend to not only look for how to repatriate people but also look at what resources are required, not only in Yellowknife, but in regional centres and small communities, in order to allow people to stay home and age in place? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Minister.

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you. It's my understanding that the point of this RFP is to find out what is possible in terms of creating alternatives for the level of needs that people have, which is the reason that they live out of the territory in the first place. I would like to refer to the deputy minister for additional detail. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Deputy Minister.

MR. COOPER: Thank you. We are interested in looking at quality improvement of this particular sector. At the same time, we are interested in what model might be required for the future. If we were to build a model that had the functions required that are being met currently by others in the South, what capacity would we need to have to build here for that to happen? It's quality of the existing community- and facility-based care and what a

future model might look like that would provide the care that's currently being provided elsewhere. Thank you.

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

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Will this document also include work force development requirements or needs across the territory, and will this information also be looked at in unison with future plans for Aurora College? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Minister.

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you. I would like the deputy minister to try this question. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Deputy Minister.

MR. COOPER: Yes, I would expect we would have recommendations on work force planning and all of the elements that are necessary to have a complete system. Thank you.

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

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I have a delicate question. I have tried to find ways back to being able to ask about the adult FASD clinic. I am just going to ask it here because I feel like the two are related. In the Northwest Territories, we do have a high number of instances of FASD. We also do have people who really struggle with cognitive disabilities. I think that all of this also relates back somewhat to supportive living. I believe it relates back to integrated service delivery models, and I think that this is something that the North really needs is to find ways to better support Northerners at home where they live. I think that's part of the health of our communities and the health of our people. I really do look forward to this work, but I think that it lends itself to a bigger conversation, for sure.

I would also like to be able to ask about medical services of hospitals and physician services provided to Northwest Territories residents outside of the NWT. One of my concerns right now is that some of the residents of the Northwest Territories who require medical services are either not wanting to travel or are unable to travel because of COVID right now. I am wondering if the Department of Health and Social Services is somehow monitoring reasons that people need to see a physician so that they are able to potentially bring up a locum or a need that could serve multiple residents. They're kind of looking at the reverse; instead of sending people down south, can we bring up specific

locums to serve a need to provide healthcare to residents? Thank you.

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

HON. JULIE GREEN: Yes. I have to say, honestly, that's a bewildering list of questions. I am just going to try, if I can, to start with the FASD portion, and then maybe the Member can just go over, again, the physician and out-of-territory care.

What I want to say about out-of-territory care is that the reason people go out of territory is because we don't have the appropriate services for their needs available in the NWT. It's not our wish to have them go away, but rather, it's a necessity. Some of these people have lived outside of the territory for the majority of their lives and, in fact, have replacement social units in the places that they live. Having said that, we understand that there are families who would like to have their family members repatriated to the NWT. That's the point of the report that is going to be done this year, to find out what those needs are and whether we can meet them.

In terms of FASD, I don't know if that specific diagnosis is tracked in the out-of-territory placements. We do know that FASD is one of those co-occurring conditions that may occur with addictions. It may occur with low intellectual functioning. It could be that some of the clients who are out-of-territory have this diagnosis. I have no idea whether we have that level of information available to us here, but I will look to the deputy minister to see if he can add anything. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Deputy Minister.

MR. COOPER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. No, I don't have any information about the number of individuals outside of the territory with FASD. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Questions on this section? Ms. Nokleby.

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am just curious to know, when I look at the addictions treatment facilities costs, in the actuals for 2019-2020, it was \$2.4 million. We have estimated we will probably be just under \$2.1 million this year. Can the department or the Minister speak to how realistic that is? Do we anticipate changes to these numbers because some of the facilities have shut down, and perhaps there's maybe a reluctance for people to go south? Do we think we are going to spend that \$2 million? Thank you.

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

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I have seen the participation numbers for this year, and compared to the previous fiscal year, they are down by a half to two-thirds. I do anticipate that we won't be spending this entire amount on facility-based treatment this year.

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

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Maybe, then, can the Minister comment on how the money would be repurposed and whether or not it would be repurposed into other addictions treatment or supports up here in the North? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Minister.

