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The Honourable Frederick Blake Jr, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

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YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**Tuesday, March 2, 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, Mr. Lafferty, Ms. Martselos, Ms. Nokleby, Mr. Norn, Mr. O'Reilly, Ms. Semmler, Hon. R.J. Simpson, Mr. Rocky Simpson, Hon. Shane Thompson, Hon. Caroline Wawzonek

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

Prayer

---Prayer

SPEAKER (Hon. Frederick Blake Jr.):

Colleagues, before we begin today, I just wanted to say a few words. As Speaker of the Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly, I wish to convey my condolences to the family of Darius Elias, the Vuntut Gwitchin people, and the Yukon Legislative Assembly. A celebration of life for Mr. Elias is being held this afternoon in Whitehorse.

Mr. Elias served as MLA for the Vuntut Gwitchin riding in Yukon for 10 years. He also served as deputy chief of the Vuntut Gwitchin. His riding included the community of Old Crow, a part of the Yukon with deep connections to the Gwich'in people and communities of the Northwest Territories.

Mr. Elias was well known and respected on both sides of the Yukon and Northwest Territories border. Known as much for his humour as for his intellect, he was a strong advocate for the Gwich'in people and the protection of the Porcupine caribou herd. His presence, laughter, and leadership will be missed, not to mention his love for hockey. Many of the Members here knew Mr. Elias and became great good friends with him. He will be deeply missed. Our thoughts and prayers are with the family and community at this time. Mahsi. Item 2, Ministers' statements. Minister of Infrastructure.

Ministers' Statements

**MINISTER'S STATEMENT 124-19(2):
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF ENGINEERING AND
GEOSCIENCE WEEK**

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Mr. Speaker, professional engineers and geoscientists play an essential role in the growth and development of the Northwest Territories. They help address our society's needs and solve our problems. Their work is evident all around us in our buildings, highways, and airports; our safe drinking water; in our power and communications; and in our mapping and resource

development in the North, just to name a few. These professions play an important role in achieving our priorities under the mandate of the Government of the Northwest Territories 2019-2023, such as making strategic infrastructure investments that connect communities and investing in alternative and renewable energy.

Mr. Speaker, professional engineering is at the core of the Department of Infrastructure. Engineering and Geoscience Week is an opportunity to express appreciation to the professional engineers and geoscientists who work hard every day, often in challenging environments, to protect public interest and safety and to improve our quality of life. The Northwest Territories and the Nunavut Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists, or NAPEG, will be celebrating their annual Engineering and Geoscience Week from February 27 to March 6, 2021. Normally, youth engagement, networking, and professional development activities would be taking place in person, but this year the venue has shifted to a virtual space. The focus is to improve public awareness of the important role that these professionals have in the North.

Mr. Speaker, the Department of Infrastructure recently took over the responsibility for administering the Engineering and Geoscience Professions Act from the Department of Justice. This will allow for legislation to be administered by a department that has knowledge and experience with the work of professionals to whom the legislation applies. We look forward to working with NAPEG and other stakeholders to review the act and to see what changes may be required so that it is responsive and reflective of the current needs of the public, the professionals, and the industry.

Mr. Speaker, later this sitting, I will be tabling the Good Building Practice for Northern Facilities 2020 manual. The 2020 Good Building Practice manual is an extensive update to the 2009 edition and incorporates 10 years of research and development in new codes and standards, which many of the Northwest Territories' registered engineers and technicians contributed to. It adds new sections for environmental regulations; climate change; and civil, environmental, geotechnical, and hazardous building material assessment considerations. It contains updated recommendations for more

sustainable development, improvements in energy conservation, accessibility, as well as climate change adaptation and mitigation for northern buildings. Managing the full lifecycle of infrastructure in the North requires a deep awareness and understanding of the unique challenges and risks arising from harsh climate conditions. The new edition of the manual illustrates the complexities that may be encountered when planning, designing, constructing, and maintaining infrastructure in remote cold regions.

This manual supplements the objectives of the national codes and standards and presents a compilation of best practices and requirements developed by many decades of experience designing and building in cold regions. It also incorporates new technologies and methods for northern infrastructure and is expected to benefit a broad range of stakeholders beyond the Government of the Northwest Territories, such as owners, developers, planners, designers, builders, as well as suppliers, building maintainers and operators. In preparing the updated Good Building Practice manual, the GNWT has drawn upon the experience of numerous individuals from within the Department of Infrastructure, other GNWT departments, and private sector agencies. Many of them contributed technical writing and comments to this guidebook. We hope this kind of shared learning experience and cooperation effort can continue during the production of future editions.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, I would like to recognize the Northwest Territories' past and present engineering and geoscience professionals. Their curiosity and creativity have led to the countless contributions that we enjoy today and will undoubtedly play an important role in solving the challenges to come. Quyanainni, Mr. Speaker.

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

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 125-19(2): FIREFIGHTER RECOGNITION

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The safety of our residents is a priority for the Government of the Northwest Territories. Through the Office of the Fire Marshal and the Emergency Management Organization, the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs supports communities in building local capacity to respond to emergencies. Fires can place a heavy burden on families, communities, and governments. Providing fire services in the North is challenging for all community governments given our remote locations, limited access to resources, and harsh environment.

Mr. Speaker, in order to deliver fire services, the NWT relies heavily on volunteer firefighters. The delivery of fire prevention and fire protection services in our communities would not be possible without the many career and volunteer firefighters across the Northwest Territories and their significant contribution. This is a tough job. Thankfully, we have many individuals who take on this duty.

There is a tremendous commitment required to be a volunteer firefighter. These individuals:

- sacrifice time away from their families and friends;
- must attend training to keep their skills fresh in order to safely respond to calls;
- have a role in educating residents to how they can protect themselves from fires;
- respond to and investigate the cause of fires; and
- have a role in inspecting our buildings to ensure people can get out safely.

Mr. Speaker, given this very important role that firefighters have, it is essential that we recognize and acknowledge the efforts of those who provide these services that contribute to our safety and security.

- The first is a Long Service Recognition Program, which awards recipients of the Northwest Territories for fire services with medals and pins for years of service; and
- The second is the NWT Fire Service Merit Award. This award is presented to individual firefighters and community fire departments who have made significant contributions to the Northwest Territories fire services and community fire protection.

Mr. Speaker, today, I want to highlight the service of one of the Northwest Territories' most outstanding volunteers and to celebrate the recipient of the 2020 NWT Fire Service Merit Award, Mr. David Bernhardt. The community of Inuvik nominated Mr. Bernhardt for his contributions to the NWT fire service and an incredible 40 years of dedicated service to the Inuvik residents.

Originally from Cape Dyer, Nunavut, Mr. Bernhardt moved to Inuvik with his family early in the 1960s. He joined the Inuvik Fire Department in 1980 and has served as a firefighter, lieutenant, captain, and deputy fire chief. In 2019, his colleagues bestowed him with the Canadian Municipal Long Service Award, which recognizes achievements of long-

servicing volunteer firefighters in our communities across Canada.

Today, Mr. Bernhardt remains an active member of the fire department, sharing his history and knowledge as a mentor to junior firefighters. Although he no longer is a front-line firefighter, he currently ensures exterior firefighting operations run efficiently and, more importantly, maintains a calm and steady presence, with a watchful eye that provides for the safety of everyone on the fire scenes.

Mr. Bernhardt does not know when he will retire from volunteer firefighting, but he considers his fellow firefighters as family and loves to contribute in any way that he can. Firefighter Bernhardt is a unique and admirable individual, and so I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate him on receiving the 2020 Fire Service Merit Award. I also want to thank all firefighters across the Northwest Territories for their dedication and their commitment in making us safer. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

Members' Statements

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON PUBLIC RESTROOM FACILITIES ON HIGHWAY NO. 3 BETWEEN BEHCHOKO AND YELLOWKNIFE

MR. LAFFERTY: Masi, Mr. Speaker. [Translation] Today, while I stand here, I want to talk on behalf of the elders. A lot of the elderly ladies have spoken to me of how the road comes, and also, whenever we have an all-season road, a lot of the elderly ladies are very concerned about how come they don't have safety, on behalf of the elders. Mr. Speaker, I will speak in English. [Translation ends]

I want to speak about the issue that, for reasons you will soon understand, rarely makes it to these hallowed walls. Some might be tempted to laugh, but it's deadly serious, as you will see. It's about toilets, Mr. Speaker, public toilets. I'm referring to the provision of lavatories on the most travelled section of road in the Northwest Territories, Highway No. 3. The problem is that there are no restrooms or toilets. I'm talking about the 100-kilometre stretch of Highway No. 3 between Behchoko and Yellowknife, and when the winter road opens up to the outlying communities, that's even further.

There is not a single gas station or restroom on the whole, entire road, Mr. Speaker. I talked earlier about the very unfortunate death on Highway No. 3 of my constituent, the late Kelly Washie. When

Kelly got out of the car on the roadside last New Year's Eve, I'm sorry to say that it was to relieve himself. That's when he was tragically hit. This is the most tragic consequence of there not being public washrooms or restrooms on this highway, but in fact, not a day passes when the absence of public restrooms is not illuminated in the most urgent way because, Mr. Speaker, for some, especially the most vulnerable elders, elderly women, and especially children, sometimes an hour and a half, two hours, two and a half hours, or even from Wekweeti, it's even further, almost five or seven hours; way too long to wait. What does your mother, your wife, your sister, and your little daughter do then, Mr. Speaker? I will have questions for the appropriate Minister at the appropriate time. Masi, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON AGRICULTURE

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to focus on some positive news that relates to an important sector of the economy which can greatly impact our residents' access to fresh and reasonably priced products in the Northwest Territories. That sector is agriculture. This government developed an agricultural strategy in 2017 with overall goals of building a relevant and viable agriculture industry; providing support for the safe, sustainable development of food production systems; support to advance and contribute to the sustainability of NWT communities; encourage and support the transfer of food production skills; and increase availability of local food for northern residents.

Recently the federal and territorial governments provided three, I am proud to say, Hay River businesses with grants to assist in the expansion and growing of their businesses in the agricultural sector. Riverside Growers, received \$118,642; Greenwood Gardens received \$111,174; and Choice North Foods received \$180,000. It is support such as this which will encourage others to view the agriculture sector not only as a hobby, but just as importantly, as a business that provides jobs and promotes healthy homegrown agricultural products.

Mr. Speaker, I know that those who are taking on the challenge of promoting and producing agriculture products, not only in Hay River, but throughout the Northwest Territories, are to be commended for outstanding work and dedication. When one looks at the climate of the Northwest Territories, agriculture seems like an industry that does not belong here. However, many Northerners

are showing and proving that, through advancement in technology, our need to provide residents with access to fresh and reasonably priced foods, along with the passion they have for the industry, agriculture is alive and well in the NWT. Not only do we have those businesses producing foods, but we have those that are supplying infrastructure, such as greenhouses, production equipment, training, and research development.

The agricultural industry in the Northwest Territories requires this government's continued support, both financially and in kind, if we expect it to develop, grow, and become sustainable. I would encourage all of you in this room to visit Hay River this summer. Visit with the people and businesses that are providing agricultural products and services. Stop by the fisherman's wharf on Saturdays during the summer months and pick up some fresh produce, eggs, fish, and have a taste of Hay River. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Hay River South. Members' statements. Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON COVID-19 VACCINE FOR INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

MS. SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to start with a quote made on February 4, 2021, by Marc Miller, the federal Minister of Indigenous Services, on defending the decision to prioritize Indigenous people in the roll out of the vaccine: "The decision to prioritize Indigenous people living in remote communities, but also in other parts of the country, including those living in urban centres, is based on science. It's not a matter of politics or opinion." Why is it, Mr. Speaker, that Indigenous people have not been placed on the priority list in the NWT, if our federal Minister is defending this publicly?

I am aware that the entire of what we call in the NWT small or remote communities have been prioritized in the NWT, which is a great start, but I am sure, when the federal Minister said "remote Indigenous communities," Inuvik, Hay River, and Fort Smith would fall under that term, coming from Ottawa. Why haven't the mostly Indigenous regional centres been on this priority list? Yesterday's announcement of the expanded priority groups still do not have Indigenous people without falling into all the other additional priority lists in other communities and urban centres, which I would consider Yellowknife to be in the Northwest Territories.

Inuvik is an Indigenous community. It is a designated Gwich'in community under the Gwich'in Comprehensive Land Claim, as well as an Inuvialuit

community under the Inuvialuit Land Claim Agreement. It can't get more Indigenous than that, can it? I am also questioning why a two-week scheduled clinic was changed in my community to one week a month ago, and the vaccine for the second week was then designated for Yellowknife. Was this based on science?

Yesterday, it came to my attention that non-resident mine workers may be prioritized or considered for vaccines in the Northwest Territories. I hope this is not the case, Mr. Speaker, not before Indigenous people and the people of the Northwest Territories. I know that there are NWT residents working out at the mines, but non-resident employees should have to get their vaccine in their home province, not by receiving doses for NWT residents that are shipped to the Northwest Territories. I say maybe put some COVID cops at the mines so they follow the rules as well as we have to in the rest of the territory. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON HOUSING FOR SENIORS

MS. MARTSELOS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today, I am going to talk about seniors' housing in the NWT and speak once again about the Core Need Income Threshold. Twenty years ago, the NWT Housing Corporation created a seniors' housing strategy. The strategy was created to address the needs of seniors in a number of areas, which included over-crowded public housing units while families remained on waiting lists; a lack of proper senior housing; and a lack of public housing units built specifically for seniors.

In the 20 years since this seniors' housing strategy was implemented, the NWT has seen some improvements within these areas, such as more senior public housing being available today than before. However, senior housing needs have only increased along with the increased population of seniors in the NWT. I believe that the NWT Housing Corporation needs to once again create a seniors' housing strategy. Building upon the previous strategy, we must create a modern strategy that won't discriminate against any seniors, period. Right now, any senior or senior couple whose income is above the Core Need Income Threshold will not be eligible for public housing. Seniors in this boat must find housing by themselves.

Mr. Speaker, I understand that the Core Need Income Threshold exists to help low-income people find housing. However, I think this means test needs to be dropped when it comes to seniors. As I said in a Member's statement last month, some

seniors may demonstrate on paper that they are financially capable of finding housing by their own means. However, that should not be the sole determining factor for whether seniors should get help finding housing. For example, some seniors have dysfunctional family members who depend on their parents or grandparents for food, shelter, and other needs. In these situations, the monthly income for seniors dwindles quickly, leaving them far less income to address their own necessities. Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

---Unanimous consent granted.

MS. MARTSELOS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In closing, the needs of seniors are diverse and unique, but our housing policies need to reflect that reality. We need to re-evaluate how we help seniors find suitable housing for their situations. It cannot be just about income. As I said last month, we need to consider something like a universal flat rate for all seniors in public housing. I will have questions for the housing Minister later today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON PREVENTING LIABILITIES

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. The first report of the court-appointed receiver for the NWT assets of Strategic Oil and Gas was released on November 9th. The available funds for the receiver to manage the site, keep it in environmental compliance, and to prepare regulatory submissions are dwindling quickly. There appears to be only about \$2.4 million remaining available for the site from the financial security held in the Northwest Territories. Clearly, the costs for remediation of this site will be in the tens of millions of dollars for taxpayers as it is inevitable GNWT will become the owner in 2021.

The Cameron Hills mess represents a total system failure to prevent this property from becoming a public liability. The last few stages have played out under our watch. We accepted this site under devolution, did not use any of our available tools to require full financial security or even a closure plan, and have not put in place any policies or legislative changes to prevent such a mess from happening again. We can't afford more public environmental liabilities. Our government has not done enough to demonstrate responsible resource development. The tens of millions of dollars that will need to be spent to properly remediate Cameron Hills should and could have been spent on housing, childcare, education, and other needs.

Preventing and better managing environmental liabilities was a priority of the last Assembly. We collectively failed and failed badly. Preventing environmental liabilities is not one of the priorities of this Assembly or in the mandate or even in the mandate letter of any Minister, as much as I tried and will continue to try to get our government finally moving on this issue. There's no roadmap, identification of gaps, or even a list of publicly available policies or legislative changes that are needed.

I've met with the Minister and his staff on this issue, and would dearly like to get something done during this Assembly. We need to do a number of things including: mandatory legislative requirements; foreclosure plans and full financial security consistent with the polluter pays principle; reasonable limits on the total discretion of Ministers on the form of financial security; better coordination of closure planning; and financial security across land, water, and resource specific legislation; and an early warning system that alerts political and senior managers when action is required. I will have questions later today for the Minister of Lands. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON LIVER AWARENESS MONTH

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This month, the Canadian Liver Foundation is recognizing Liver Health Month in Canada. The liver is the body's third largest organ and weighs in at approximately three pounds. Your liver can regenerate to 90 percent of its original size and serves as the body's filter, cleaning our blood and regulating hormone levels and cholesterol as well as vitamin and mineral uptake. The liver is our processor and, daily, performs over 500 functions essential to life.

When people think of liver disease or failure, there is often stigma attached. An automatic assumption is that it is caused by alcohol when, in fact, there are over 100 diseases that affect the liver, and only one is alcohol-related. Liver cancer is one of the fastest-growing and deadliest types of cancer in Canada today. As well, up to 20 percent of obese individuals in Canada have non-alcoholic fatty liver disease, which may require a transplant sometime down the road. Liver disease can affect people from all walks of life, regardless of their age, gender, ethnic background, or socio-economic status. While one in four Canadians may be affected by liver disease, many are unaware. Early diagnosis remains the key to a successful treatment or cure.

Liver Health Month is especially important to me as I lost my maternal uncle, William Grant, to primary liver cancer, likely due to his time as a military airline mechanic working with solvents and chemicals; and I, myself, suffer from an immune disease called sarcoidosis that affects my liver. I was diagnosed 10 years ago after having surgery in Edmonton to remove benign tumours from the right lobe of my liver. This began my own health journey where I soon learned I would have to navigate not only my own diagnosis and subsequent health-related issues, but become an expert in medical travel, specialist appointments, blood work, self-advocacy, and diagnostic imaging.

My story is not a unique one. Many people across the North face the same struggle, trying to balance living life with a chronic disease or condition. This balance is hard to achieve at the best of times and is only been thrown on end by COVID-19. Given the challenges of receiving healthcare in the North, it only seems smart that we be proactive and work on preventing people from getting sick in the first place. Education will be the key to reducing the mortality related to liver diseases, and I urge my colleagues to help by sharing posts from the Canadian Liver Foundation this month. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON VENDOR COMPLAINT POLICY

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When people are working and our economy is booming, the North feels different. Meaningful employment improves mental health outcomes, increase in school attendance, jumpstarts community participation, and decreases social support demand. Our North success is deeply rooted in the GNWT's ability to support northern small and medium businesses that rely on the financial influx of public service procurement.

This past Sunday, Industry, Tourism and Investment completed its second online public engagement session to gather feedback from northern entrepreneurs as part of a comprehensive review of all procurement policies. Their goal is to modernize the procurement process to the benefit of northern residents and businesses.

The most common procurement feedback I received from NWT residents is that northern employment outweighs a southern business with a northern address. In short, Mr. Speaker, keeping Northerners working through meaningful, stable employment is our key to procurement success. As part of its existing procurement process, the

Department of Finance provides vendors with an avenue to handle written complaints in an organized, consistent manner using the vendor complaint policy. According to the policy, the Office of the Comptroller General receives an annual report tracking all vendor complaints to improve the procurement process.

Mr. Speaker, this means the GNWT has, at its fingertips, at least a decade of annual reports outlining the unique vendor challenges experienced as well as patterns of complaints within the procurement process. This information adds value to the procurement review process, and I hope it will be used as an added tool to form the procurement review panel recommendation.

This information is not only valuable today, Mr. Speaker. It is also valuable into the future. Policy documents need to be living documents that ensure we are continually learning and improving the services of government. I would like to see a public version of this annual report shared on the open government portal with recommendations to and responses from the government that ensure the GNWT continues to improve its procurement practices.

I hear weekly from Kam Lake businesses about yet another GNWT contract being awarded to a southern vendor. As we review another annual operating budget on the heels of the largest capital budget ever passed in the NWT, we cannot afford to mess this up. We need to get procurement done right. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON SNOW CASTLE OPENING

MR. JOHNSON: Hear ye, hear ye. Mr. Speaker, I am glad to announce that today is the grand opening of the Snowking's Winter Festival. I want to thank the entire Snowking crew, staff, and volunteers for all of the hard work they do to building such an amazing festival, 26 wonderful snow-filled years running, and this year, a pandemic can't stop them. However, things are going to look a little different this year, Mr. Speaker. Instead of a castle, it's more of a snow garden this year, filled with a series of adventures. Best of all, it is completely free this year, just remember to book a time slot before you head on down. Mr. Speaker, I encourage all residents of our Snowking to go down the snow slide, play in the snow maze, check out the merch, check out the awesome snow-carving competition. There is fun to be had for all. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
RAPID TESTING ACROSS THE NORTHWEST
TERRITORIES**

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today, I am bringing up rapid testing across the territory. We have been having so many deaths in the communities. We are having some problems getting family members into the community. For instance, I have six members from my riding in hotel rooms in Inuvik right now. They're unable to get hotel assistance. Under the rules, it doesn't state that you have to be from the territory. If you are coming home from a funeral, it's not their fault they are going to school or they have to work elsewhere because there's no work in the communities. It's not their fault, but the government should be taking care of that. The mourning and grief these six members have of a family from my hometown. It's tough.

Rapid testing should be available. If we have the units, why aren't we using them? Check them when they come in. Give them three or four days. Check them again, then let them go home, but in a social bubble at a house so that they could be home and grieve. Unable to grieve, it's not right, Mr. Speaker. We spend so much money on COVID secretariat and all this. If we are buying the unit for rapid testing, use it. It has to be dealt with, Mr. Speaker. Too many people are hurt. We are not testing residents across the territory. It could be saving our government more money by using these testing units.

Compassionate exemption on rapid testing: we need to get that sorted out, Mr. Speaker. Today, I will be asking the Minister why we aren't using those rapid testing units for the community. We are legislators here who could make changes. Nineteen Members, we could make changes and let the Minister take over that instead of having Dr. Kandola run that department. We have the Premier and we have the Minister who are able to do that. I am going to be asking them why not. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Nunakput. Members' statements. Item 4, recognition of visitors in the gallery. Item 5, reports of committees on the review of bills. Member for Thebacha.

**Reports of Committees on the Review of
Bills**

BILL 16:
AN ACT TO AMEND THE INCOME TAX ACT

MS. MARTSELOS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Your committee would like to report on its consideration of Bill 16, An Act to Amend the Income Tax Act. Bill 16 received second reading in the Legislative Assembly on November 2, 2020, and was referred to the Standing Committee on Government Operations for review. On February 25, 2021, the standing committee held a public meeting with the Minister of Finance and completed its clause-by-clause review of the bill. Mr. Speaker, the committee reports that Bill 16, An Act to Amend the Income Tax Act, is ready for consideration in Committee of the Whole as amended and reprinted. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Thebacha. Reports of committees on the review of bills. Item 6, reports of standing and special committees. Member for Kam Lake.

**Reports of Standing and Special
Committees**

COMMITTEE REPORT 11-19(2):
REPORT ON BILL 13: AN ACT TO AMEND THE
INTERPRETATION ACT

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Your Standing Committee on Social Development is pleased to provide its report on the review of Bill 13, An Act to Amend the Interpretation Act, and commends it to the House.

Introduction

Bill 13, An Act to Amend the Interpretation Act, received second reading in the Legislative Assembly and was referred to the Standing Committee on Social Development October 29, 2020. Bill 13 amends Interpretation Act to remove references to Mountain Standard Time and Daylight Savings Time and replaces them with a reference to one standard time. Bill 13 will allow the Commissioner in Executive Council to replace the current Daylight Savings Time regulations, with permanent year-round time standard regulations.

Public Review of Bill 13

Committee invited written and in-person submissions from municipal and Indigenous governments, organizations, education councils, and the business community. Committee received seven written submissions from:

- Nahanni Construction Ltd. / Cold Weather Construction Experts
- Dehcho Divisional Education Council
- Yellowknives Dene First Nation, Dettah Administration

- Sahtu Divisional Education Council
- Mayor and Council, Town of Hay River
- Dave Nickerson
- David Wasylciw

Submissions received by committee are attached in appendix A, and committee thanks those who took the time to share their views. The submissions received by committee are broadly supportive of allowing the Government to amend Daylight Savings Time to one fixed time. Committee notes that the submission from the mayor and council of the Town of Hay River provided support conditional on Alberta advancing changes to one standard time.

Committee Review

Committee also considered recommendations from the work done by the 18th Legislative Assembly's Standing Committee on Social Development. In the report, Review of Motion 32-18(2), Referral of Petition 6-18(2), Elimination of Time Change in the Northwest Territories, committee acknowledges an elevated level of attention from the public. Petition 6-18(2) had 533 signatures from residents of 18 different NWT communities, supporting the Government of the Northwest Territories to move to one standard time.

Prior to making any changes to the Daylight Savings Time Regulations, committee report recommendations advise the Government of Northwest Territories to consider conducting broad public and targeted stakeholder engagement and to consult with counterparts in Alberta.

Concerns

In their review of Bill 13, committee shared concerns about the lack of options for government public engagement and consultation prior to the Commissioner in Executive Council making changes to the Daylight Savings Time regulations. This concern was addressed by a committee motion to amend Bill 13. Committee's motion requires the Minister to conduct public engagement with residents of the Northwest Territories regarding the elimination of the time change and prior to the setting of standard time.

Clause-By-Clause Review

A clause-by-clause review of the bill and public hearing was held on February 9, 2021. Committee moved one motion to amend Bill 13, which is attached in appendix B. The motion was carried, and the Minister concurred with the motion. Committee thanks the honourable R.J. Simpson,

Minister of Justice, and members of his staff for their appearance before committee.

Conclusion

Following the clause-by-clause review, a motion was carried to report Bill 13, An Act to Amend the Interpretation Act, as amended and reprinted, as ready for consideration in Committee of the Whole. Committee thanks all those who took the time to make written submissions on this bill. This concludes the standing committee's review of Bill 13. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MOTION TO RECEIVE AND ADOPT COMMITTEE REPORT 11-19(2),
CARRIED

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move, seconded by the Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes, that the Standing Committee on Social Development report on Bill 13, An Act to Amend the Interpretation Act be received and adopted by the Assembly. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Kam Lake. The motion is in order and is non-debatable. All those in favour? All those opposed? Any abstentions? The motion is carried.

---Carried

Reports of standing and special committees. Item 7, returns to oral questions. Item 8, acknowledgements. Item 9, oral questions. Member for Hay River South.

Oral Questions

QUESTION 619-19(2):
AGRICULTURE

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The questions will be for the Minister responsible for ITI. Currently, the GNWT has an Agriculture Strategy which is nearing its good-until-2022 expiry date. Can the Minister clarify the reference dated time frame of 2017 to 2022 with respect to the Agriculture Strategy? Is the department considering an update or a revision based on progress or lack of it over the last four years? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, I am very happy to say that we certainly are planning to have a new strategy, and

with respect to success or not, I can say that, when the strategy first began back in 2017, there were very few commercial producers. We are now numbering roughly eight to 10 with some significant growth in the area. We are gathering the information now, and I would expect that more formal engagements will happen beginning possibly as early as the end of this year and, if not, early in 2022 so that it is ready indeed to roll out in due course next year. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: The agriculture strategy states that, in order to develop the agriculture sector, regulations, legislation, and policies are required at all levels of government to enable the sector to grow and function. Under current legislation, the NWT's agricultural sector has limited room to grow. Production of meats and fish are two areas of concern. Mr. Speaker, can the Minister confirm what, if any, progress is being made with respect to addressing the issue of legislation and policy that is happening in our agricultural sector?

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: With respect to meat regulations, that work is right now actively taking place in my colleague's department, Health and Social Services, and that indeed is part of the mandate and, as such, is moving along and will be reported on in that regard. Beyond that, Mr. Speaker, there is also now, newly formed, the territorial agriculture agri-food association. That is an entity that is very active in this space and one that I would certainly commend producers to be involved with as an advocacy group to identify any other barriers that may exist. Last, Mr. Speaker, there is recently rolled out the red tape working group for small- and medium-sized businesses, which I suspect a number of the businesses in this sector would likely fall into that category. To the extent that they are facing continued barriers, I would urge them that, once that group starts rolling out, that they would please contact them so we can indeed address those barriers.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Capacity building opportunities are important. As a First Nations person, I find the best way to learn is always hands-on training that meets regional and local needs. Mr. Speaker, I would ask the Minister to consider ensuring that all communities throughout the Northwest Territories have access to a greenhouse and the tools required to support training and capacity building around agriculture.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: I certainly am keen to see what can be done with respect to ensuring that we continue to grow this industry, not only in terms of its commercial value but also as far as it may impact on food security more generally. For now, Mr. Speaker, what I can say: if there is a community that is looking to have a greenhouse, looking to have access to some agricultural

opportunities, I would urge them to speak to their local economic development officer or other ITI officer. There are programs and projects that can help support them, whether in terms of the training that may be needed or in terms of some community funding opportunities. I certainly would say again is that, if those are areas of interest, they should please reach out. We certainly have resources available.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I previously said, if we are expected to grow the industry, then we have to provide the support and tools required to make that happen. We can start with our institutions, such as corrections facilities. As both these facilities are under the responsibility of the same Minister, will the Minister of ITI commit to working with the Minister of ECE and Justice to establish small-scale greenhouses on institutional grounds to further the interests of the agricultural sector? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Those two departments, while under one Minister, have different areas, and they may not necessarily flow into the agriculture-commercial sector, for which ITI is responsible. Notwithstanding, Mr. Speaker, I was happy to discover very recently through my colleague that take a kid gardening is, in fact, a program that exists in schools across the Northwest Territories. Absolutely, I will commit to speaking to the Minister of ECE and the Minister of Justice to see what we can do to bring some synergy to this area and to agriculture more broadly. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 620-19(2):
PUBLIC RESTROOMS ON HIGHWAY NO. 3

MR. LAFFERTY: Masi, Mr. Speaker. [Translation] When I did the Member's statement, the one on behalf of the words of the elders, the words of the elderly ladies were talking about while they were standing, just like them standing here, asking the government. Because we are asking questions on behalf of the elders, the Minister of Infrastructure, I have a question for you. [Translation ends] The Minister of Infrastructure talked about engineering in her statement earlier. I would like to ask questions about this, the sorry inconsideration her and her department has for hundreds of people driving back and forth between Yellowknife and Behchoko on a daily basis. You would think, with their great feats of engineering, that they might give minor passing thought to the biological needs of people driving those roads. I am talking about

simple places to relieve themselves. Mr. Speaker, the first question I have for the Minister is: why don't we have on Highway No. 3 and beyond to all our communities restrooms along the three side turnouts between Behchoko and Yellowknife? Mr. Speaker, Masi.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The outhouses between Yellowknife and Behchoko were brought up in the House either this week or last week. The Department of Infrastructure and Department of ITI are both working in partnership in ensuring that we have adequate facilities along the way, including pullouts, because we continue to improve, promote, and deliver safety through investments in infrastructure because highway safety is our utmost priority. I do want to let the Member know that the Department of ITI and Infrastructure will be looking at developing a management plan in order to have a look at some of the highways, not only on Highway No. 3, but all along all the other highways in the Northwest Territories. Mr. Speaker, we have 10 highways in the Northwest Territories, and we need to ensure that there is some safety out there. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. LAFFERTY: I did not hear much of an answer there. Highway safety, as the Minister indicated, we need to put that into actions; less talk, less study. We have experienced a tragic accident on the highway numerous occasions, and here we are still deliberating in the House about restrooms along the highway. There is urgent need. Mr. Speaker, I don't know how else I can relay that message, the importance of having those restrooms along the highway. Just putting into action on the general standards for providing public toilets or restrooms on the well-used highways like Highway No. 3, has her department, the Minister of Infrastructure, thought of devolving a position on this particular question that I have in this House?

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: No, we have not looked at developing a specific position for this outhouse and that, but we did talk about looking at another, perhaps, highway safety and look at perhaps bringing it to appropriations for some extra funding for finance. I hope I have answered the Member's question in terms of looking at working with ITI and to be able to come up with a management plan. I think that is the key here, is we need to have a look at it, address the safety issues, and come up with a plan.

MR. LAFFERTY: [Translation] Yes, there are questions I have. I am talking about the elderly ladies, the elderly ladies. I am talking on behalf of what I was told. The Minister, we have to respect.

Though we always say, "Let's work with one another; let's work with one another," that is not what I am hearing. These words of the elders are very important. [Translation ends] This is not an outhouse we are talking about. We are talking about restrooms along the highway. Will the Minister commit to coming back to this House with plans and funding for the construction of at least a minimum of one or two public washrooms or restrooms along highways between Yellowknife and Behchoko? I don't mean a long line of promises, study. We are tired of studying. It's a very simple problem that -- to death. A promise to put a 20-year plan in place, this is part of the commitment that needs to be made in this House. I need to bring the message back to the elder who particularly asked me, and I'm not getting any answers today. Can there be a plan in place that can be brought back to this House?

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: This is not a simple answer. We have to work with a variety of departments within the GNWT to look at it. There is some work that is involved; pullouts between Yellowknife and Behchoko, there are a number of things we need to look at. We need to see if there is space and provide technical support to ITI's efforts to fund and build outhouses, should ITI decide to do so. I'm not saying that we would commit to it because I can't. I need to work with the Department of Infrastructure to be able to look at some of the technical requirements to putting an outhouse there and whether the department is going to be able to find some funding and work together with this.

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

MR. LAFFERTY: Masi, Mr. Speaker. It has been well over a month since we had a public forum in Behchoko, and part of the discussion we had was with the Minister's senior staff, as well. They agreed that we need to formulate partnerships to deal with these particular issues. It has been over a month, and we are still talking about, potentially, we can work on this. I would like to see an action plan in place during the life of this Assembly. Could that be established between the partners? Of course, working along with the Tlicho government because they are the ones who initiated the discussion. Could that be established within the life of this Assembly? Masi, Mr. Speaker.

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: From my understanding, the meeting in Behchoko that involved a lot of the key stakeholders was mostly around cell service. We had the Departments of Infrastructure and ITI, as well as some of the leaders, to be able to look at the safety of the cell service along the highway, and it was something that the working group was going to look at. This outhouse is a whole new subject that we need to perhaps add to that discussion,

because it is something that we need to look at, as well. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 621-19(2):
HOUSING FOR SENIORS

MS. MARTSELOS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Can the Minister tell us if her department considers it a priority to help all NWT residents find adequate housing regardless of their income level? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, absolutely. It is a priority for the Housing Corporation to initiate and engage with the Northwest Territories to find adequate, suitable, and affordable housing throughout the Northwest Territories. However, I know the Member is also going to be asking about the income threshold that we do currently have. The income threshold is established for fairness and consistency throughout the Northwest Territories, but I would like to take that back because there are a lot of considerations we need to look at with how we look at the rent that we are collecting for the public housing units.

Also, I really wanted to elaborate on the housing programs that we do have that try to work with the residents of the Northwest Territories to find affordable, adequate, suitable housing, and I'm hoping to hearing the rest of the Member's statements, as well, and the questions coming forward because it really puts together a different, unique approach that the Housing Corporation needs to consider. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. MARTSELOS: Can the Minister tell us if she believes that the current means test determining seniors' eligibility for public housing is fair?

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Looking at the number of units we have throughout the Northwest Territories for seniors, we do have approximately 2,900 throughout the territory; 374 of those units are occupied by seniors' housing. Also, throughout the Northwest Territories, the Housing Corporation has also established seniors' complexes in Fort Liard, Fort Providence, and a number of communities throughout the territory. Not only that, I wanted to elaborate that, for seniors' housing throughout the territory, we really engage into partnership throughout the territory. The Housing Corporation can't come forward and, right now, put new houses on the ground. We need to look at creative alternative solutions.

I just wanted to highlight that one of the only housing societies throughout the territory is the K'asho Got'ine Housing Society in Fort Good Hope, where they took some money out of their local government, partnered up with the Housing Corporation, and also looked at the need for seniors' housing in that specific community. That is the kind of approach that I'm looking for as a Minister. I need to work with the Indigenous groups, with the stakeholders in the community. We need to start addressing housing as the number one priority within the government, but not only within the government. We need to look at this with the Indigenous groups and the people of the Northwest Territories so we can continue to work in partnership and continue with that collaborative approach to make sure that we have and continue with affordable housing, adequate housing, suitable housing for the residents of the Northwest Territories.

MS. MARTSELOS: Will the Minister commit to removing or changing the current means test determining seniors' eligibility into public housing units?

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: I know that the Member is going to continuously ask this question, and I really appreciate it because we come forward and we're coming up with adequate solutions that we are working on with the seniors. The Housing Corporation had lifted the requirement for land tenure and insurance for private homeowners in order for the client to adequately seek approval for our housing programs. The other thing that the Housing Corporation has done is eliminate the requirement for additional people living in the public housing units in order for us to calculate rent, where we're solely looking at the senior.

I recognize, coming from a smaller community, we do have elders in our smaller communities, and we do have extended family members who live with our elders who provide that adequate care. It really prevents them from going into the larger centres and the larger communities. We are supporting seniors to age in place, but with the questions coming forward, I would like to see a lot more creativity throughout the Housing Corporation, as well, in looking at further expanding our needs throughout the territory. Not only that, I need to really consider the other population, as well, of low-income families; the women, the children, and the overcrowding, the homelessness. I will bring this back as a Minister to my department. Sorry for the long answer, but I am very passionate about my portfolio. I know I can't house everybody, but I just take a look at all of the opportunities and the creativity that we can have in the Northwest Territories.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Colleagues, just to remind everyone to slow down a bit. Our interpreters may be having difficulty here. Also, be mindful for our other Members who still have to ask questions. Final supplementary. Member for Thebacha.

MS. MARTSELOS: Mr. Speaker, will the Minister consider creating a new seniors' housing strategy for the NWT Housing Corporation that does not discriminate against seniors based on income? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: I will try to speak very slowly, and I'll be very quick with my response. We are looking at the Core Need Income Threshold for seniors. This is something I will bring back to my department, but I cannot commit to putting together another strategy. I would have to bring this forward, and I will keep the Member informed. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 622-19(2):

GAHCHO KUE MINE COVID-19 OUTBREAK

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. My questions are for the Minister responsible for the Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission. We've had a recent outbreak of COVID-19 at the Gahcho Kue Mine site; 19 confirmed cases, 11 of which are workers from out of the territory, but eight of them are NWT residents. My question for the Minister is: what is he doing to protect northern workers at this mine site? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. Minister responsible for the Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission.