HON. JULIE GREEN: The money that is going to be unspent in this fiscal year, I am not clear that that can be carried over and applied, so I would like to refer the question to the director of finance. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Director.

MS. MATHISON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. If there were funds there that weren't spent this year in 2021, those funds would just lapse at this point. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. And then, of course, just go back into the general revenue? I see nods. Okay. Thank you. I just want to reiterate maybe some concerns I have heard with repatriating people to the North, and I just would like to throw my support around. That seems to be a really hot topic and one area that I would like us to be working more towards. Maybe the Minister could speak to the fluctuations of the fees and payments line item. There is a \$50 million line item in 2019 for the actuals, but then we have an estimated of almost \$36 million, and for our year coming up, it's at \$40 million. Can we get more information on that? Thank you. Page 189.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Minister.

HON. JULIE GREEN: Yes. Thank you. It's my understanding that, yes, there is a lot of fluctuation in this area. It's hard to predict how many people will need out-of-territory treatment and what that will end up costing. However, for more detail in this area, I would like you to please call on the director of finance. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Director.

MS. MATHISON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes, very difficult to forecast the need in this area. In 2019-

2020, there was supplementary funding of about \$13 million that was added to the budget, which was one-time funding, and then the following year the budget returned to its normal, and no request for supplementary funding has been made for this year. You see the budget has increased to \$40 million for 2021-2022, though. That reflects a forecasted need based on a look at the past five years to determine where we forecast the use of out-of-territory hospitals and physicians to be for 2021-2022, but again, that is a forecast. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am guessing part of that uncertainty would then also be the fact that we are moving more towards telehealth. Will that impact this line item if more of our services are provided online versus having to send patients to the South? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you. I would like to refer this to the director of finance, please.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Director.

MS. MATHISON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes, that would for sure be an impact. As I think we discussed yesterday, between the interprovincial billing agreements, there is a year where provinces and territories have up to a year to bill each other. That also adds to some of the uncertainty, which is why I referenced that we look back at the past five years to be able to make our forecast moving forward. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would like to give the department a kudos in that, when I had surgery in Edmonton, I was actually told that we get in very high on the list over Albertans because the Northwest Territories pays their bills very well and on time, so I always thought that was kind of an interesting comment. I just want to know if maybe you could explain, if the department could explain to me or the Minister -- and this is just my own knowledge. We just have a line item here for the Health and Social Services Authority funding on page 190, and I am just curious to know: what function do the health authorities play in out of service, like what is this money used for with respect to out of service or out-of-territory services? Is it to administer getting patients out of territory? Because I would wonder if that would be captured under medical travel. I am not sure if that is a very clear question, but thank you.

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

HON. JULIE GREEN: Yes. Thank you. I do not think this has to do with medical travel. I think it has to do with the physician services and the hospital stays that happen out of territory, but for further clarification, I would like the question to go to the director of finance. Thank you.

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

MS. MATHISON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. This budget is actually for the adult southern placements program. The NTHSSA administers this program, so anytime an individual from the NWT needs to be sent south for those facilities that we were talking about not long ago, this is where that gets paid. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. That would be the facilities both for treatment and addictions as well as maybe for health and other related items or medical travel type situations?

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

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you. Back to the director of finance, please.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Director.

MS. MATHISON: Thank you. This is specifically for the adult placements for supported type living arrangements. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. No. I think that I am good, Mr. Chair. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. I am just trying to understand a little bit more about the breakdown out of the three categories on the bottom part of page 189. I see the grants, contributions and transfers, that amount, and that seems to correspond with the money that is given to Health and Social Services Authorities. It's just a flat-line amount. Maybe I will start with that. There is no fluctuation whatsoever. How is this amount determined? The fact that it has just stayed the same over three years just seem a bit odd. Thanks, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. JULIE GREEN: Yes, thank you. I would like to refer this question to the director of finance.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Director.

MS. MATHISON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes, the Member is right in that that line does correspond directly to page 190, and that is all given to the NTHSSA. The budget there has not changed because it has not yet been needed. There has been no forecasted increase in funding required for adult southern placements in the South. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Okay. Thanks, Mr. Chair. Maybe it's been a long week. How does the money then flow from the department of health through the NTHSSA to provide out-of-territory services? Maybe I am just a little bit thick today. I'm trying to understand how that money flows or does not flow. Thanks.