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. WSCC is in constant contact with the line manager to ensure all reporting requirements under the line health and safety regulations have been followed. I was very happy to tell the Members and the public that WSCC has gone in on February 26th to 28th, and part of the on-site investigation is to ensure that their control plan, which is reviewed by both WSCC and the CPHO, has remained in place and was adhered to. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. O'REILLY: I want to thank the Minister. It's good to hear that inspectors have finally been sent to the mine site. Can the Minister tell me whether there're any WSCC requirements or the control plan requires separation of northern and southern workers in terms of their accommodation at the site?

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: WSCC does not have authority under the Mine Health and Safety Act to dedicate the segregation of the two, north and southern workers. If it's an identified component of the control plan, the WSCC will enforce to adhere to this.

MR. O'REILLY: I want to thank the Minister for that, but it didn't really answer my question. There seems to be some kind of top secret exposure control plan that he can't even share any information with me on the floor of this House. I've asked about whether northern and southern workers are separated at the worksite. He can't tell me that. Now, I'll try something else. Can the Minister tell me whether this top secret control plan requires masking of employees at the site?

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: I understand the Member is trying to get information. First and foremost, this is the plan of a private industry of private company, so we need to respect that. It's their plan. In regards to his question, the Mine Health and Safety Regulations do not govern the use of face masks, and the WSCC is unable to enforce the usage. If the masks are included in the employees' control plan, the WSCC would enforce compliance to the plan. If it's in the plan, we make sure it's enforced.

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. We have a top secret plan. You can't even tell me whether masking's required at the site. I'll try something else here, Mr. Speaker. Can he tell me if there's any requirements for cleaning of the shared washrooms at the site? That's a pretty simple thing to ask, Mr. Speaker. I hope he can at least answer that. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: It is not top secret. It's a business. It's the company's control plan, and we need to respect that. We work with them through WSCC. Under the Occupational Health and Safety Regulations, washroom hygiene is addressed for non-pandemic situations. Changes as a result of outbreak are not covered under these regulations. The WSCC can enforce compliance if increased cleaning practises were identified in employer's control plan. Mr. Speaker, the Member needs to understand, if it's in the plan, we enforce it. If it's not in the plan, then that's where we can't enforce something that's not in the plan, which has been approved by WSCC and the Chief Public Health Officer. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 623-19(2):
COVID-19 VACCINE FOR INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

MS. SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As in my Member's statement, I would like to ask about the release yesterday. Can the Minister explain to us who exactly are a priority for receiving the Moderna vaccine in the category that was released yesterday? I'll quote under that category, "anyone 18-plus with CPHO approval." Why would we have this designated on the release? Is there a category under that? There must be something to make that decision to add that category. 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. The categories that were released yesterday were front-line workers aged 18-plus who interact directly with the public and are unable to work virtually in the following areas: schools, including teachers; teacher assistants or support workers; school bus drivers; front-facing administrative workers; daytime janitors. The next category is day homes and daycares, hotels, grocery stores, drugstores, banks, libraries, postal service, liquor stores, gas stations, and convenience stores; customer service agents at airports; media, including reporters and camera crews. The last category that the Member is referencing, I believe, is an area in which the CPHO could create an exemption for a group of workers who had been inadvertently left off of this list. Thank you.

MS. SEMMLER: Thank you for that answer. Are non-resident employees at remote camps a priority now, or any plan to vaccinate them in the NWT?

HON. JULIE GREEN: The short answer is: no, they are not being vaccinated now. NWT resident rotational workers in the larger centres have been prioritized to receive the vaccine since January 31st. What we've seen at the Gahcho Kue Mine is that, when you have people in a congregate setting, it doesn't really matter where they're from the NWT or somewhere else. They get sick equally, and they are all infectious to one another. As a result, we had the outbreak that we had of 20 cases, one very serious case.

What I can say about this is that the NWT will not, will not prioritize non-residents over residents. When all eligible residents have been vaccinated, and if there is vaccine required or available, then the CPHO will look at the possibility of vaccinating the rotational workers who are from outside of the territory who work in the territory.

MS. SEMMLER: Thanks to the Minister for that answer. My next question is: the immunization

clinic that was in Inuvik, there were two weeks, and then, the second week, it was rapidly cancelled. People started blowing up our phones who are from that region because they got their appointments cancelled. We always kind of hear what's going on behind the scenes, and what we were told was that the vaccine was removed from the community and sent back to Yellowknife. How much of this vaccine was set for Inuvik during that clinic from the February 1st to 5th, and how many doses were sent back to Yellowknife?

HON. JULIE GREEN: My information is that the CPHO is not aware of any clinic that was proposed or approved for Inuvik for the first week of February. That's February the 1st to the 5th, and so there was no clinic that was cancelled at that time. As I think the Member is aware, the vaccine allotted to the NWT is a public and territorial resource, and it has been moved to places where it is needed to vaccinate priority groups. In terms of how many specific vaccines were in Inuvik the first week of February, I do not have that information with me.

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

MS. SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. People can say there was no clinic. The people that had appointments know that there was, people booked in for appointments to have vaccines for their COVID shots, and they were all cancelled. I will move onto the next question: when will all Indigenous people be made a priority in rural and urban cities, whatever the term that we are going to use, in the Northwest Territories, and added to this list that was publicly released yesterday and is defended by our federal Minister who is the one coordinating all of the vaccines going out to the territories, remote communities, and Indigenous communities? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. JULIE GREEN: Indigenous people were not listed on the new priority group because this is a public healthcare system. Everyone who works in a hotel regardless of their place of origin or their ethnicity is eligible to have a vaccine. What we do have the benefit of is that the initial vaccine allotment by Ottawa was very large to all three territories and the northern parts of the provinces in order to account for the fact that health vulnerabilities are higher in Indigenous people than they are in other populations. As a result of that, we were promised enough vaccine for 75 percent of our eligible population. As of today, we are at 44 percent of vaccinating our eligible population which puts us well ahead of any other jurisdiction in Canada, which we greatly appreciate.

We have been using the National Advisory Committee on Immunization advice to guide our own NWT vaccine strategy about identifying priority

populations to vaccinate, and I just want to reiterate the two foundational principles of the development of the vaccine prioritization. The first is people who are at risk of severe disease from COVID-19, and the other is at risk of importing COVID-19. That is the foundation of our priority groups, and that is the basis on which we are now delivering vaccines.

I want to say further that, at this point, every community except Yellowknife, Hay River, and Inuvik is open for vaccination to every person over 18 years of age. The reason that the three communities I just mentioned are not open is because of the larger populations and the availability of vaccine not matching up at this point. We are waiting for another big shipment. At this point, every community has had two clinics, and every resident over 18 years old, except in Yellowknife, Hay River, and Inuvik, are eligible to receive that vaccine. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 624-19(2):
COVID-19 RAPID TESTING ACROSS THE
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today, I was talking about rapid testing. We said we had a death in the community, and we have six family members sitting in a hotel in Inuvik. I want to know what's happening with rapid testing across the territory. On December 22nd this past year, NWT Health and Social Services said, "All NWT communities have access to rapid COVID-19 testing that can deliver preliminary results to patients in as little as 15 minutes." Can the Minister confirm these rapid tests are available and which communities they are available in? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my understanding that every community, even those without health centres, have rapid testing available to them. The important piece to know about rapid testing is that it is only used on people who have symptoms of COVID. They are not going to use it on me unless I am running a fever, I have aches and pains, flu-like symptoms, respiratory symptoms. Then they would give me a test, but they do not test healthy people unless they are essential workers in the healthcare system. The situation is that the tests are widespread, but they are only used for people who are symptomatic. Thank you.

MR. JACOBSON: I'm thinking, with these rapid testing, why did we get them in the first place? My

six people can say, "I'm having the flu. I'm not feeling well," so I could get six tests brought over to the hotel and get them tested so they could go home and grieve properly with their family? That's not right. If we are going to provide that service of rapid testing, why can't we use them when they come off the plane? Rapid test them. We are legislators here; we could make changes. I want to know: when is the Minister going to take back control from Dr. Kandola and start doing that job?

HON. JULIE GREEN: The situation with the rapid testing is that, even though somebody doesn't have symptoms now, they can develop them at any point over the 14 days. The rapid tests are not a substitute for isolation. Until the virus creates a load in the body that can be detected, it's not possible to know whether this person is infectious or not. That's the situation with rapid testing. There really needs to be ongoing testing through the quarantine period to determine whether someone is infectious.

What the tests are for, I think, was really well illustrated in Fort Liard. What happened there, as we all know, there was an outbreak. It's my understanding that the community response team then tested everybody in the community repeatedly to find out whether they were infectious with COVID-19 in order to be effective in the outbreak management. That is what we are saving the tests for: to manage an outbreak if one were to come along.

MR. JACOBSON: I want to thank the Minister for that. Man, she could do the job. She could leave this COVID-19 and lead. I thank her for that. I want to ask the Minister. It states in the rules, like, family members, it doesn't state where you're from. The people in the hotel room are six people from Tuktoyaktuk, born and raised, because I was with them growing up. Now tell me: where does it state them being denied for hotel compensation. Why are we not paying their hotel compensation at the hotel during this isolation period?

HON. JULIE GREEN: I recognize this is a difficult time for the Member to have a death, not only in his community, but in his family. It is not my job to decide which hotel rooms are paid for and in what circumstances. That's the job of the Premier as the lead on the COVID Secretariat.

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

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to ask the Premier. Madam Premier, I need help here. People from our communities are hurting. It's the last thing they need to be doing is paying a \$2,000 bill for 14 days in a hotel room. They need help. I am asking for help here. We need to show a little bit more compassion and

leadership in regard to this. It's not only them. There are other families who are hurting, not only the family that I am talking about. It's other families that are hurting. It should be looked at, reassessed, and say yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Nunakput. Honourable Premier.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a fine balance. I would love to be able to accommodate every single person who wants to come to the NWT, whether they're residents or not. In fact, we started with that when we started the COVID secretariat. However, I am also conscious that it is taxpayers' money. It's a real fine balance between being empathetic and providing for every single person, no matter what reason, or being responsible to taxpayers. I heard MLAs; and I heard the general public; and I heard the business communities, and chiefs, leaders of communities, who were saying, "Don't do it anymore." The CPHO's recommendation is that no one travel. Jurisdictions throughout Canada are now saying the recommendation is, "Don't come to our jurisdictions. Don't travel."

Mr. Speaker, it's not as easy as just saying, "Cover them." We cover for almost everyone. The only people we are not covering in the NWT who are residents are people on discretionary travel, those who are going for vacations. Every other person has been covered, from my understanding. When they're not residents, whether they're born here or not, when you leave here after a certain amount of time, you lose your residency. Mr. Speaker, at this point, we are not covering that because we don't have the finances. We have to be accountable. The Member did say that we have a lot of money, but we also have to be accountable for it. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 625-19(2):
LIVER AWARENESS MONTH

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Minister of Health and Social Services. Can the Minister explain how the department liaises with national NGOs or organizations such as the Canadian Liver Foundation to ensure that Northerners can maximize the supports and services they offer but also so that we can contribute to ongoing research? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Department of Health and Social Services has relationships with a number of national organizations, such as Canadian Blood Services and the Mental Health Commission of Canada. However, we don't have a relationship with the Canadian Liver Foundation. I have asked the department to determine if there are areas where the health system can work more proactively with that organization. Thank you.

MS. NOKLEBY: I'm glad to hear the Minister say that she would have her department reach out to the Canadian Liver Foundation, given our propensity maybe for a little bit of liking the drink in the North. That would probably be a good thing. Annually, there is an 80 percent shortfall in funding to research liver issues when compared to the number of grant applications that are received. Could you imagine if any one of these applications actually contained the cure for liver disease or an early diagnosis tool? Does the GNWT participate in any sort of research in this area, and subsequently, do we provide any funding to do this type of research?

HON. JULIE GREEN: The Department of Health and Social Services does not conduct research in this area. If somebody who is a researcher comes to us and asks to partner with us, then we certainly would look at that proposal. We would consider offering things like in-kind services, letters of support, contributions of data, staff time, and so on. We are not the initiator of the research, but we are willing participants where we can be.

MS. NOKLEBY: I'm glad to hear. I do know that the GNWT is a very research-open type of government as evidenced by our Aurora Research Institute. A lot of the health issues that involve the liver can be prevented by a healthy-living lifestyle and a reduction in alcohol consumption. What does the department of health do to provide early education and raise awareness around liver health specifically, given the high incidence of alcoholism in the North?

HON. JULIE GREEN: I am delighted to say, because I raised this when I was a Regular MLA, that the department is now exploring the potential for implementing screening, brief intervention, and referral for alcohol use at the clinical level. What happens here is that the patient, in the course of an ordinary appointment with a healthcare provider, would be screened according to Canada's low-risk drinking guidelines, and the healthcare provider could offer a range of supports, from counselling to a referral to an alcohol treatment centre. We are interested in exploring whether we can use that. Of course, even without this screening tool in place, people who are concerned that they are over-consuming alcohol can seek help from the

community counselling program, they can access eMentalHealth supports, and of course, they can access supports through their healthcare provider if they feel like they need a detox or treatment.

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

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That's great, around alcoholism or alcohol education. I guess, too, I would like to see the department looking at a more holistic conversation around liver health, which does include things like healthy eating, exercise, and such. As I mentioned in my statement, many people have liver disease who have nothing to do with alcohol. I guess my next question would be: can we commit to launching a healthy liver campaign in the North specific to the liver, not just focused on alcoholism, but on a healthier lifestyle and prevention? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. JULIE GREEN: I can't make that commitment at this point. I can say that, of course, we are interested in helping people to have the best liver health that they can have, and our current efforts are really all focused around the alcohol strategy. I know the Member is talking about liver disease that is not alcohol-related, but we are dealing now with the issues that are alcohol-related because we see them as such big drivers of poor health in our territory. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 626-19(2):
VENDOR COMPLAINT POLICY

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My questions today are for the Minister of Finance in regard to the vendor complaint policy. The first thing I would like to know, though, has to do with the procurement review. I am wondering if the Minister of Finance can confirm if the Procurement Review Panel plans to release a draft of its report to the business community prior to finalizing that? Thank you.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have been trying to be quite clear, both with the panel and publicly, that I think it's important that the panel have the opportunity and ability to do their work independently from my office, from government, and remain objective and remain creative and do what they need to do. I have not directed them to do that, and I have not heard back from them at present on whether they intend to do that. I'm sure, if the message doesn't get back to

them through the course of this forum, then I can certainly make the inquiry on behalf of the MLA. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. CLEVELAND: I appreciate that, and I think it's important that the 19th Assembly get this right. I think spending the time to work with northern businesses to make sure we are getting it right is really important. One of the things that the Department of Finance has, one of the tools at its disposal, is the vendor complaint policy. It produces annual reports every year, and I'm guessing that the answer to my next question might be similar to the first. I am wondering if the Procurement Review Panel will be using those annual reports as part of their review or, if the Minister is unsure, if she will make them available to them.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: I can say that, over the course of approximately six years, there were only 19 complaints, and in fact, this fiscal year thus far, there has only been one. I certainly will look to compile that information and provide it for the use and review of the panel. As for what they may do with it, obviously, that is certainly up to them. Again, we'll see where it goes, but certainly, we can compile that and provide it for their use.

MS. CLEVELAND: I appreciate that. I can confirm, though it's great news to hear that there is one complaint this year, I receive a complaint probably every week about procurement from Kam Lake businesses. Whether they are escalated or not is another story. Sometimes, it's great news that things can be sorted out between conversations with MLAs and Ministers, and sometimes, they require a little bit more digging. I am wondering if the Minister would be willing to make the annual reports that go to the Comptroller General public so that, potentially, people can find patterns within those, if there is more than one that comes out every year and, also, hopefully in the future, they can drive change.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: First of all, I had April 1st as the fiscal year in my head and said one complaint. It's three, not one; my apologies. Nonetheless, fortunately, not a significantly large increase. At present, there is not a report per se. Again, not having a very large number of complaints, I don't know that a report has been necessary to date. That said, they certainly do gather up all of the complaints. Procurement Shared Services does process those complaints. The Comptroller General does receive notice of the finalized complaints. They certainly are reviewed throughout the government, and the purpose of that review, the purpose of the complaint policy, is indeed to not only provide an avenue of complaint, but to in fact change processes.

I will certainly commit to go back and see what could be perhaps collated into a report that could be shared. I am conscious that the information contained in the complaints may well be something that is subject to some privacy, and I certainly do not want to put any damper on people using the complaint process. As I say, I will commit to speaking with the Comptroller General's Office and seeing what information we can put together so that there can be some transparency on the kinds of complaints we're receiving.

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

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. No. I appreciate the Minister saying that. I definitely do not want there to be privacy concerns, and I don't want to deter anybody from reporting complaints because they do in fact offer opportunities for the government to maintain its procurement policies as living documents and to continue to make change. Even if it is identifying an industry type versus a specific person or company within an industry, I think that is a much better way of going about that. I am also wondering and I just want to confirm that the Minister is willing to also take back to her department the idea of adding recommendations that were made and what happened with those recommendations within those reports so that we can see what action was taken on the part of the GNWT and what change was made for local businesses. Thank you.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Again, Mr. Speaker, the policy right now allows individuals who have gone through the procurement process or who have considered applying on a procurement process to look there and to see whether they would be eligible to make their complaint. It would go through the client department that they are working with and then involve Procurement Shared Services and, if necessary, yes, of course, to the Comptroller General's Office. It's not a formal report per se that gets completed. At this point, in fact, my understanding is that the three that were dealt with were dealt with in a manner that did not require any kind of proposed change.

Now, again, all of which is to say, Mr. Speaker, I am very alive to the fact that the business community wanted to see change in procurement. We advanced. That was not only part of the mandate. We accelerated that, and the work is underway. I am very alive to the fact that there are concerns with the process, but right now, the vendor complaint process is not really a tool wherein people will necessarily find the recommendations they are looking for. Those recommendations are likely to come out of the procurement review process. To the extent that the vendor complaint process is not what people want it to be, then that,

too, ought to be something that is mentioned to us in the course of the review. If we can improve the complaint process to make it more accessible so that there can be that kind of a living document, I am certainly happy to hear it. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 627-19(2):
REGULATORY SYSTEM FOR CONTAMINATED
OIL AND GAS SITES

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. My questions are for the Minister of Lands, who appears to have the lead on strategic oil and gas bankruptcy. The Cameron Hills sour gas field is a mess, and the remaining funds to manage and remediate this site are drying up quickly. Can the Minister tell us when he expects the GNWT will take ownership of the site? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As everybody is aware, right now, we have a receiver in place who is looking after all aspects of it. Right now, they are making sure that regulatory compliance is followed and considering options to transfer the site to another operator through a sale process. However, it might be possible we might get small parts or the whole transferred back to us if we cannot find a company to take it over. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. O'REILLY: I want to thank the Minister for that. I think that is about as close as he has ever admitted to us taking over the site, so I am making some progress here. In my statement, I outlined that there is a total system failure in terms of preventing this site from becoming a liability for this government. I would like to know from the Minister what lessons we have learned from this mess and what is he going to do to fix this from happening again and again.

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: This was a unique situation. Securities were estimated by the federal government and then transferred to the GNWT upon devolution, and the amount held by the Canada Energy Regulator was not disclosed to the GNWT until recently. We did not know that the total amount of security is insufficient. It is unlikely that this particular situation will arise again as we have a robust regulatory system, including updating security requirements for oil and gas and other operations and devolutions since devolution has happened.

MR. O'REILLY: I want to thank the Minister for that. Again, it confirms a number of things that I said earlier. If we did not know what the security was, why did we take it and what did we do about it? Not much. In the last Assembly, there was a mandate that read as follows, "Develop an integrated comprehensive approach to management of contaminated sites, including prioritizing sharing of responsibility in collaboration with other governments, monitoring, and a sound financial security system to prevent public liabilities." Mr. Speaker, none of this was done. We collectively failed. Does the Minister have a plan, a roadmap, any resources or steps, anything that we can do to prevent another Cameron Hills from happening again?

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: I would like to thank the Member for that question and for giving it to us in advance because I have to get some really important details out in the open here. In 2019, the GNWT approach to contaminated sites management was released, and we continue to build upon this work. The interdepartmental contaminated sites committee and working group have formed to coordinate and implement this work. It is anticipated the work plan will be finalized in the spring of 2021. Over the years since devolution, the GNWT has also worked with the land and water resource boards and the federal government to update the guidelines and model for establishing securities. With the regulations being developed under the Public Land Act and other oil and gas regulations being developed by ITI, we will continue to make ongoing improvements to the regulatory system to prevent future liabilities.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. When Cameron Hills sour gas field finally becomes a GNWT liability, it's not clear how these costs are going to be appropriated or accounted for. Can the Minister tell us where the funds to remediate Cameron Hills will come from when it becomes a GNWT liability and how it will appear in the public accounts? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: The cost to remediate the site is estimated, included in the listings, unless our reclaimed security amounts held. However, Mr. Speaker, the environmental liability fund, as the Member has said, is an annual appropriation of \$2 million. If additional funds are required to cover the cost of remediation for all environmental liability sites, a supplementary estimation will be put forward, at that time, to the House for consideration. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 628-19(2):
ONLINE CAMPGROUND BOOKINGS AND
SEASON OPENING

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. When the sun starts coming back, I get excited about summer, and the sun is coming back. I am wondering if the Minister of ITI will let us know when ITI plans to open campground bookings online this summer. Thank you.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am also excited for the summer coming back. Right now, the planned reservation time for parks will be a staged opening between May 4th and May 7th. Thank you.

MS. CLEVELAND: If the bookings open May 1st to May 4th, I am wondering when the campgrounds intend to open.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: One of the things that COVID did not change is the weather, and as such, we are still sticking with the usual dates for opening. This accommodates the fact that those who have the contracts to do the campgrounds and to operate the parks need some time, once they are able to get in there, once the thaw has begun, to actually get in there and make facilities functional and usable. We are right now anticipating the same usual opening date, which would be May 15th for most parks and/or the May 24th long weekend for the other parks.

MS. CLEVELAND: I understand that it's cold sometimes. We have, in the North, some pretty tough people, and I think they would love to start their staycation season a little bit early given that they have been in town for a long time and would love the opportunity to break out their campers. Some of them who are extreme die-hards would love to just camp in the snow. I am wondering if ITI would be willing to open the season a little bit early this year. Don't worry; I am not a snow camper. If they would be willing to open the parks a little bit earlier this year. I know Yukon just announced yesterday that they are opening their parks May 1st. I am wondering if we can jump the gun and do April 30th since that is a Friday.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: That, right now, is not in the plan. I, as much as anyone else who has not travelled anywhere, would like to be outside. There is nothing much that I can do, though, and I can't speak to what the situation in the Yukon may be or what their circumstances or facilities may be. For us and for the facilities that we have, for the contractors that we have, they are going to need time, once it thaws enough, to go in there. Mr.

Speaker, I suspect it comes back down to outhouses, oddly enough, twice in one day. Not to minimize the other work that needs to get done, but right now, that is the expectation, is that, to get down to work, they need to get done. It's going to be the same opening as usual.

It cost over \$200,000 last year when they kept the parks open into the fall, which is not to say that we can't look at whether we can extend the season again, but the traditional opening is there for that reason. We have not had an outpouring of folks asking for the earlier start. We have the very fortunate situation in the North where people can indeed go camping at sites outside of the formal territorial parks, and there are many fine lodges and other staycation opportunities in the Northwest Territories. I know that my news is not necessarily good, but we will have those parks in wonderful working order as soon as the date arrives.

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

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Given that people can't leave the territory this year and they would love to probably be able to camp every single weekend, if possible, is there a plan to offer an incentive to camp more often than not or an incentive to camp at all this summer for NWT residents? Thank you.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Last year, there was a coupon program that encouraged people to stay longer in the parks, and we are looking right now at doing that again. It did seem to be very successful. It was highly subscribed, so while I am not in a position to stand and make any official announcements right now, we certainly are actively looking at doing that again, precisely to encourage people to get out and utilize the facilities of the fantastic parks that we do have. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Colleagues, our time for oral questions has expired. Item 10, written questions. Item 11, returns to written questions. Item 12, replies to Commissioner's address. Item 13, petitions. Item 14, tabling of documents. Minister of Education, Culture and Employment.

Tabling of Documents

TABLED DOCUMENT 335-19(2):
FOLLOW-UP LETTER FOR ORAL QUESTION
408-19(2): USE OF INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES
IN GNWT WORKPLACES

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following document: "Follow-up Letter for Oral

Question 408-19(2): Use of Indigenous Languages in GNWT Workplaces." Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Tabling of documents. Item 15, notices of motion. Item 16, motions. Item 17, notices of motion for the first reading of bills. Item 18, first reading of bills. Item 19, second reading of bills. Item 20, consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters: Bill 3, An Act to Amend the Public Highways Act; Bill 12, An Act to Amend the Apprenticeship, Trades and Occupational Certification Act; Bill 13, An Act to Amend the Interpretation Act; Bill 14, An Act to Amend the Securities 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(2), Main Estimates 2021-2022. Colleagues, by the authority given to me as Speaker by Motion 1-19(2), I hereby authorize the House to sit beyond the daily hour of adjournment to consider the business before the House, with Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes in the chair.

Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters

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

MR. NORN: Marsi cho, Madam Chair. Committee wishes to deal with Tabled Document 286-19(2), Main Estimates 2021-2022, Departments of Infrastructure and Justice. Marsi cho.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, committee. We will take a short break and resume with the first item.

---SHORT RECESS

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): I now call Committee of the Whole back to order. Committee, we are considering Tabled Document 286-19(2), Main Estimates 2021-2022, and we are continuing on with Infrastructure. We are under regional operations. That is on page 250, with information items on page 253. Sergeant-at-Arms, please escort the witnesses in. Minister, will you please introduce your witnesses for the record?

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Today, I have with me Deputy Minister Steve Loutitt and assistant deputy minister for regional operations, Gary Brennan.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, and welcome back. Committee, like I mentioned, we are on regional operations beginning on page 250, with information items on page 253. Questions? Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. I know my colleague, I think from Yellowknife North, asked about this. Does the Minister have any idea how much the average O and M costs are for highways? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. The average on our estimates, last year, we spent \$75 million as an average on highways. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Member.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. I will confess that I don't know how many kilometres of highways we have. Does the Minister have some kind of figure or the cost per kilometre? Is it, I don't know, \$10 a kilometre that we pay to maintain a highway? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. In terms of highway operations, we are responsible for maintaining the system. We have about 2,350 kilometres of all-weather roads, which includes bridges, small culverts, across the Northwest Territories. In terms of costs, Madam Chair, it varies, and I will repeat myself from yesterday's question because it was something similar from another Member. It talked about, for all the different highways that we have across the territories, we have some that are chipsealed, some that are

cement, and some that are just gravel roads. It would vary in terms of costs. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. Maybe I will try it again. Is there a range that the Minister could give us, cost per kilometre, for O and M for highways? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I will ask ADM Brennan to give a range. Thank you.

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

MR. BRENNAN: Thank you, Madam Chair. In terms of 2019-2020, the first thing I will say is that the range changes every year, depending, and worked on based our inspections. We did daily inspections of our highways, and work happens after that there. In 2019-2020, the range went from about \$6400 per kilometre on Highway No. 7, up to \$14,000 on Highway No. 6. We don't have the overall average per kilometre because we break it down by particular highways. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. Bingo, I got it. I appreciate that. I think this is the part of the budget where the Yellowknife Airport Revolving Fund is found as an information item. I'd like to know: there seems to be quite a lot of money that's built up as surplus in this fund. When can we expect that this is going to start to be spent? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I understood that this was just regional operations. Madam Chair, if you want me to go back to, you referenced pages 250 to 253, and the revolving fund is on pages 261 to 262. Would you like, Madam Chair, for me to do all the other sections?

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): No. We just decided yesterday, just because of the department and the info items are very large and some of the topics in there, so we'll just do the regional operations. Then, we'll go into another section where you can ask questions on the information items separately. Do you want to continue on with regional operations?

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. Look, I'm happy to get 10 minutes on the Yellowknife Airport Revolving Fund, so thank you. I appreciate that.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

MR. NORN: Thank you, Madam Chair. I was looking at page 251 about the amortization. I know that my colleague from Yellowknife asked his questions a little bit. I'm just curious. I looked in every department here in our budget here, and this is quite a bit higher, significantly higher than any other department for this line item. It made me think about: one, why is it so high? I'll continue on with my questions. Thank you.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. We're looking at the 2020-2021 to 2021-2022. There was an increase of \$3.8 million, and it was basically an amortization adjustment. The various highway assets that weren't pushed into service in 2019 to 2020, which contributed to a surplus of \$4 million, and as the creation of the Yellowknife Airport Revolving Fund where assets are now amortized, adds to the surplus. I'm sure this question will be brought up again once we get to the Yellowknife revolving fund. That's part of it. Thank you.

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

MR. NORN: Thank you, Madam Chair. Like I said, accounting is not one of my strong suits, so my understanding is that amortization is to deal with assets being written off over time. You always see a lot, I want to see if the department does try to recover that, too, when items get decommissioned. Is that line item shown anywhere, where decommissioned equipment is being sold, and if there's any profits made from that? Where would that be in this area of the budget? Thank you.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm going to get ADM Brennan to answer this because I don't see it on this section of the summary. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. BRENNAN: Thank you, Madam Chair. The Member is exactly right in his definition of amortization, and I might actually steal that for future use in terms of that comment. In terms of decommissioning of the assets, we do have a

disposal policy. We have two disposal policies, actually: one for our goods and one for our lands. Any assets disposed through either of those policies gets recorded as revenues, so any revenue would show up on the revenue page in the main estimates. This page here is just for expenditures. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. NORN: Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you for that response. I actually tried to look up this policy yesterday, even just now. Right now, that disposal of goods policy on the Department of Infrastructure website doesn't exist, so I'm hoping that the department can actually, probably, fix that and post that, and just let me know, get an update from maybe, hear back from the Minister on that? Thank you.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. We do have a policy, and I'm quite happy to share the policy with the Member. It's a Cabinet-level policy that provides for disposal of improved real property assets that are surplus to the needs of the GNWT. We are responsible for disposal of buildings as part of this policy. I think it's important just to state -- actually, no, I'm not going to waste the Members' time in going into quite detail on what this policy is other than I think it's important to be able to share that with him. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. NORN: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you for the response. It sounds like, then, like that page not found where I tried to click on that is there by design, so maybe, it's probably best to get rid of this, then? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I don't think getting rid of it is the solution, but we can be able to have a look and share the policy. I think I've shared this in the past before with some of the other Members which we have offered sale to priority interest groups in preference: NWT public corporations get priority one; community governments, priority two; not-for-profit organizations, number three; and general public, number four. The current policies require that FMB must approve the sale of surplus if it's more than \$50,000 of the appraised value property. I'm not sure if I'm answering the Member's question other than I don't think we should get rid of such a policy but maybe just share it. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Minister. I think the Member was saying that the website link is broken. There's no attachment. Member?

MR. NORN: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just so all the Members are aware, I was looking at three specific policies: there's infrastructure. I didn't mean to go down this rabbit hole. I didn't expect to do that, but Infrastructure Establishment Policy, Disposal of Goods Policy, and Disposal of Improved Real Property. One of those links work, and the other two don't. That's what I was trying to get at. Thank you. Other than that, I just wanted to ask those couple of questions. Right now, I don't have anything further. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Mr. Norn. Are there any further questions under regional operations? Member for Hay River South.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just want to go to page 251, highway operations. I'm just wondering if any of that expenditure relates to new technology to address any issues with our highways? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. You look at the increase. There is quite a big increase in the line item from previous mains. We are looking at a \$4.6 million increase, which is reallocation maintenance on Inuvik-Tuktoyaktuk highway because the winter road is no longer needed. There is an incremental increase for Highway No. 8. The huge part of this is the amortization adjustments for any of our highway assets. It's a surplus due to amortization expenses, which is lower in previous years because there's a delay in capital assets being pushed into service. There is quite a complex financial aspect in terms of how we recognize any of these assets and how we bring them into service. Are we bring them out of service? That all affects the amortization, otherwise known as depreciation in my time. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Take a look at utilities, and I notice that there is an increase there, about \$2.5 million, I think. What caused or what is the result of that number increasing? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. When I first became Minister of Infrastructure, I did

not realize that the department covers all utilities in all the GNWT buildings. When it gets dark at night, you look around and see whose light are all open. You are like, "Infrastructure is paying for that." Anyways, the increase is \$2.336 million; \$750,000 of that is for increased utilities for the new Stanton hospital. The decrease is the \$167,000. It's a net decrease in utilities for the Lafferty and N'Dulee ferries, which is the remaining funding for sewer pump-out and fuel at the two ferry crossings; and an increase of \$1.789 million for utility funding for increased electrical costs. I have got the breakdown there. It is basically utilities for predominantly a lot of the buildings that the GNWT is responsible for. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank, Madam Chair. Is any of that cost associated with, say for instance, Snare Hydro going down and the cost of running off hydro here in Yellowknife? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. No, it has nothing to do with this budget item, but I do want to state that, just in general under utilities, we have longer, colder winter seasons, which cause increased heating expenses, so there are shortfalls in the budget and increased costs, as well. However, no, it does not cost what the Member is asking in terms of the hydro stuff. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. That is all.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Are there any further questions from Members under regional operations? Member for Deh Cho.

MR. BONNETROUGE: Mahsi, Madam Chair. I just want to touch up on under facilities management. In the small communities, I know the outlying communities, like in Fort Providence and Fort Resolution, they have settlement maintainers. I know it's costing the department quite a bit of money every time one of heating boilers or whatever goes down in either Fort Resolution or Fort Providence. The operating engineers have to come from Hay River, and we don't know if they will come all hours of the night most times. I had brought this up when I was an employee in Infrastructure, but it has not gotten anywhere.

However, I was really hoping this department would really look into providing training for those settlement maintainers at Aurora College because, every year, Aurora College, sometime in May, has a six-week oil heat technician training. It used to be OBM. They are open for anybody with an electrical ticket, but if not, there is specialized training that you could work in conjunction with the Housing Corporation. If you even went on a course for furnaces and boilers, the theory and the practical instruction that they get onsite opens their eyes as to what they are really dealing with. It certainly has for me.

I have worked as a housing maintainer for quite a number of years in my community. When you go get the theory and the training, you are sitting in front of a furnace for four weeks, and you are able to wire it at the end of the course. That is really something. When you learn about the boiler systems, the zone valves, and everything, it really opens your eyes to what you are really dealing with and what you can do in the communities. I don't want to drag this on any further, but I was really hoping that the department would consider helping those settlement maintainers in the communities. Let's get some training done. Mahsi.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. The Department of Infrastructure has a lot of specialized training, including building maintainers, which are an important role in ensuring that our communities are kept going, that the assets are kept going. I do want to turn this over to Deputy Minister Loutitt, just to expand a little bit further. I think this is an opportunity to be able to just talk about some of the great things that we are doing with other departments, including our friends at MACA and housing. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Minister. Deputy Minister Loutitt.

MR. LOUITT: Thank you, Madam Chair. In support of our preventative maintenance program, we have 14 indeterminate settlement maintainer positions that have been created in communities across the Northwest Territories. At the present time, all of the settlement maintainer positions are filled. One hundred percent of the maintainers have Priority 1 Indigenous Aboriginal status under the Affirmative Action Policy. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Deputy Minister. Member for Deh Cho.

MR. BONNETROUGE: I think I was asking about the training component. You haven't touched upon that. Like, I made a big speech out of it.

---Laughter

MR. BONNETROUGE: Good Lord, did I just waste my breath? Mahsi.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I thank the Member for his long-winded question. I do want to add that maybe I answered it; I will say it again. We do partner with our friends, our department, our colleagues at Municipal and Community Affairs under their training program. They have a number of training programs that are offered for recreation, for facilities maintainers, and as a department, we utilize some of those training opportunities for our communities to get some of the training and the skills to be able to stay local in our communities. I think that is important, to be able to build the capacity for building maintainers to come and get the training here in the territories, finish your program and come back to your community and be able to work. I think that is an opportunity for us to continue the partnership. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. BONNETROUGE: Yes. Thank you for that. It's interesting to note that you do have 14 settlement maintainers spread out throughout the territories, and I imagine they are in the smaller communities, not in the larger centres. The larger centres, they carry the operating engineers. They are the ones who deal with all of the heating appliances. I suppose, say you were in a community like a fly-in community, maybe Aklavik; somebody would have to fly in from Inuvik who is an operating engineer or else from Fort McPherson. I don't know if they have one there.

What I am saying is: can we get these settlement maintainers trained up in oil heating technician? That opens their eyes so that they can do basic heating appliance repairs in the dead cold of winter, if need be. That is what I am getting at. Let's get these people trained up within the department. I don't know why there is reluctance to even train. There is not much training. When I was in there myself, too, as a project officer, we did not have anything offered to us. I wanted to expand more my knowledge about the building systems, the exterior systems, the updated stuff. I could not get that. Anyways, I am just arguing this one here for the settlement maintainers. If we could look at, really look at, providing that training to them, it would go a long way for savings for the department in the long run. Mahsi.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I think that is a really good point, what the Member is suggesting. It would all depend on each facilities maintainer, whether that is something that they would want to work on. Some people just like working as building maintainers and to continue what they are doing. However, to work on boilers, I do want to point out that you do need a steam ticket, which takes some work. It's not something that perhaps we offer. I don't know this for sure, but we may not even offer some of these tickets in the Northwest Territories. If any of the building maintainers are interested in pursuing further training, then I think it's important that they perhaps come forward, work on a career plan with the department, and see if that is something they want to do. However, I hear the Member's concern where it is something that we can look at, as well. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MS. MARTSELOS: Thank you, Madam Chair. I was just wondering about the utilities. I want to go back to the utilities line. When the Minister was answering the question to my colleague, this is under regional operations, and she was mentioning about the utilities of just over \$2 million for Stanton, why would it be in this section when it's a territorial hospital, when we are doing regional operations? I just want to ask that question.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. On an annual basis, if you look at our main estimates this year, we are estimating an increase of \$35 million just towards utilities on an annual basis. That's for pretty much all government buildings in the Northwest Territories. I am pretty sure it is. If you look at the budget here, there is an increase, and I am stressing the increase of \$2.5 million, the increase for Stanton Territorial Hospital utilities and increase for the electrical costs. Because Stanton just came on board in this fiscal year, we have perhaps not budgeted in the previous years such a high increase. That's the increase in the utilities. It is captured under all regional operations, such as utilities and leases. All that is captured in this area of the budget. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MS. MARTSELOS: On page 251, also, is the lease for the monthly payment or yearly payment within

that lease for Stanton, also? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes. The Department of Infrastructure looks after leases, as well, for the majority of the departments here. We are looking at such a large increase this year because we are looking at the Stanton legacy and the Child and Family Services program and the temporary student housing funding for Education, Culture and Employment. The increase this year is quite a bit. It's \$3.4 million for increases in those facilities, but yes, we do cover a lot of the leases, including Stanton. I think that's what the Member is asking. Thank you.