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

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you. I would like to refer this question to the director of finance.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Director.

MS. MATHISON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The department gives the \$26 million to the authority in a contribution agreement, and then the authority enters into individual contracts with each of the facilities in the South. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Okay, thanks. Yes. That helps me a lot. I appreciate that. The contract services line, can someone explain to me what that is? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. JULIE GREEN: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am not seeing that my page has any detail on it, so I would like to refer the question to the director of finance. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Director.

MS. MATHISON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. This is where the department enters into contracts directly for the child, for the southern placements for children. The authority currently administers the

program for the adult southern placement, and the department does the children. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. That is helpful to understand. I see back in 2019-2020 it was a little bit higher, by half a million dollars, but then it's just a constant amount. Do we sign, I don't know, two- or three- or five-year contracts or something? I just would have expected that this would fluctuate a bit more than the numbers here seem to show. Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Minister.

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you. That is another question for the director of finance, please.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Director.

MS. MATHISON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. There has not been a forecasted need to further increase the budget in this area based on what we currently see. On the side for children, it does fluctuate between years and over months even because some children go in for a month and then they come back for short-term treatment periods, but the budget has not needed to be extended at this point. We did overspend, and we did forecast an over-expenditure in 2019-2020. I went for supplementary funding at the time. If we were to incur a similar situation at this point, it would be something that would be one-off, and so we would take that same approach next year. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. Now to the last line here, fees and payments, this one does jump around a fair bit. Back in 2019-2020, it was \$15 million, which is \$10 million more than what is anticipated next year. If I can get an explanation of what this covers, let's start with that. Thanks, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. JULIE GREEN: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chair. The explanation is that we historically have shortfalls in this area where we exceed the budget. In 2019-2020, that shortfall was \$11.8 million for hospital services and another \$2.4 million for out-of-territory physician services. That combined shortfall was addressed through a supplementary appropriation. I don't see that that has been necessary in the current fiscal year that will end next month, but I think that further detail could be provided by the director of finance. Thank you.

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

MS. MATHISON: Thank you. The \$40 million there that you see ties directly to the \$40 million above for medical services. This is fees and payments specifically for the services we pay to other jurisdictions, the invoices we receive from them for their service to us in hospitals and physician services. Correct, we have added \$4 million to the budget for 2021-2022 based on our assessment of the forecasted use of those services next year. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks. That's really helpful to understand. I presume, then, that this section of the budget, there is nothing in here that really deals with after-care. Is that correct?

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

HON. JULIE GREEN: Yes, that is correct. After-care takes place in the NWT, and this is an out-of-territory segment.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks. I think it was yesterday the Minister mentioned that the current mental wellness and addictions recovery action plan is expiring in a month or so and that the new one has to be developed. The money for that program is not found here. Is it found somewhere else in the budget? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you. I'm not going to get to the right page in time, but I am going to say that it is within health and social programs, and I see the deputy minister is nodding.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. With that action plan, would we expect to see some changes moving forward with things like addictions treatment facilities, grants, contributions, transfers, that kind of thing, in future budgets with the new action plan? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am not sure that there is a new action plan coming. I think that the department is taking a different

approach, as they are with cultural safety, of embedding the work right into the department rather than segregating it into an action plan, but the deputy minister would have more information on this point. Thank you.

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

MR. COOPER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. We, of course, have the mandate from this Assembly and have taken great effort to develop an action plan in relation to that mandate, which includes a cluster of indicators that we need to meet. The mandate has been converted to internal action planning and metrics is being driven into the work plans of staff. It is also embedded within our business plan, and it is something that we will certainly be reporting on every year as needed by Members in terms of our accountability for meeting the objectives we have laid out. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks. I think I understood parts of that. The survey work that is being done now, how is that going to feed into what this is going to look like in the future, this part of the budget? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Minister.

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you. Is the Member talking about the alcohol survey?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Member.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. Yes, the survey that the Minister talked about, I think, even earlier today that's online and you can pick up at the health centres, that kind of stuff. Thanks.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Minister.