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

MS. MARTSELOS: Madam Chair, for clarity, the lease payments for Stanton, the main hospital and the legacy building that we don't own anymore, are part of this lease payment in here? Am I correct, Madam Chair?

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. The quick answer is no, but I want to have ADM Brennan explain a little bit more on some of the details. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Minister. ADM Brennan.

MR. BRENNAN: Thank you, Madam Chair. Thanks to the Minister for her original answer. She is right that the Stanton legacy is included in the lease payment, and all of the leases are operated through regions in charge of the regional budgets. The Stanton hospital, the new building, what the Member is asking about, is not included in this budget. I do believe that it's in the Department of Finance. I am not entirely sure, but I know it's not in the Department of Infrastructure. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MS. MARTSELOS: For clarity, Madam Chair, the lease payment for the legacy building is in this budget. What is the yearly payment for the lease for the legacy building that we do not own anymore? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. On a yearly basis for the lease for the Stanton legacy building, we pay \$1,821,000 a year. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MS. MARTSELOS: Madam Chair, that would be fine if it was owned by a northern business. I am very pro-business, and I believe in making sure that businesses survive in the North. When it's paid to an outside firm, these tremendous amounts, especially when we used to own the building, that is unacceptable. I don't know how people thought about these things, especially with the legacy building because we owned it. Now, we don't, and now, we are paying that amount of lease on it. We are using public funds, and that, to me, is very unacceptable. It's just a comment. I want to see what the Minister has to say about that. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Absolutely. When I was going through some of the briefings just five months into the department, I was looking at some of the costs that Infrastructure pays on behalf of, perhaps, other departments or just in general. Just a few minutes ago, I stressed some of my frustration on how much we pay for utilities in some of these Infrastructure buildings, but not only that, the leases. I hear the Member's concern. Sometimes, the decisions were made prior to this Assembly, and we are just having to work with whatever decisions were made in the past. Unfortunately, this is something that we need to look at further because that is a lot of money coming out of government coffers and taxpayers. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MS. MARTSELOS: Thank you, Madam Chair. I understand it's past Assemblies that made these kinds of discussions. I hope that future Assemblies do not make the same mistakes, especially when you're not dealing with companies that are from the Northwest Territories. We have to stress that northern ownership is the ultimate when it comes to public dollars. I think that, many times, it's easy to grandstand on certain buildings, and red carpets are rolled out for these people who are not from the North. When it's a northern company, we always have to cross the t's and dot the i's and everything else to have a foot in the door. I think that is not acceptable. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member. Minister, did you have any comments?

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. No. I hear the Member's concern about the costs associated with this. I do have some notes, if I can share, on the Stanton Territorial Hospital renewal project, which is meant to accommodate growth projections within the next 30 years. It is, the Member is right, a partnership between the Boreal Health and GNWT. I believe the service provider for the facility is Dexterra. There are services, such as 72 long-term care beds, 18 extended care beds, and there are a number of programs that are going into this building. I will just leave it at that, Madam Chair. I think it was a comment, but I wanted to add just a couple more notes. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Minister. Any further questions under regional operations? I'm going to just go to the information items. If Members want to look at page 254, right up to 265. Those are the information items. If you want to ask questions on that, Members. Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

MR. NORN: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm looking at the Infrastructure stuff on page 254. Specifically, I am looking at other operations. Any time I see "other" or "miscellaneous," it always kind of piques my interest. Can the Minister just expand on what that line item speaks to? Thank you.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I am going to switch that over to ADM Brennan. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. ADM Brennan.

MR. BRENNAN: Thank you, Madam Chair. The \$16.3 million that the Member is asking about is mostly computer hardware and software. Approximately \$15.7 million is computer hardware and software, and there are some other services in there, such as a little bit of travel for \$180,000, purchase services, some contracts for \$100,000, and just other miscellaneous items. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. NORN: Thank you, Madam Chair. I heard several items that were mentioned there. I am just wondering why they are not laid out that way instead of just saying "other operations"? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I am going to ask ADM Brennan just to speak to why things are organized in this manner because it becomes confusing for me, as well. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Minister. ADM Brennan.

MR. BRENNAN: Thank you, Madam Chair. I don't think I have a good answer for this other than that is the format of the main estimates that has been provided to the department. We can bring that comment back. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. NORN: In that list, I heard "contracts." Could the Minister just expand on what type of contracts are in this other operations section? Thank you.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Without me spending too much time finding it here in all of the different pages, I am going to ask ADM Brennan if he can find it within his notes. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, ADM Brennan.

MR. BRENNAN: Thank you, Madam Chair. Again, contract services is \$100,000. Most of the work that is done by the technology service centre is done in-house, so this takes care of all of the, basically, network, hardware, mobile devices for the GNWT. Occasionally, some money is needed to consult contractors to come in and assist on some of that work there. It's basically \$100,000 that is for work that we can't do ourselves. Sometimes, it's due to capacity issues, and sometimes, it's for a special skill set that we don't have. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. NORN: Thank you, Madam Chair. That gives me a little bit more clarity. Thank you. The other item that I looked at is "other public agencies" on the same page. Can the Minister just explain what other public agencies they are making reference to in this line item? Thank you.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I am going to ask Deputy Minister Loutitt to explain that. Thank you.

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

MR. LOUTITT: Thank you, Madam Chair. The other public agencies are our health boards and education boards. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. NORN: Thank you, Madam Chair. Can the Minister just explain what the split is between those two categories? Thank you.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I am going to ask Deputy Minister Loutitt for that.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Deputy Minister Loutitt.

MR. LOUTITT: Thank you, Madam Chair. We don't have that information handy, but we can provide that. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

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

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Member for Great Slave.

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. That was the question I was also going to ask: where was the education and Internet access? Thanks to my colleague for asking that. It is my understanding that we are looking at all of these back pages? Okay. Thank you. My question is around the Marine Transportation Services Revolving Fund on page 259. I am looking at the marine freight transport and charters, the revenues section. We have nothing estimated for revenues for charters for the upcoming year. Can the Minister or the department speak to whether or not we think we are going to do any charter loads this year? Thank you.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I totally have the wrong package here. I apologize for that. In that case, I am going to ask ADM Brennan to answer.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Mr. Brennan.

MR. BRENNAN: Thank you, Madam Chair. For that question, when the budget was done in the fall, with COVID impacts happening, we weren't quite sure over this past year. We had very little charters, and we didn't really budget anything for charters for this year with the uncertainty that was around business in the North, basically. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. With that being said, perhaps things are maybe not quite so drastic as they may have gone. Does the department anticipate that we would see any revenues from charters in the upcoming year? Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): I am just going to take a minute or so break, just to give the Minister a few minutes.

---SHORT RECESS

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): I'll call Committee back to order. Thank you for the short little break. Just because of the way our restrictions are with not allowing so many witnesses into the Chamber at once, we've been switching out the Minister's witnesses. Some of the information items may not have the right witness in here. What we can do is: if it's not the right, then we can just check to clarify with the Minister first before we move along, and if you have ones that are with the Minister's witnesses who are in here, then the Minister can just get the information back to the Members on their questions, if it's not the right witness. How does that sound?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Good. Moving forward, we will continue on now. I'm going to go back to the Member for Great Slave.

MS. NOKLEBY: I'm going to re-ask my question, then. I asked: do we anticipate we will have any charters in the upcoming year? Thank you.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'll pass that over to ADM Brennan.

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

MR. BRENNAN: Thank you, Madam Chair. With respect to charters for 2021-2022, we have updated some numbers since the main estimates were completed, and right now, we're anticipating about \$2.4 million in charter revenue next fiscal year. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you. Just to confirm, that being the 2021-2022 fiscal year, the upcoming one? Okay. When I look at the charter costs for the 2019-2020 actuals, we lose money on the charters. Is the department looking at, perhaps, re-evaluating, as part of the governance model evaluation, whether or not MTS should be doing charters in the first place? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I think I've got some of my papers figured out here. I want to reference that charters are the leasing of a vessel for use. Daily rates are charged for the vessel as well as personal costs. The Member did mention that we will be doing a governance review of MTS, and I think that's important to note whether we continue to do the work that we're doing, filling our 16 communities with transportation fuel. What's the cost benefit, and do we make money or not in doing some of our charters? That is part of the governance review when we're looking at some of the costs for charters and whether we do make money or not and is it the best use of our vessels and our time. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you for that. Before I move on, I'll just make a comment that if the Minister hasn't already been reached out to from a lot of charter companies that we compete with, I'm sure she will be soon. I'd like to go to technology service centre and just ask quickly. You've got all the rates, and I apologize for jumping back and forth a bit, 254. You've got the different rate chargebacks for the different departments. It's not my belief that the COVID money or the extra costs to TSC to move everybody virtually or online would be captured here. Can the Minister explain where that money would be found in the budget? Thank you.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I'm going to give this to ADM Brennan to be able to provide that information. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Minister. ADM Brennan.

MR. BRENNAN: Thank you, Madam Chair. The amount that's on page 254 is the amount for departments currently, and the Member is correct,

there is nothing here for COVID. The TSC still supports the COVID secretariat, but the COVID secretariat has a separate budget for TSC-related issues. We chargeback to them directly. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MS. NOKLEBY: Just to clarify that a little bit further: any of the money that was spent earlier on in the COVID situation, such as a year ago, March, April, to get everybody working from home, that would also be captured under COVID secretariat costs, not Infrastructure? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. My understanding, it is a cost that Infrastructure has taken on as part of that. I'm just going to look at ADM Brennan to just confirm that. Thank you.

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

MR. BRENNAN: Thank you, Madam Chair. What the Minister said is partially, mostly correct, that, in 2019-2020, in March, that was when the government decided that we should not be working from our work site and sent everyone home, there was a lot of requirement for remote devices and support for remote devices, so lots of laptops, cell phones, et cetera, and getting the network ready for people to work at home. The TSC did overspend its budget, and the Department of Infrastructure, because it is a chargeback model, had to pick up that amount. That is the amount that you see there at the bottom line, \$881,000. The COVID secretariat actually was approved, I think, with a budget effective August 1, 2020, so any costs incurred by the department prior to August 1st stays within the department. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. Maybe the Minister could commit to providing a little bit of a summary at some point of what it did cost us as a government to move from working in offices to the virtual, in a breakdown of, say, hardware versus software upgrades and such that were needed. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I think that's something we need to put some work into, but I'm sure we have that information. I'm just

going to confirm with Mr. Loutitt to answer that. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Deputy Minister Loutitt.

MR. LOUITT: Thank you, Madam Chair. I think that we have some breakdown, but maybe not quite as much as the Member wants. The department has spent about \$2.7 million on COVID costs. Approximately \$1 million of that is for the TSC, and \$675,000 is hardware and software, but I don't have the breakdown between hardware and software. If the Member would like, we could easily provide that information, as well. In summary, we've spent just over \$1 million on TSC since April 1 on COVID-related costs. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm a nerd. I like data. I'd take that, if you don't mind providing that; that would be great. I have a question now. Sorry, I'm jumping around a little bit, to the Petroleum Products Revolving Fund on page 257. I would also like a suggestion that we make our page numbers larger, going forward. With the Petroleum Products Revolving Fund, I note that we still are carrying an accumulated deficit at the beginning of the year of \$1 million. I'm just curious to know, and I always struggle with wrapping my head around this one: have we paid off the extra debt that was incurred due to the tainted fuel delivery? If so, what is this \$1 million deficit, then, reflecting? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. There were a number of changes within the fuel services, including, and if I can, the increase of \$4.5 million that is due to the increase in sales that is expense; the decrease of \$5.2 million mainly because we have some deferred maintenance on some tanks; \$450,000 for fuel to Tlicho; decrease of jet fuel delivered to Inuvialuit Settlement Region. I think that's where the Member is questioning, is the \$550,000 decrease. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. I'd like to turn to the Yellowknife Airport Revolving Fund. There is a significant surplus that has built up here, and I'm just wondering when we're going to start to spend it. Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm just going to see what the big increase was. We do have a surplus, very true, in the Yellowknife Airport Revolving Fund of \$12 million. The fund bought various assets; however, they are owned by the GNWT, so for accounting purposes only, it's just a method of disclosure. The total accumulated surplus includes the value of the net assets transferred to the revolving fund by the GNWT. It is true, yes, we are going to start spending on things to improve lines and baggage, improve lines and baggage. The airport has a 20-year master plan, which is about to be released for a competitive procurement. Without wasting too much of the Member's time: yes, we will be spending this, but yes, we do recognize that we have a surplus. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. Yes. I was hoping for a rather quick answer as to when we're going to start spending the money. Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. We are currently going through a plan right now. We've got a lot of work to do within committees. We've got a lot of consultation. We've got an RFP going out to be able to look at a number of things. As for when, right now, I'm looking at some of our current projects will be doing the airfield lighting upgrade that is expected in spring of 2021. My list could go on, Madam Chair, but we are spending the money. I have some current projects, airport drainage, capital purchases, a tractor tow vehicle, so we are spending the money. It is on par with some of our timelines within this revolving fund. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. Rather than have the Minister read it off, perhaps she could provide that to me or to SCEDE? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes, absolutely. It's not 20 pages; it is a number of pages on the different projects and upgrades, such as current projects, capital purchase, what are some of the things in queue, what are some of the upcoming potential capital needs. Yes, I can share that with the Member. Thank you.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. That was a rather long yes. I understand that there are two advisory committees of some sort that have been set up to provide advice to the Minister and the department about the spending of the revolving fund. Can the Minister tell me whether these two committees are actually in place? Are there vacancies, and so on? Because there is absolutely no information whatsoever on the Infrastructure website about these committees. Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm going to turn that question over to Deputy Minister Loutitt. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Deputy Minister Loutitt.

MR. LOUITT: Thank you, Madam Chair. There are two committees that are established. One is the EAC, the Economic Advisory Committee. That committee, we are currently in the process of restarting. Actually, this morning, I was going through the terms of reference, the renewed terms of reference, and we will be appointing membership shortly on that. The other one, the Airline Consultative Committee, is a committee just with the partners at the airport, and it is a committee that we are currently operating with. That's an internal committee. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. When this was being set up, there were a number of concerns and issues raised around the accountability of these two committees and whether they were really independent and whether they were going to be doing any kind of public reporting. I can't even find one word about them on the Department of Infrastructure website. I had understood that they were going to be keeping minutes, that the minutes were going to be made public somehow. There was going to be an annual report from each of the committees. There's nothing. Can the Minister commit to giving us a status report on each of these two committees, who the current members are, and how they are going to try to increase accountability, transparency, and reporting from these two committees? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes, we can share that information with him, given that we are re-looking at the committees to be able to start some of the master plan work going forward. Thank you.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks. I appreciate that, Madam Chair. I've had concerns expressed to me by the City of Yellowknife and the Yellowknives Dene First Nation that they do not have any representation on these committees; certainly, at least, the Economic Advisory Committee. I understand the other one is more the air carriers themselves. Can the Minister commit to consult with or work with the Standing Committee on Economic Development and Environment to make sure that we have the right representation on the economic advisory committee? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. The easy answer is yes, but I do want to get the deputy minister to explain. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. LOUITT: Thank you, Madam Chair. We have had several groups who have reached out to us for representation on the committee. We are looking for a good cross-section of individuals for the committee, and at this point, the composition, we would like our Indigenous partners as well as industry and the public represented on the committee. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. The deputy minister sounds a lot like me four years ago when this was being set up, when we made these suggestions about who should be represented on the committee. It kind of fell on deaf ears with the previous Minister in the 18th Assembly, so I guess I will ask again: is the Minister prepared to work with the Standing Committee on Economic Development and Environment to look at a more appropriate composition of this committee and how they can report publicly and better engage the public in general? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. We have engaged with Cabinet on this and

provided a presentation to committee. We want to get input. I am not going to sit here today and commit to who is going to be on the committee, but we will have that conversation with committee. Thank you.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. That's great. That's exactly what I was looking for. I appreciate that commitment from the Minister. That's all I have on this one. Thanks, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Members, we are going to take a short recess.

---SHORT RECESS

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): I will call this meeting back to order, committee, and we are going to continue on with the Member for Hay River South.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I want to turn to page 259, Marine Transportation Services, and the revenues, marine freight transport. I just want to understand what that entails. Is that deck rate and fuel? Is some of it a difference in private/GNWT? What is that number made up of? Thank you.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. If I can ask, what was the title again? Sorry.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Page 259, Marine Transportation Services Revolving Fund.

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Okay. Thank you, Madam Chair. In 2007, the Marine Transportation Services was established. It was an amendment of the Revolving Funds Act, which MTS is a mechanism under which the GNWT, the tug and barge shipping arm, operates, so MTS commands the operations July 1, 2017. If the deputy minister or ADM Brennan would like to speak a little bit more into detail as to what that is? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Minister. ADM Brennan.

MR. BRENNAN: Yes. Thank you, Madam Chair. In addition to what the Minister said, I can confirm that the marine freight transport is the transport of fuel and that cargo. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. What is the breakdown of the revenue there

between freight, deck freight, and fuel? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Under the expenditures for the fuel services, fuel services is estimated at \$23,500,000, and the shipyard terminal operations are \$8.7 million. Fuel is predominantly the majority of the budget for this revolving fund. Thank you.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. What I was asking is: the revenues under marine freight transport, like the \$27 million, how much of that is received for providing deck freight services and how much is received for fuel deliveries; also, if they have the numbers for private fuel deliveries versus for GNWT's own use? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. All I have with me today is just the information on some of the main estimates on previous years and how we decreased some of our funds and increased. However, I am going to turn it over to ADM Brennan to speak a little bit more in detail for cost breakdown. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. BRENNAN: Yes. Thank you, Madam Chair. In terms of the first question that I heard, I think for the \$27 million, approximately \$5.4 million is related to the cargo, \$13.8 million is related to fuel delivery, and an additional \$7 million is fuel sales. Fuel sales is an item more where you ship fuel on behalf of Imperial Oil to Norman Wells, so we essentially take possession of the fuel in Hay River and sell it back to Imperial Oil back in Norman Wells. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. Now, just moving down to shipyard, \$3.4 million, what makes up that revenue? Is it work on other vessels or supply and material? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Some of this shipyard, terminal operations were

based on a consulting plan, Ernst & Young business plan, and was drafted prior to purchase, so some of the revised amounts were reduced to reflect some of the actual work underway and completed. I know I am not answering the Member's question right now because he wants a little more detail in terms of cost. I am going to get ADM Brennan to answer a little more into detail.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. ADM Brennan.

MR. BRENNAN: Yes. Thank you, Madam Chair. Just to confirm what the Minister added was that shipyard cost is essentially third-party work that we do in the shipyard. We currently do work on coast guard vessels, and we charge back for that work. We also do work for the Arctic Research Foundation vessel, the Nahidik. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. Under "other items," there is \$10 million there, and that is about 25 percent of the revenue. What is that? What makes up that \$10 million? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. That revenue line consists of some of our federal funding to be able to retrofit our tugboats, and the other part is the Oceans Protection Plan, which is to be able to provide four double-hulled barges. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. Going down to expenditures and shipyard, terminal operations, the \$8.7 million, what makes up that \$8.7 million? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I am going to ask Mr. Brennan to answer that. Thank you.

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

MR. BRENNAN: Yes. Thank you, Madam Chair. The shipyard, terminal operations are essentially the cost of both salaries and materials that are used in the actual shipyard. When we do work on vessels, we charge time and materials to each vessel, so that would be the cost that we incur to do

the shipyard work for revenue that is generated above. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank, Madam Chair. The labour cost charged for shipyard personnel by ORSI, is that included in that number? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes, it is included in that number.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. That has always been a concern of mine, is that we are hiring southern firms to basically crew our shipyard terminals and our boats, and I am just wondering if the department, I know they put the contract out, and I think it's only out in a year. I don't know if there are any option years in it, but maybe the Minister can comment on, going forward, crewing both the shipyard and the vessels, if we're looking at a contract being tendered in a year from now, or are they going to go to auctioneers? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Within the Marine Transportation Services, we are trying to maximize local and northern employment within the department. We do have 10 indeterminate GNWT employees who reside in the South Slave. Through MTS recruitment, the first priority for employment resides with resident locals, residents of the NWT, and third, non-residents. We do have a number of local employments. As the Member is aware, the majority of our transportation headquarters is in Hay River. I do want to note that about 90 percent of our shipyard staff hired were Northwest Territories residents last year. In terms of the contract, I'm going to ask ADM Brennan to speak a little bit more about where we're at with our contract. I just recently understood we had it tendered and closed, but I would just like more detail from the ADM. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. ADM Brennan.

MR. BRENNAN: Thank you, Madam Chair. Thanks to the Minister for that information. In terms of the contract for ORSI, this year, what the department decided to do was to split the contract into two separate contracts. Previously, it was one contract

for both the shipyard personnel and the seafarers. This year, the contract was split to give an opportunity for more people to get on both contracts. I do believe that the shipyard one was awarded recently to the winning bid, and the seafarers' contract, the RFP closed last week and hasn't yet been awarded as of now. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Mr. Brennan. Just for the Member, if you want to ask more questions on MTS, we go back to programs and services later on, and it falls under that, too. Member for Kam Lake.

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Earlier today, the Minister and her staff were talking about the money spent under the technology service centre since April 1st related to COVID. The total number was \$1 million, and under that was an amount for software. I'm just wondering if they can repeat that because I didn't have time to write it down. Thank you.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm going to look to ADM Brennan to see if he can repeat his answer from earlier because, I'm sorry, I was looking through my papers and I missed that, as well.

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

MR. BRENNAN: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes, I'm actually going to repeat and correct the number I said earlier because I read the wrong number last time; thank you for the opportunity. The number last time was just over \$1 million, I think around \$1.1 million, spent on the TSC, and \$925,000 is for hardware and software. I think previously I said \$670,000. I do not have the breakdown between software and hardware at this time, but we've already committed to provide that to the committee. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. One of the things that I'm wondering if it could be included in that is one of the things that I think a lot of us have noticed since April 1st is that we have used quite a few different virtual meeting softwares or virtual meeting technologies, and so I'm wondering if those numbers for virtual meeting software can also be broken out of that software and hardware number. Also, I'm wondering if I can get a commitment, as well, from the Minister to review the different licences for virtual meeting technology and maybe work with the GNWT

departments and the Legislative Assembly to choose a platform and stick with a platform, and then we can potentially save some money on how many different virtual meeting softwares we're using across the GNWT. Thank you.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. That was a lot of commitments in that request there. I'm not going to sit here and commit to something big, unless we're looking at some of our software and costs to be able to ensure that, if we do make a commitment, it is cost saving and it works within all our technology services across the board. Thank you.

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

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. One of the commitments I was looking for was a commitment to include the cost of the virtual meeting software in the cost for software that is coming back to committee, so I'll start with that one. Thank you.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm glancing over at the Minister of Finance because we do share some of the technology infrastructure in terms of broadband Internet and some of the services we do have. Without committing to something specific, I would like to reach out to the other departments within the GNWT to have a look at what are some of the things that are working within Education, Culture and Employment, within Department of Finance, and other departments to ensure that, if we do look at something permanent, we have done a lot of our work. Thank you.

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

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I'll take that as a commitment to my second request for a commitment, which was to work with other departments to figure out which meeting technology we can use as a government. Thank you for that. My next question is in regard to Public Stores Revolving Fund. The Public Stores Revolving Fund deals with accounting forms, vital statistics, support documents, et cetera, that are used for different government departments, so it allows them to have a space, I believe, that they fund all these needs and then different departments can take it from there. My question is: is there an intent to move PPE and safety items to this Public Stores Revolving Fund so that different

departments can access PPE as a group from this fund, or does it only include intellectual items? Thank you.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. That was very technical in terms of what the Member is asking for seems pretty technical, and I would have to kind of get a little more understanding on what that is. However, I do want to note that there is one Public Stores Revolving Fund at the warehouse. It consists mainly of forms used by government departments and was used a lot when the government was paper-based. In terms of where we're going forward to be able to look at new technologies for the fund, I am going to ask ADM Brennan to elaborate a little more about the fund. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Minister. ADM Brennan.

MR. BRENNAN: Thank you, Madam Chair. In terms of the Public Stores Revolving Fund, that actually was discussed last year, I'm not quite sure when anymore, regarding the ability of the Public Stores Revolving Fund to hold the PPE. One of the challenges that we ran into was actually because the warehouse in Yellowknife, currently where most of the things in the Public Stores Revolving Fund are stored, also stores artefacts for the museum. The hand sanitizers that we see all over town these days are considered a flammable liquid, so there are some volume issues there that we need to look into. At the time, because we were trying to bring in a lot of hand sanitizers to ship all across the territory, it was decided that it wasn't the right time, at that point in time. That is certainly one logistical challenge that we would face. In terms of your masks and gloves, certainly, I think that's something the department could look into. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Madam Chair, and thank you to the assistant deputy minister for that. I think that's a worthwhile commitment, and potentially an area where the GNWT can come together and save some money by consolidating that, so I really appreciate that. My next question is in regard to the Yellowknife Airport Revolving Fund. I just noted that the airport improvement fee has come down, of course, with people not travelling because of COVID and the recommendation from the Chief Public Health Officer, but I notice that the aeronautical revenues appear to have come down by half. However, the airport improvement fee has come down a lot less

than half, and so I'm just wondering how they got to the airport improvement fee numbers, given that people aren't planning to travel still for 2021. Thank you.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. In looking at the budget on page 261, where we look at the aeronautical line, I do want to note that the variance of \$3.388 million is due to COVID and the economic stimulus package that GNWT offered for airlines. Yellowknife Airport did not collect lease, concession, or landing fees for a portion of the year, which the Member is fully aware of. The fees will resume for this fiscal year. There was a decrease of \$6.285 million, and it was offered for airlines. The Yellowknife Airport did not collect lease, concession, or landing fees for nine months. Another decrease of \$480,000, which, again, the Yellowknife Airport did not collect lease, concession, or landing fees for the month of March. That's the difference in revenues in terms of the aeronautical. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I am wondering if the Minister can confirm if the airport improvement fee is solely collected from the cost of tickets by air travellers or if there are other avenues for money to get into the airport improvement fee? Thank you.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I am going to get ADM Brennan to speak about the details. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. ADM Brennan.

MR. BRENNAN: Yes. Thank you, Madam Chair. The answer is yes, the money is collected through tickets. We entered into agreements with each air carrier who collect the fee at the time of sale of their own plane tickets, and then they remit to us after the plane actually moves. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I appreciate that clarification. My first point was that I don't know how this is going to increase as substantially as it is shown here between the 2020-2021 revised estimates and 2021-2022 when there is still a recommendation not to travel for this

year. My concern is that I feel this revenue is actually quite high, given that we don't have a lot of people coming in and out of the territory. That was my concern there. I appreciate what the Minister said about the waiving of fees and such. My next question is: is there an intention of the Department of Infrastructure to increase the airport improvement fee in the next couple of years? Thank you.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. That is not the intent of the department to increase any fees at this time. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Minister. Members, if there are no further questions, I am just going to go back to page 251. Infrastructure, regional operations, operations expenditure summary, 2021-2022 Main Estimates, \$218,101,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I have assistant deputy minister for regional operations, Gary Brennan. I also have with me assistant deputy minister for energy and strategic initiatives, Robert Jenkins.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Welcome. Committee, we are on page 242, energy and strategic initiatives, with information items up to 246. Questions? Member for Yellowknife North.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I am looking at page 244, and the Low Carbon Economy Leadership Fund. I believe this is actually federal money that flows in, which I am happy to see. There are three subheadings, and I noticed there was an uptick in the revised main estimates. Can someone just refresh my memory as to what those were? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I will turn this over to ADM Brennan.

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

MR. BRENNAN: Thank you, Madam Chair. In 2019-2020, the department wasn't able to spend all of its appropriation for Low Carbon Economy Leadership Fund. We requested \$4.5 million for a

supplementary appropriation in this fiscal year. The difference that you are looking at is that \$4.588 million. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I recall that supplementary appropriation. I believe the feds kind of agreed to us carrying that funding forward. Can I just get some confirmation that, for the remaining approximately \$7 million under this fund that we are getting this fiscal, we will be on track to get it spent on time? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. That's normally the intent. Having these on the books is to hope to get them spent. For me to commit to spending them is another thing. I will turn to ADM Jenkins to be able to provide just a little more information on our intent on how we want to get this spent. Thank you.

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

MR. JENKINS: Thank you, Madam Chair. This is four years of federal funding, so \$31.2 million in total. That funding is to fund projects and initiatives that reduce greenhouse gas emissions across the NWT. We have six approved initiatives there. We have energy retrofits of public housing, energy retrofits of marine transportation vessels and ferries, the government GHG grant fund, the buildings and industrial GHG grant fund. We are also providing an incremental expansion of Arctic Energy Alliance programs and services. We also have the active carbon sequestration in forestry, which is being led by ENR. We have six initiatives there that we are advancing. We hope to be able to utilize funds that have been received from the federal government. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I think I made this comment during the supplementary appropriation. I recognize sometimes that getting money out of the feds can come with different contribution agreements that can be complicated. Let's make sure that we spend all of this \$7.5 million and that the department is not coming back with a supplementary saying that they have not spent it again. I think this actually might be a bit of an asset management question, but it will lead into energy efficiency. Can I get an update of where we are with the new version of the GNWT Good Building Practices? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

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

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

MR. JENKINS: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just a second, please, if you could. I am just getting the information on this one. Thank you, Madam Chair. All of our facilities are designed and constructed to Canadian national codes and standards. We do maintain the good building practice for northern facilities manual, and that's a technical resource for designers and developers to design facilities, specifically for northern conditions. We do plan to release a fourth edition this year. We are in the final stage of edits, and this is something that should be ready to go imminently, hopefully, within the next month or so. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes. I really look forward to seeing that and having the department releasing it. I've made this comment before, though, that it's essential, I think, to a lot of the work that MACA is doing in looking at a potential building standards act. A lot of our municipalities actually lean on our good building practices for how they design their own buildings. This is the area where we have biomass energy funding, as well as a number of biomass projects. I know we've taken them on in different capacities, and it can be hard to kind of pinpoint how efficient they are. Do we have any kind of numbers on what switching our buildings to biomass results in cost savings? Do we have any of those figures in general or specific? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm just going to find it here. Actually, I'm going to get Assistant Deputy Minister Brennan to speak about some of the cost savings because I'm looking at expenditures, and I don't know what the cost savings would be. I'm hoping he can help me. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): ADM Brennan.

MR. BRENNAN: Thank you, Madam Chair. With respect to biomass, I think there's a couple of different programs that we run, but in 2019-2020, the biomass movement, there was a utility savings of about \$1.8 million. I would add that we also had the Capital Asset Retrofit Fund, as well, which on our capital estimates, we use for retrofits of

buildings, not just biomass boilers. Currently, I do believe we're saving \$2.8 million per year, and total on that program is now just about \$20 million we save through those programs. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I heard the Minister talking about the fact that the Department of Infrastructure pays all of the GNWT's utilities, which I think is somewhere in the ballpark of \$60 million a year we pay in utility costs. It's a lot. I know the department has a bit of a goal here in increasing energy efficiency. Every time we can do that, I think it's a win-win-win for everyone. I've asked the Minister questions on district heating before. I've asked her both as her role in Infrastructure and her role as the Power Corporation. Where should I ask those questions? Is this the department or unit that would be responsible for district heating? I know they're responsible biomass. Would this be the correct place? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm going to turn this over to Assistant Deputy Minister Robert Jenkins. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, ADM Jenkins.

MR. JENKINS: Thank you, Madam Chair. In terms of district heating systems, we do have several programs, again, with the goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions, that would apply to district heating systems. For projects outside of the GNWT, we do offer application-based grants under the GHG Grant Program. For projects that reduce greenhouse gas emissions, including district heating systems. We offer 25 percent for individuals in businesses and 75 percent grants for governments and communities to undertake for eligible projects. Obviously, we encourage and we welcome people to apply. Also, as we go through each building when there's new work planned or new buildings built, we obviously look at heating systems to try to improve energy efficiency, but also to make sure that we maximize and utilize our funds in the best manner possible. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I will start with a comment in that I think Greenland has 16 of its communities on district heating, and I don't just mean some of their buildings. I mean their

entire communities are on district heating systems, and they've seen cost savings of 30 percent. I repeat that almost \$60 million a year we pay in utilities, and we know there's a proven method to reduce the utility costs. I cannot speak highly enough about biomass and district heating. I'm going to leave it as a comment, and sink one more in. Where are we at with the business case for Taltson? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I am going to get Assistant Deputy Minister Jenkins to just elaborate on where we're at with this. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, ADM Jenkins.

MR. JENKINS: Thank you, Madam Chair. With respect to the Taltson project, we are working with a number of Indigenous partners right now. The business case, obviously, a very important aspect of this as we move forward and something that we need to do and get right. We have some materials prepared. We're having conversations with our Indigenous partners. We will have some conversations with our Indigenous partners, and we hope that this is a document that we will have available that could be, probably, in the first quarter of this fiscal. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. I am just looking at this page. We have Arctic Energy Alliance has its own line item. As well, then, they are funded under some other pots of funding, including the year contributions are made to them, including under the community government retrofits and the community renewable energy program. Can the Minister or the department speak to the capacity or ability for Arctic Energy Alliance to carry out all of their work? How is the department working with them to ensure the staffing is adequate and that we're not putting all this money into an organization that, perhaps, maybe can't carry out everything that needs to be done? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Arctic Energy Alliance, as the Member is aware, is a non-for-profit society, to be able to reduce costs of environmental impacts, energy, and utility services. Right now, the Arctic Energy Alliance annual funding is both \$2.74 million. We work closely on partnering with the alliance to be able to

help us, to enhance some of our energy efficient programs that provide us with, to meet some of our goals. They are non-for-profit. We work in partnership with them. I'm going to get Assistant Deputy Minister Jenkins to just speak a little bit more in detail on how we're accomplishing that. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. JENKINS: Thank you, Madam Chair. Again, the Minister outlined sort of the AEA. They're a public-facing, not-for-profit organization that promotes energy programs and services to residents and businesses and communities across the territory. The programs and services that they provide are central to helping us meet our goals and objectives in the energy strategy. They did receive about \$2.74 million in core funding, and just over \$3.5 million in supplemental funding to the AEA. They did utilize over \$5.9 million in funds last year, and this resulted in a number of things: over 1200 energy efficiency rebates; 120 home energy efficiency kits that were distributed; 150 home energy audits. There were 54 community wood stoves installed and an additional 66 delivered to communities. A number of programs there, energy rebates for solar panels, wood-pellet heating, and there were a number of benefits, an estimated \$1.3 million per year in savings in energy-related costs. They're a key partner for us, and they are delivering on the funds that are provided to them. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair, for the two definitions of what Arctic Energy Alliance is. Perhaps, next time, we could just keep the answer a little bit shorter because I only get so much time. The reason I was asking the question is I do want to know if the Minister has explored looking at a training program through Arctic Energy Alliance to help increase the capacity of the non-governmental organizations in order to be able to expand or continue to implement their programming better. I know that they have quite a good group of technical experts at the alliance. However, it seems that they at times do have a lot of work on their plates. We have a lot of money invested in them, and this seems like a great way where we could be training Indigenous-community workers to do audits, to take up some of the technical aspect of the work and create employment that way. The reason I was asking about that is that I just want to know if the department is helping the alliance to basically disseminate their information and use them almost as a training program for local and Indigenous employment. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I think that is a great idea. However, because they are at arm's length from the department, we would have to go back and have that discussion with them because I think that is a great idea. Some of the work that they are doing here in the territories to be able to reduce reliance on services is excellent, so it is something I can go back to the department and work with. Thank you.

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

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. I am glad to hear that the Minister is interested in that, and I would be happy to discuss it with her further at a break at some point. My next question has to do with: there are three items that are lapsing or there is not funding for the upcoming or the last year, that are in the 2019-2020 actuals. This would be the Tulita Solar Project, the Arctic Research Foundation money, and the Northern Transportation Adaptation Initiative. It is my understanding that these all would be federal funding pots that we no longer have access to -- I know I am speaking fast; sorry, interpreters -- yet, they are all great projects, and so I am just curious to know if the Minister can speak to: can we expect to be getting more funding like these in the future? Then I have a specific question about the adaptation initiative. Thank you.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. The Tulita Solar Project was again a one-time contribution agreement. It was for design, engineering, purchasing, and also installing some solar systems in the community. I believe that project is done, and therefore, it is no longer on our books. I think what the Member is really asking is: are there opportunities to not only just do this in one community but perhaps expand out to some of the other communities and look at projects? I want to say that there are some exciting projects that, without the government's help, we have Indigenous groups, we have non-profit societies really looking at going over and above and doing some of this work themselves, so we commend them. Thank you.

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

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just quickly to go back to the Arctic Energy Alliance information that was provided by the ADM, if we could perhaps get some of that in writing? It was

really quite quick, so I would like to hear sort of the number of audits they have done, that kind of thing. I perhaps, probably, have that information somewhere and not just at my hand, so thank you for that. My specific question is around the Northern Transportation Adaptation Initiative, which had to do with work at the ITH, Inuvik-Tuktoyaktuk Highway. It was a study that was a contribution to the University of Manitoba to look at the stability of the highway embankments. I am just wondering: what came out of that study? Was there anything identified as being very critical from an infrastructure or rehabilitation perspective that we need to be addressing. Is there any way to go after funding tied to this study, so basically taking this study to the federal government and saying, "This is what the university has found. Can we get money to address these issues?" if there are issues. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. It's the Northern Transportation Adaptation Initiative, and the Member is speaking specifically about a project that happened along the Inuvik-Tuktoyaktuk Highway. I do not believe we have received a report on that yet, but do any of the ADMs? ADM Brennan, thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Minister. ADM Brennan.