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The survey is going to fulfill a couple of different purposes. One is that it is going to feed information into the alcohol strategy which is being developed, which is the greatest driver of hospitalizations because of alcohol use. There is that part of it. The other part of it has to do with evaluating how well our current treatment regime is working. I am anticipating that the department will take into account what is collected in the alcohol survey and apply it to planning going forward. That's really the point of having the survey. I don't know if I've captured everything that needs to be said, so I will ask the deputy minister through you if he would like to add anything else. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Deputy Minister.

MR. COOPER: Thank you. Just to say that the survey work is going to inform the work that we are doing on the alcohol strategy within the department, but also the whole-of-government approach that we are taking on that issue. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you. Committee, our time is almost up. What is the wish of the committee?

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. I move that the chair rise and report progress.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): The motion is in order. To the motion. [Microphone turned off] I think we had a 2:00 hard stop. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Mr. Chair, I would be happy to withdraw the motion, if I can do that procedurally, and we could have one of my colleagues at least ask one more set of questions with the time available. Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Okay. That's fine. Ms. Semmler.

MS. SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. My colleagues have asked a lot of the questions, but some of the questions that I have are in the same areas but just a little bit different. In the residential care, I see that we have \$35 million. We have \$26 million of that, to my understanding, is part of that residential care, and then there's another contracts and services that is \$10 million. This services 114 clients and the 50 clients within the Northwest Territories. Can I just get clarification on that?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Minister.

HON. JULIE GREEN: Could the Member please confirm that she is on page 190?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Member.

MS. SEMMLER: No. I am on page 189.

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. It is my understanding that all of this residential care money concerns youth and adults who are seeking services outside of the NWT.

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

MS. SEMMLER: The 50 clients that my colleague asked about, that the deputy minister mentioned, in the Northwest Territories is not included in this?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Minister.

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. That is correct.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Member.

MS. SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Out of this \$35 million, then, we are spending \$35 million on 114 residents. I know I stressed this the last time we brought up the mains, and now we are going out for an RFP to see how we can plan on possibly transitioning some of these residents home. My question for some of this is: what is the percentage of Indigenous versus non-Indigenous of these people who are outside of the NWT in these facilities? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. JULIE GREEN: I'm sorry, I don't have that information. I wonder if the deputy minister -- he doesn't have it, either. We'll have to return with that information.

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

MS. SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm sure he won't have the information that I'm going to ask for next, so I'm just going to continue to ask it. That way, I can get that commitment to have the answers. I would like to also know, out of these 114 clients, how many of those clients are from Yellowknife? How many of those clients are from regional centres? How many of those clients are from small communities? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. JULIE GREEN: Can I just clarify: is the Member asking where they were born or where they lived when they were referred to southern treatment? What kind of a classification is she looking for here? At what point in their lives does she want them classified by location?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Member.

MS. SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. If we're paying for people to live outside of the NWT, then they must come from the NWT somewhere, so they must have families or they must originate from either the capital, the regional centres, or the small communities. That's the percentage that I would like to have of all the residents who are outside the territory.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Minister.

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you. I'm not trying to be difficult, but I am very familiar with the client group at the Inclusion NWT, and that client group includes a client I know is from Tuktoyaktuk, a client who is from Behchoko. They have lived here for a big chunk of their lives because this is where the

services are located. The services they need are not generally available outside of Yellowknife and the regional centres. That's why I'm asking. If we took the client from Tuktoyaktuk, would that person be from Tuktoyaktuk because that's the origin of her family, or would she be from Yellowknife because she has lived here most of her life? I don't find this a cut-and-dried area.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Member.

MS. SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I know it's not cut and dried, but if there were going to be issues with this person, we can't say where they were going to live, but if I say that this person was born to a family and their family is still in Tuktoyaktuk, for instance, then that's kind of where I'm looking at. I'm trying to find where the people have come from in the Northwest Territories. What are their roots? Where are their families from? That's one of them. I want to ask another thing, and the reason why I want to ask that is because we teach our children about equity. You've got Jordan's Principle, for instance, to try and balance that inequity. We have small communities, regional centres, and Yellowknife. As the Minister has stated, this person and some of these clients, they live in Yellowknife or they lived in Yellowknife, and now they are outside of the territory because they couldn't get the services in their community they needed to live here. Those are the reasons why I'm asking the question because, if we're not providing these services in the small communities, they had to go to the regional centre or Yellowknife. I feel like we talk about systemic racism, we talk about all these things, and we can't have services in every community, but I would like to know this breakdown.