MR. BRENNAN: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes. The NTAI funding was a two-year program funded by Transport Canada, and it was for work along the ITH. Part of that funding was for the University of Manitoba. Again, that was a two-year agreement with them, similar to the two-year funding that we had. They have not been provided their report yet. I think it is actually due by the middle of March, I will say. We have to report on it by March 31st, so I will know within the next month. The other part of that funding, though, is we are doing some other work with the NTGS, the Northwest Territories Geological Survey, and they also provide a report to us, as well, along the other parts of the highway. The University of Manitoba set up a test section during the construction of the ITH, and they have been studying that section since the highway started construction eight years ago, I will say. The NTAI has not put out a call for additional funding, but we are hopeful that they will come back out for more funding because we do want to continue to study the impacts that they are having on the embankment, especially the University of Manitoba under the section that the Member is aware of. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes. I actually had a lot of opportunity to see some of the work of the universities and such, and there is quite a bit of research work being done along the ITH, so I just want to continue to encourage the Minister to use that work to leverage funding, as well, from the federal government because it does not always necessarily, maybe we can get our road repaired if we train a bunch of students to do it, right, and they come up with some innovative way of fixing it. I urge the Minister to be creative when she looks at that type of work.

My last question is just going to be around the Arctic Research Foundation, which is the money that was given to do the bathymetric conditions on Great Slave Lake with the boat. I am not going to get the boat's name right, but I have mentioned this before, the Nahidik boat. I got a chance to tour it at MTS, and it's pretty fantastic. Again, to me, this seems to be the way forward ahead of our polytechnic university. I think this is an area where we can start our knowledge economy if we continue to fund this more, so maybe the Minister can speak to: while there is no budget in this for this particular line item, is there any area in which she is looking to move funding to perhaps utilize the boat, get more students out there, and do some sort of educational piece with her department? Thank you.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. As the Member spoke about the Nahidik and the opportunity I had to be able to go onboard with some of the youth who spent some time out on the Great Slave Lake and have a look at the some of the options for the Taltson hydro. It is a great opportunity, and the youth were very excited about that. I think what the Member is asking is if there is opportunity, then, perhaps going forward to be able to look at some of the opportunities. We are working with ENR to be able to discuss possibility for collaboration, so there is still a lot of work to do in terms of ensuring that the lines are lined up properly and done in a safe manner. We are still looking at options for the Taltson. Thank you.

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

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. No. I think that is great news, what the Minister was just talking about with the Member for Great Slave in regard to the Arctic Research Foundation, and I think it is definitely worth exploring and continuing on down that road. I am very happy to hear about that. I am wondering, in that same vein, how many summer students and interns are funded within this area and within this

division within the Department of Infrastructure. Thank you.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. We have within energy and infrastructure, I don't even think this is summer students, so I am just going to put that paper away and look to the assistant deputy minister for energy and strategic initiatives, Mr. Jenkins.

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

MR. JENKINS: Thank you, Madam Chair. As the Minister mentioned, we did have the Nahidik do some work, bathymetric work, so what are the water depths and subsurface conditions, looking at routing options for the Taltson project. We did have associated with that vessel 20 northern hires; there was a northern leadership program that had 17 northern students and five northern youth leaders. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. No, that is amazing news, and that is really great. I think that opportunities for summer students and interns as well as northern hires within different areas of energy and strategic initiatives is such a commendable investment, especially when students, if they are coming back from university, if they are going to small communities, energy and strategic infrastructure initiatives is something that every community needs. Congratulations to the Department of Infrastructure for that one, and I encourage them to continue that year after year.

My next question is in regard to the 2030 energy goals for the Department of Infrastructure, and I noticed here that there is a \$5.3 million decrease in their energy line. One of the strategic goals that they had identified, and another one that I know that I hear about frequently from the people who I serve, is the cost of electricity in the Northwest Territories. I'm wondering, with that decrease to that line item, does the Department of Infrastructure feel that they can achieve their strategic goals with energy this year? Thank you.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Within the 2030 strategic plan, we do have an action plan within the bigger plan, so within that plan, we are able to look at some of our milestones and to determine whether we are achieving it as the time goes on and if and where we make

adjustments. Although the 2030 strategy is a bigger picture, we try and look at some of the ways where we can enhance and have a look at some targets so that we can determine if we are meeting our standards and, if we're not, what we need to do better and how we reinforce some of our capacity to ensure that we are in line with where we need to be. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. My question was: does the Minister feel that they will reach this year's goals? Thank you.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I am hoping so, but I'm going to get ADM Jenkins just to confirm because I looked at some of the targets. They looked pretty good to me, but who am I to determine all the little bits of it? I'm going to go to Mr. Jenkins. Thank you.

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

MR. JENKINS: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes. I understand that the reduction was for a \$5 million supplementary in 2021 that comes off the budget in 2021-2022, but in terms of the work that we're doing and the objectives of the energy strategy, we do feel we're on track. We rolled out a number of new greenhouse gas grant programs to support alternative energy. We doubled EE funding. Again, we're working on a number of larger energy projects, hydro power, and transmission lines, and we hope to move those forward. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. The one last thing that I just wanted to say quickly to the Minister is that I really appreciate the ongoing support of the Department of Infrastructure for Students Against Drinking and Driving. That has been an annual contribution of theirs. I think it's a worthwhile cause, and I appreciate the Minister continuing to support that. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member. Minister, did you have any further comments?

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: You're welcome.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Any further comments or questions under this from Kam Lake?

No? Committee, we will take a break and resume with Mr. Bonnetrouge from Deh Cho.

---SHORT BREAK

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): I now call Committee of the Whole back to order. We are continuing energy and strategic initiatives on page 243. Member for Deh Cho.

MR. BONNETROUGE: Mahsi, Madam Chair. What I notice in the main estimates is that the Arctic Energy Alliance is getting \$1.6 million, and biomass energy is only getting \$200,000. From what I am hearing and everything, we are getting pretty heavy on getting away from lowering our greenhouse gas emissions overall. It's not going to come overnight, but there were plans to bring those levels down overall. We spend a considerable amount of resources, lots of money, on fuels, whether it be diesel fuels or liquid natural gas, propane.

In the future, it looks like we are looking at biomass, whether it be wood pellets, wood chips, or briquettes. I think briquettes are a common commodity. I think, in Europe, they are changing over from pellets to briquettes. There is even market where you can harvest willows to make your fuels. I am not the expert on that, but I'm just really wondering how serious we are as a government in looking at biomass energy. When you're only spending \$200,000, I don't know what that's doing, but we don't even have a research and development area within Infrastructure to really look at this. We should have a line item for that. I was just wondering if I could get the energy guy to give me some insight into this. Mahsi.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. The Government of the Northwest Territories has delivered a number of biomass projects to help reduce some of the greenhouse gas emissions and also operating costs. The use of wood-pellet boilers has proven to be a reliable technology in the Northwest Territories. Residents, as well as businesses and local governments, have all benefited from this success. I do want to assure the Member that, yes, the government is serious about using, when and where we can, more biomass heating. The use of this is considered for all GNWT facilities that are being constructed. Yes, we are looking at it for any new builds that the government is looking at constructing. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. BONNETROUGE: Mahsi, Madam Chair. Mahsi to the Minister for that, but I think she missed

the mark here, the gist of my statement. I am aware of what the government is doing. I see it. I worked in Infrastructure. I know what you've been doing in the new government buildings. You're converting. You're converting just government buildings, only governments. I'm looking at a big picture here, and I said it: where's our research and development to harness biomass energy for use throughout the Northwest Territories? That's why I asked if the energy guy, Mr. Jenkins, could provide us with what they see in this field. Mahsi.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Member, just remember to direct your questions to me, and I will direct it to the Minister. Thank you. Minister.

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. We were looking at this budget here, and the title is grants, contribution, and transfers. You look at that line item that the Member is speaking of, and it's \$200,000 in biomass energy. I do want to point out that that is a specific \$200,000 that is given to Arctic Energy Alliance in order to support biomass in homes, just that project. This area in the budget speaks of grants, contribution, and transfers. That's what the department is transferring, so that's what that line item is. Once we get into some of the other, perhaps maybe even past asset management, where we talk a little bit more about what we're doing in terms of some biomass projects being incorporated into our new infrastructure build, perhaps we can speak about it then. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. BONNETROUGE: Mahsi, Madam Chair. I have gone past what's there. I was asking a question. How serious are we, as the GNWT government, to look at harnessing biomass energy for the Northwest Territories moving forward to get rid of the greenhouse gas emissions? Like I say, we spend a considerable amount of financial resources buying fuels, paying for fuels. Are we going to get serious about reducing greenhouse gas emissions? Where do we have a line item within infrastructure for energy and strategic initiatives, energy department, that shows research and development, and are we going to be serious and start putting our thoughts and our energy into that? Mahsi

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I said in answering the first question that we are serious about biomass, and we are serious because we are looking at new infrastructure builds and how we can incorporate biomass into new buildings. However, I think I will direct my ADM to speak a bit more about some of the projects directly

related, some of the biomass projects that are happening within our infrastructure. Go ahead, ADM Jenkins.

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

MR. JENKINS: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes, so there's a lot of work going on in terms of biomass energy. The Minister correctly identified the \$200,000 that is going out to the Arctic Energy Alliance. Again, wood-pellet boilers, a reliable technology that we are looking to advance, we have a number of projects underway. The GNWT has installed 39 biomass boilers, three of which are under commercial arrangements, so quite a bit of work done there. We have two programs, the government greenhouse gas fund and the building industry buildings grant fund, which again are applicant-based, by individuals, businesses, or governments, other levels of government. That could include district heating, and that is under the Low Carbon Economy Leadership Fund. There are funds there available for that. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. BONNETROUGE: Mahsi, Madam Chair. I am just wondering because I know you are just listing what you currently have. I am looking for a research and development section of everything so that we look at biomass seriously. It should be a separate report saying, "Hey. This is what we are looking at," and the different types of biomass energy. I have a problem with just keeping it within Infrastructure because the NWT Housing Corporation needs help to address harnessing biomass energy in our communities up and down the valley. It went from 2,400 units to 2,600 units, and I heard now there was 2,900 units, and hooking them up to a district heating system that we have been talking about.

I think I threw this out when I first got here: we need to see ways that we can save on our heating energy costs using biomass so that the government realizes in the long run significant savings which we can pass back on to the consumers through the cost of living. This has got to hit the Northland Utilities power company and the NTPC power company. Why don't they incorporate biomass instead of just burning up diesel year after year after year? Has anybody talked to them, even the Housing Corporation? We need that crossover so that we have got the energy department working with all of these groups here and really taking a serious look moving forward. We need to be serious about this and do it. I don't want to hear about, "We have got more projects here and there and there." Where is the research and development department to get us where we need to go? Mahsi.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member for Deh Cho. Minister, did you have any response to that?

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I hear where the Member is coming from. Right now, within our current Department of Infrastructure, we do not have research and development embedded in any of our energy budget, and this is perhaps something we could look at going forward, to be able to ensure that we have cost savings in all our energy within the territories. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. With respect to the \$12.39 million, what percentage of those funds would actually stay in Yellowknife versus going out to projects in the communities? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I am looking at the variety of grants, contributions and transfers. It is quite diverse. Predominantly, the majority of these, if not all of them, should stay within the Northwest Territories, but I will just get ADM Brennan. It's a hard question. I do not know. It's not something we have looked at, but I will let him give it a shot. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Minister. ADM Brennan.

MR. BRENNAN: Excuse me. Yes. Thank you, Madam Chair. I think I need the Member to repeat the question. I never heard the full question. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Member, can you repeat your question?

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes. We are looking at total contributions of \$12.388 million, and I am just wondering what percentage of that amount stays in Yellowknife for Yellowknife projects versus what ends up in the communities for support to the communities. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. BRENNAN: Thank you, Madam Chair. I don't think we have that number available with us today, but most of these programs are application-based programs. The actual amount that is paid every year would depend on the applications that we received. If you look at the community access

program, for example, I think that normally 100 percent of that money is outside of Yellowknife. The other programs, we would have to go back to our funding agency, such as AEA, to get a list of the people of where it went. We definitely don't have it here with us tonight, so my apologies. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I would like to see those, see where that distribution is because, when you go outside of Yellowknife and pretty well predominantly First Nations Indigenous communities, I just want to see what the buy-in is in those communities and the understanding as well of these programs and if they actually know they are available. The other thing that I would like to know, as well, is: I have got no problem with energy and strategic initiatives. I think we have to look down the road, and as much as I am an oil and gas guy, I realize I have to adapt and change. I would like to know: have we looked at what is the cost savings, or are we getting value for our dollar by switching over to alternate types of energies in the Northwest Territories? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Within our bigger strategy of the 2030 energy strategy and action plan, within there, we have targets, and within our targets, we are able to kind of match where we are at every couple of years, to be able to see if we are on target. I am just going to see if ADM Jenkins wants to elaborate a little bit more in terms of his views on whether or not we are doing any savings. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. JENKINS: Thank you, Madam Chair. I think the one that we have right in front of us that we could provide this evening is some of the savings associated with some of the biomass energy initiatives that we have ongoing. In 2019-2020, there was a utility savings of \$1.85 million, and that is based on the use of using 7,400 tonnes of wood pellets. In essence, we are displacing diesel, and these projects displaced almost 4 million litres of diesel. Ultimately, we are working towards reducing our greenhouse gas emissions, reduced over 10,500 tonnes of greenhouse gas in reductions. I think that is the one that we have at hand tonight that we could provide. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. The question I have now is for smaller communities. I am just wondering if the research is being done to see the savings in the smaller communities, as well? Because I know that we look at the Housing Corporation and we say they should sometimes upgrade their houses, make them airtight, and all this. That causes mould problems. It causes a whole bunch of things which we pay for down the road, and then there are really no cost savings. I just want to make sure that what we're doing here isn't creating more problems that will cost us in the end, anyway. If the Minister can comment. Thank you.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'll take that as a comment.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Any further questions, Member for Hay River South?

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. With respect to the \$12.38 million, the government has changed over some of their energy requirements to biomass. How much of that cost, or does any of it, come out of this \$12.38 million? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. The short answer is no, but I will get ADM Brennan to talk a little bit more about why it's a no. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. BRENNAN: Thank you, Madam Chair. The money that we save by putting it in biomass boilers basically just frees up money in the budget for other GNWT initiatives. This money here is funding that the department provides to various agencies or applicants for taking on their own initiatives. No, there are no savings in this \$12.38 million. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. Basically, this \$12.38 million goes towards projects that are accessed probably mainly by residents and businesses, private businesses? Is that correct? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. If you look along the list of contributions, it varies. You look at one example of the community access program, where it's proposal-based, and we put requests for proposals out twice a year, we get applicants, and we go through the department to be able to deliver that type of funding. You look at the Arctic Energy Alliance, where we provide direct funding to the Arctic Energy Alliance Coalition, and they determine that. It varies. Looking down the line, I want to say it's quite a mix of both providing either just contributions or perhaps just transferring some money or a grant. I'm not sure if the Member is wanting to go into all 20 of them or whatever and determine what are grants, contributions, and transfers. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. No, that's fine. I can look at it, and if I have further questions, I can ask the Minister at a later date. Thank you.

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

MR. NORN: Marsi cho, Madam Chair. I'll try to break this down to something more regional, and then I'll probably speak to something broader in terms of globally. I'll start by looking at page 244 just as a whole. I circled a few items that were sunsetted, the Arctic Research Foundation, the Tulita Solar Project. Understandably, that was sunsetted for the Tuktoyaktuk highway study, the Northern Transportation Adaptation Initiative. Then looking at this, it just seems like, in terms of research and development outside of Yellowknife, it just kind of all stopped. My first question to the Minister is: I don't want to sound anti-Yellowknife here, but I want to see how many of all these line items on page 244 are based in Yellowknife? What percentage of that? Thank you.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I don't know if I have that level of detail, on whether or not. I'm assuming that, to pick on Arctic Energy Alliance, most of the regions have an Arctic Energy Alliance office that does their own work. I'm looking to ADM Brennan to see if he wants to take a look at this, to be able to determine it. I'm pretty sure the majority of the list on the contributions are either administered by a department in Yellowknife or perhaps maybe some of them are delivered at a community level. I'll just see if the ADM wants to try to answer that. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. ADM Brennan.

MR. BRENNAN: Thank you, Madam Chair. We definitely don't have a list of how much of this money will be spent outside of Yellowknife, partially because, again, it's an application-based program and we don't know where the applications are going to come from. About half of this money, \$6.2 million, is for the Arctic Energy Alliance, and certainly, they offer services and rebates to various members and communities throughout the NWT. This money goes to the community governments, it goes to residents, it goes to businesses all across the Northwest Territories, and it will depend and will change every year based on where the applicants come from. With the exception of some core funding we provide to the Arctic Energy Alliance, everything else is pretty much application-based. I think the number will change every year, and we just don't have that information with us right now. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. NORN: Marsi cho, Madam Chair. Yes. It would be nice to see some of those numbers, because, again, it goes to my next question. On page 246, there are 28 positions in headquarters, and I'm assuming that's all here in Yellowknife. If the Minister is correct in saying that there are offices around, I imagine they have all the information on the Arctic Energy Alliance, but because it is money from the public purse, it would be nice to know how many jobs the AEA has, or Arctic Energy Alliance has, outside of Yellowknife. They don't have that information, but I'll get it at a later date.

Going back to my more global thinking, I always try to think of new ideas. I brought this up with the Members on another forum, but I talked about server farms. If you look at the R and D here, and I did some homework a couple of days about this, there are server farms all over the world. A lot of tech giants like to choose the colder climates. Like Iceland, they are working on a big project right now. They are going to wire fibre optics out of their country, and it will serve other areas of the world. Finland, the Scandinavian countries, because of the climate, they have favourable conditions. One of the things that's interesting about server farms is: because they generate so much heat, it's an alternative form of energy that can heat buildings, as well. Is that something that this department would be interested in doing and possibly researching and just putting the antenna out there and trying to get some interest in doing that? Is that something that the Minister would be interested in for her department? Thank you.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm hearing a lot of great ideas today. Unfortunately, they can't really be put in the budget right now, but it is something we can look at if and where there are opportunities for cost savings and look at innovative ideas on how we can save money. You look at some of the costs that we put into the energy strategic initiatives and some of the projects going out, and when you try to balance some of the cost savings, it is different. I hear the Member's concern about trying to get out there and look at some exciting programs and initiatives that are happening all over the world. I also hear the need for a little bit more focus on more, perhaps, research and development in terms of looking at saving money. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. NORN: Yes. I understand, just in terms of what we're working on here, but it's always good to just start conversations and get that out there and find ways. Like I said, I'm always going to look for ways to try to streamline the way we do business and try to find ways for revenue, and that's working. I'll leave that as a comment. I'm kind of excited about this. I'm going to do more research on this, and I'll probably share that information with my colleagues. Thank you.

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

MR. LAFFERTY: Masi, Madam Chair. Just probably a couple of areas. First is the Member for Tu Nedhe-Willideh talked about the cost breakdown. I'd like to see that, as well. Provide the list for the last five years. The community contribution, it does vary on an annual basis based on the application. For the last five years, we should have a good idea who got what. The \$12 million previous years, last five years, if there could be a breakdown of funding contribution, that would give us a good idea of where the money is expended, either Yellowknife or outside Yellowknife, and the regions, as well. If we could get that, Madam Chair?