I also would like to know from which regions because I know, in the past, there has been a summer student who did some research on this, and a large portion of these out-of-territory people are from my region. Like I said, my region has Inuvik, which is in the Beaufort-Delta. I've got my colleague from Nunakput. It's very expensive to be there. We know that we get a little bit more money, but we still have a lack of services and lack of facilities. This is why I'm asking these questions. If I can get some kind of numbers and some kind of breakdown of regions and whether they are adult or youth? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. We will attempt to gather that information.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Member.

MS. SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The other concern that I have had, and it goes back to some of the facilities that we have outside, do we know how many residents are living outside the NWT who we are supporting, who fall under this residential care? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Minister.

HON. JULIE GREEN: Yes, we have that list, and we can provide it.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Member.

MS. SEMMLER: Thank you. In my past work and knowing that some of this information about the people who are outside the NWT are a large number from my region, I have also found that the costs of these facilities have gone up significantly over a number of years, and I'm just wondering if that is accurate and if we can get a confirmation of an average of what we pay. I know there is a large amount of different -- people are living at different levels of care. I'm just wondering if there is a breakdown of what these levels of care are and the average cost that we pay per person out-of-territory annually, or something like that. Thank you.

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

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you. I can see how that is going to be difficult to provide because there are a few dynamics. One is that youth have moved into adult care. Another is that some people are extremely high-needs; they need one-on-one support, 24 hours a day. Some of them are less intensive. I just feel that averaging that wouldn't give you the full idea. Could we instead provide you with a range, so the cost could be as low as this amount and as high as that amount, so that you could see that some clients are very expensive to maintain in the southern facilities? Thank you.

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

MS. SEMMLER: No. I just want to know, like I said, if we can get an average of how many facilities and what the average cost is. I'm just trying to look at, and I know I mentioned this in the last budget session, when you break it down, the amount we pay. I know there's a certain level of care. I know we would pay high amounts for a one-on-one level of care and depending whether they are a child or an adult, that specialty care. In my region, I know a lot of the people who live here, and I also know a lot of the people who have been living out of the territory. I know that the previous Minister has said, when we were going through this budget, that they don't want to come back, some of them. They don't want to go back to their regions, and that's fine. That's why I'm looking forward to the review so we

can kind of get this moving. It's a way to bring our people who do want to be at home, that our family members do want their family members close, and it will increase our economy in some of our regions, too. More of a comment. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you for that comment. I think the Member has hit on the reason that we are doing the review. It's because we have heard from people that they would like to know whether it would be possible for their family members to come back, and the answer without the study is: we don't really know. Can we provide for the level of care they need? Do we have the physical space? Do we have the staffing expertise to provide that care? This is what we want to learn and share so that we are all on the same page in understanding the kinds of needs. That is one dimension, of course. Whether the person wants to come back, has the capacity to make that decision, that's a different story, which is not part of this review. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you. Noting the clock, committee members, I will now rise and report progress. Thank you to the Minister and to the witnesses. Sergeant-at-Arms, please escort the witnesses from the Chamber.

Report of Committee of the Whole

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

CHAIRPERSON (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(20), Main Estimates 2021-2022. I would like to report progress, and, Mr. Speaker, I move that the report of the Committee of the Whole be concurred with. Thank you.

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

---Carried

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

Orders of the Day

DEPUTY CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Rutland): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Orders of the day for Monday, March 1, 2021, at 1:30 p.m.:

1. Prayer
2. Ministers' Statements
3. Members' Statements
4. Returns to Oral Questions
5. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery
6. Acknowledgements
7. Oral Questions
8. Written Questions
9. Returns to Written Questions
10. Replies to the 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 Monday, March 1, 2021, at 1:30 p.m. Have a good weekend.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 2:03 p.m.