One of the areas I've been focusing on is the biomass, the \$200,000 to assist increase of modern wood-burning technologies to heat homes and buildings in the communities. As you know, we serve a lot of communities that are isolated, high cost of living in the communities, no road infrastructures. Those are real challenges that we're faced with today. I can only speak to the experience that I've had with my own alternative heat in my

home. In 2003, we purchased a pellet boiler system. At that time, it cost us \$10,000. That was 18 years ago. I'm sure it's way higher now, probably double, almost double. It did cut my heat in half, I mean the cost, on an annual basis. It is beneficial. But \$200,000 can only stretch so much. When you serve 33 communities, \$200,000 a pot, that's \$6,000 per community. That's pocket change for the Government of the Northwest Territories, Madam Chair. We should have that increase over the years. If you talk to people that installed pellet boilers, it's all good news. Wood burning, all great news, but we're still at that low level. Has that been contemplated by this department over the years to increase that funding? If not, why not? Madam Chair, that will be my first question.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. We did provide, through the Arctic Energy Alliance program, a lot of funding, which we completed just in the last fiscal year, \$5.9 million resulting in some of the energy rebates; some 120 home energy efficient kits; 150 energy audits; deep home energy; 54 wood stoves that were installed; and an additional 66 delivered to the communities. This is not just \$200,000, in addition to providing to homeowners who wish to do some of this wood themselves, but we are providing some community work, as well, to some of the communities. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. LAFFERTY: Madam Chair, obviously, that is good news. A lot of my communities have benefited from wood stoves. I serve four communities, almost 4,000 people, and when the Minister is talking about 54, that's 54 throughout the Northwest Territories possibly. Even my communities, obviously, there's an outcry for wood stoves. A lot of our people are not employed in the community, and they're struggling. Power went out 20 hours in Whati. Some communities were fortunate they had wood stoves, but a lot of them didn't have a wood stoves. Those are real challenges, real stories.

Yes, Arctic Energy Alliance, there are monies set aside there, but I'm strictly referring to the biomass energy of \$200,000 that's to assist increase use of modern wood-burning technologies. I'm referring to a pellet boiler system, and not everybody has or in a position to purchase \$10-, \$15-, \$20,000 worth of equipment to cut down their costs on an annual basis. Even the pellet bags at 40 pound a bag, just imagine transporting that to isolated communities that do not have road access. There's a substantial cost, and I'm just wondering if there's been an appetite to assist those communities at the initial

stage. Usually, government turns to individual community members saying, "You buy this, and we'll give you a rebate," but not everybody has money up front. I'm just wondering that because it says to assist increase use of modern wood-burning, how are they assisting, Madam Chair? Masi.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm looking at this program here, the Low Carbon Leadership Economy Fund. Some of the things, the allocation to the GNWT is \$31.2 million for an initiative to reduce greenhouse gas, so the total project expenditures, including GNWT as well as third-party contribution, will total about \$74.2 million if all the programs are fully subscribed. This funding is allowed for six approved initiatives. I'm not going to go into all of them, or I can but I won't, but one of them is the energy retrofits of public housing. This is just one part of this fund that can assist residents who live either in housing, public housing. I'm going to get ADM Jenkins to speak a little bit more about what are some opportunities, more specifically about what the Member is speaking about in terms of helping individual homeowners to be able to provide some wood stoves. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. JENKINS: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just to speak to a few of the programs that are provided, specifically looking at one that is a new program that's called the low income home winterization program basically designed to help energy upgrades more accessible for low-income-owner occupied homes. That is a new program there through AEA. In terms of providing energy saving products, not particularly in terms of what you referred to in terms of biomass boilers, but ways to basically make homes more energy efficient and potentially save costs, there is, of course, the community wood stove program that is a program that is already existing. Basically, AEA works with, basically, provides programming in communities after installations are done to help in that. There are programs in there. As the Minister mentioned, there is also the Low Carbon Economy Leadership Fund, and there are grant programs, GHG Grant Programs for governments in the NWT, including community and Indigenous governments, that could be used to fund projects that result in GHG emission reductions. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. LAFFERTY: Masi, Madam Chair. Arctic Energy Alliance and other programs, there's always a threshold. Not everybody qualifies. Some people are making just beyond the threshold, and they don't qualify for a wood stove. Those are the individuals I'm voicing for. I'm certainly hoping that the Minister will seriously consider these areas. Madam Chair, the next one I have, obviously, is Community Access Program at \$1.48 million. I know it goes directly to the communities. As you know, COVID-19 hit us over a year now, and there've been a lot of cabins built on my area on Highway No. 3. I'm assuming those are community access roads that we're referring to. How many communities or cabins have we covered over a COVID year period, and \$1.48 million, is that enough? I don't think it is because I'm seeing a lot of cabins going up. Madam Chair, that will be my question to the Minister.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. The Community Access Fund is on a yearly basis, like I said, \$1.5 million, application based. In terms of the breakdown as to what we give for trails, what we give for access roads, what we give for there, I am going to look to ADM Jenkins to see if he has a breakdown, as he is the guy in charge specifically of that CAP program. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. JENKINS: Thank you, Madam Chair. Community Access Program, \$1.5 million for access roads, trails, docks, wharves. We have two application periods, the summer and a winter intake. To date, in 2021, we have approved 26 construction projects, totalling just over \$1.58 million. We do have a breakdown of the projects that were funded, both in the summer construction projects, as well as the winter construction projects. Broken down by region, it would take a little bit of time to go through, Madam Chair. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Mr. Jenkins. Minister, can we get a commitment that we could get a copy of that list for the Members? Thank you. Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. I just looked at the Infrastructure website. The latest document that has the word "biomass" in it is from 2017. It's a fact sheet. I think I heard the Minister say there is some kind of study or strategy that was developed. Can the Minister just tell me very briefly what that is and commit to share it with the committee? Thank you.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I am going to see if ADM Jenkins has further information, a really quick answer on what that is. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. JENKINS: Thank you, Madam Chair. This would be captured under the Energy Strategy. Thank you.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Look, is it a separate document, and can it be shared with the standing committee? Thank you.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I am looking to support staff here to see if we are able to share it. I am seeing nodding. I am going to ask ADM Jenkins to see if that's possible. I really don't know where we're at in that document. I have so many numbers and stuff in front of me here to be able to find it very quickly. It's not going to be very quick. Let's see if he can do this quicker than me. Thank you.

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

MR. JENKINS: Thank you, Madam Chair. We will have to look that up on the website and take a look and see if there is a new document there. I am not aware, so I will have to go and do some looking. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks. I just burned up two minutes with what I thought was a simple question, so I think I will move on. I have been here for over five years now. I have never seen a detailed cost estimate for the Taltson expansion project or the Slave Geological Province road. I heard the Minister or somebody say that there is supposed to be an updated cost estimate for Taltson in the first quarter of the new year. Can the Minister commit to sharing that cost estimate with standing committee? Yes or no? Thank you.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. It's going to be a no because I don't know

specifically what I committed to or what I said. I am not going to sit here and commit to something that I don't know whether it is shareable or not, so the answer is no. Thank you.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. I will be here three months from now asking for it. Is there an updated cost estimate being prepared for the Slave Geological Province road, or the road to Lockhart, or whatever the heck it's called now? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thank you, Madam Chair. Can the Minister tell me when that study is going to be finished, and can she share it with standing committee? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I am wasting some time here but without finding the right information, I am going to look to ADM Jenkins to see if he knows more information while I find that. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. JENKINS: Thank you, Madam Chair. We have \$40 million in funding for the Slave Geological Province corridor. We are going through the environmental, regulatory, and other type of information-gathering, which would support regulatory applications. Obviously, we would have to look, as we go through this process, similar to Taltson, and look at the business case for the project. We don't have a time right now. We are looking at hopefully having a regulatory application in for the Lockhart All-Season Road some time in the next year. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. This is more of a comment. We spent tens of millions of dollars on these two projects, and I, as a legislator, have not seen an updated cost estimate. I don't know what else I can say. That's just not good management. I will leave it at that. I want to ask about the strategic infrastructure line on page 243,

\$667,000. Can someone tell me briefly what that is actually for? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Minister.

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. The strategic infrastructure line, there's not a change in it from previous. It's due to unfunded positions and an increase of O and M spending. I am looking at it as no change, but I am going to look to ADM Brennan to just confirm. I see a difference here because there is a decrease of \$133,000. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. BRENNAN: Thank you, Madam Chair. The \$667,000 is \$560,000 for salary and about \$100,000 for O and M, including travel, some contracts, and materials and supplies. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. I appreciate that concise response. I had understood that the department was doing some studies, research, cost estimates for small hydro projects close to some of the Tlicho communities, including Whati, Gameti, Wekweeti. Can someone tell me the status of that work? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I am going to get ADM Jenkins to find that in his book really quickly and respond. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. JENKINS: Thank you, Madam Chair. One project I can speak to quickly is the project for Gameti. We have done some hydrological monitoring on that since 2018 looking at doing a community-scale hydro power project. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. Rather than eat the clock up here, can I get a commitment, then, from the Minister to share some more information about what that project is all about and whether there are any other mini hydro projects or work being done in the other Tlicho communities? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. That's a yes. The ADM did speak about one of the projects. The other one we can share information on is the Whati transmission line that is happening, as well. There are some projects that are taking place that the department will be able to provide an update as to where we are at with them. Thank you.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. I appreciate that commitment from the Minister. The Whati transmission line, though, has nothing to do with mini hydro. It's about bringing Snare power over to Whati at what I feel is an exorbitant cost. For the same cost, we could actually build mini hydro in three of the Tlicho communities and make them energy self-sufficient, but we will have that discussion later. Just a couple more clean-up questions if I can. My colleague from Deh Cho asked about research and development. Can someone confirm whether there is actually any research and development capacity within the Department of Infrastructure for biomass? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Some of the things that we are doing for alternative renewable energy research is funding used for academic leading-edge research and development of push technology, but without going any further, that's as much as I know on research and development. I will ask ADM Jenkins to see if he can give further information on R and D. Thank you.

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

MR. JENKINS: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes, we do have engineers, and we have some smart people in the division. They do a lot of work. As an early adopter and now a leader in the use of biomass for heating across the territory, we have actually been contacted by territorial and provincial agencies in terms of our expert technical input into projects in other jurisdictions. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. Wow, I actually got through all of my questions. I want to thank the Minister and her staff for responding fairly quickly. I just wanted to note for the record that we have a wood-pellet boiler system, as well, in our

home. When we put it in, it was \$35,000. The prices have gone up significantly, but it is a big cost. We actually have hoppers on the outside of the house, and it's delivered pneumatically. With pressure, they can blow the pellets into hoppers, and you don't have to load the individual bags in. It's a big benefit that way, especially when you're an old guy. We need more money to do wood pellets, but even more importantly, wood chips. You are not going to get wood pellets in the off-road communities, and we have to look at technology that allows for wood chips to be used. That's my pitch to try to get the Minister and her staff to do some more work on wood chips and biomass, in general. That's all I've got. Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: I will take that as a comment, and I thank the Member for sharing that. It's really good to hear that people are doing this on their own. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Minister. Since there are no further questions under this because we have gone through everybody, please turn to page 243. Infrastructure, energy and strategic initiatives, operations expenditures, 2021-2022 Main Estimates, \$19,030,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Sergeant-at-Arms, please escort the new witness into the Chamber. Minister, will you please introduce your new witness?

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Still with us today is deputy minister for regional operations, Gary Brennan, and we have Assistant Deputy Minister John Vandenberg for programs and services.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Mr. Vandenberg, welcome. Thank you, committee, and now we are going to move on to programs and services, beginning on page 247, with information items on page 249. Questions? Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

MR. NORN: Thank you, Madam Chair. I have a few questions, I think, on fuel services. I hope this is the right area. I know in my riding, in Lutselk'e, the fuel has to be shipped in there. The prices of fuel shift from year to year. I am just wondering right now: can the Minister just explain the one item here, the actuals to the main estimates, that variance? Thank you.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. When you look at the fuel services, I think that's where the Member is looking at, we had an increase of \$32,000 for amortization adjustment, but there is a variance of \$2.3 million, which the department absorbed expenditures in order for the fuel services division to stay within its authorized stabilization limits. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. NORN: Thank you, Madam Chair. I know this is a sticky point in the community of Lutselk'e because once a price is announced, that's the price for the year, but prices for fuel are always fluctuating. I am just wondering how the department determines how they keep a certain price for fuel in the communities and how they determine what rates they are going to be charging and how they arrive at that decision. Thank you.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I am going to get ADM Vandenberg to speak to this.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Mr. Vandenberg.

MR. VANDENBERG: Thank you. Good, I can hear myself. I thought I might have to push something. With respect to the determination of fuel prices, the fuel prices are based on a number of cost components. The cost components include the wholesale purchase price of the product itself; the commissions paid to the local community contractor for distribution of the fuel; the transportation costs of the fuel to the community; the taxes, and there are various fuel taxes that are part of that; an O and M levy, as well, which covers the cost of the overall operation for the fuel services division of the Department of Infrastructure, which includes staffing costs and office costs, various costs. All of those come together to determine the total price of fuel that is charged to the communities. Thank you.

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

MR. NORN: Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate that response. If we could get some numbers back, I would like that, for all of the communities who have to have their fuel delivered. I know it's going to be different from community to community based on what I was just told here. If we could get a breakdown by community of what the fuel prices are on average in the Northwest Territories? Thank you.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes, I believe we have a list here that we can share. Within each of the communities, in the North Slave, the Deh Cho, Sahtu, and the Beaufort-Delta, in each of the different categories, we are able to classify what the price per litre is for diesel heating, diesel motive, gasoline, naphtha, as well as jet fuel. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. NORN: Thank you. I appreciate that. One other concern that was brought to me by my constituents, especially in Lutselk'e, they are always watching fuel prices. They see it on the news. All of the sudden, the price will dip for fuel, and it becomes cheaper everywhere. That happens from time to time, but the prices of the fuel in the small communities stay the same. Is there ever going to be an appetite to keep with the times? If you see the price of fuel drop across the board, will the department ever follow suit and try to keep things fair for our small communities? Thank you.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Really good question. I wish I could say yes right now, but I don't know for sure. I am going to ask ADM Vandenberg to see if he can help me out with that answer. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. VANDENBERG: Thank you, Madam Chair. The price of fuel in the communities that we serve, the Petroleum Products Program, under the fuel services division, services 16 communities in the Northwest Territories, and for each of those, as was pointed out, there is a different cost structure, different cost component. The components are the same, essentially, but the prices to do that are different. A smaller fraction of that total price is actually the wholesale price of the cost of fuel. When we see fuel fall in various parts of the country, what we have to understand is that the cost of our local contractors to distribute the fuel in the communities, the cost of transportation, the cost of our levy, our various overhead costs, they do not really change very much. Even though the price of fuel, the wholesale price, may change somewhat, the price change for the communities as in what they pay, what the citizens pay, does not change that much. I don't know if that answers the question.

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

MR. NORN: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you for that response. If I could just get something

in writing from the Ministers about the breakdown about the wholesale cost and some of the factors because I know I am going to get that question again in the future, just so I could explain to my constituents what factors into the cost of fuel? Thank you.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes, absolutely.

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

MR. NORN: Nothing further. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Member for Great Slave.

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. I am looking at the line item for occupational health and safety on page 248. I note that it's \$306,000 for the upcoming year, which is an increase of \$150,000 or so. It is my understanding that that is a staffing position increase. Now, for me, it's really concerning that for a department with an overall budget of, what are we looking at here, \$278 million, that there is only \$306,000 being spent on health and safety. This is the department of the doers and the workers and the people who are out in the field and active, and I feel that the health and safety funding is woefully short. Perhaps the Minister can speak to whether or not the department is looking to increase funding for occupational health and safety roles within the department. Thank you.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. The occupational health and safety is crucial to some of the line of work that we do within Marine Transportation Services or let alone the Department of Infrastructure. In terms of the increase, I know it does not look like a lot, but we did increase by one extra position in the Northwest Territories. Perhaps one is not enough. I think that is where the Member is going, and that is something we can look at. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes. Just a further comment to that, I do think it would be worthwhile, as we look at integrating things and breaking down silos within the GNWT, that the entire health and safety program of the Government of the Northwest Territories be looked at and perhaps one unified one created, which would be

great, along with a public safety department, but I will follow up with the Minister at a later date on that. Sorry. I just lost my spot here. I really do need glasses, particularly at the end of this day. I am going to leave it there, and if I could come back to my spot, I will just send an email. Thank you. I am good.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member. Any further questions from Members under programs and services? Member for Yellowknife North.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. Do we have a timeline when we expect all departments to be on our digital integrated management system, our digital records system, a.k.a. DIIMS? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I am going to find -- actually, I am using up his time, so I am going to turn it over to ADM Vandenberg. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Mr. Vandenberg.

MR. VANDENBERG: Thank you, Madam Chair. I can tell you, at this time, and I may have mentioned this before, that DIIMS has not been implemented at a few of the departments: Education, Culture and Employment; Health and Social Services; Executive and Indigenous Affairs; and at the Legislative Assembly. The implementation of DIIMS is certainly high on our priority list. We are working with the departments to do that. You may know that the occupational records classification system and the administrative records, the ARCs and the ORCs classification systems, need to be accomplished by these departments before we can fully implement the DIIMS in these departments. Again, we are working with them to see that that happens. That is really the denominator of how long it will take to get it done. We do have a schedule. We want to move forward on this as quickly as possible.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. We spend two-and-a-half million dollars a year on corporate information management. Getting all of our departments on the same records is essential for the ATIPP implementation; it's essential for any sort of digital government work we have to do. I hear what the department is saying, is that there is a readiness aspect in that the first step is departments getting their records in order so that they can actually be brought into the GNWT's digital information system. What is the department doing

to make sure that ECE, Health and Social Services, EIA, and I guess I will talk to the Legislative Assembly about making sure they are ready and getting DIIMS online? Sorry. I just want to re-ask my first question. Do we have a timeline? I know we are trying. I know we are spending millions of dollars doing this every year, but it has been many years in the making, so when can we actually expect the GNWT to be on one information management system? Thank you.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. The Member did talk about when. There are some steps that we need to do that meet some of our key requirements in order to get everybody online. That is going to take time. I am going to look to ADM Vandenberg to see if he knows a little more information about some timelines in getting everybody on the same page. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Mr. Vandenberg.

MR. VANDENBERG: Thank you, Madam Chair. I will say that, again, we cannot pin down an exact timeline, but we are working. The Department of Infrastructure is working. We are providing project management support, training, help-desk support, advisory services to support the approval and implementation of ORCs in these departments. I cannot say exactly how long that will take, but we are redoubling our efforts to make sure that they can get that done, and we are providing the training accordingly. It's going to vary per department, depending upon the volume of records that they have. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes. I recognize that the fault probably does not lie with the corporate information management section and that departments, some of our records are in a mess, and it was a lot of work to bring all of the records into one place for the departments who got there. Can I just get a commitment from the Minister to try to do their best to put together a timeline? I believe there was a timeline at one point when DIIMS was first rolled out and that we failed to meet it a couple of times in a row now, so perhaps there is some hesitancy to actually put a date on this. If possible, can the Minister come back with a date or at least an assessment of what is the barrier to getting this work done? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes, I think that is a great idea. That would put a lot of pressure onto some of the departments who still are not combined with our infrastructure information management system, so absolutely. Thank you.

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

MR. JOHNSON: No further questions. I will celebrate the day we are all on one information management system and all of our ARCs and ORCs are sorted out. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Is there anyone else who wants to ask questions under programs and services? Member for Deh Cho.

MR. BONNETROUGE: Mahsi, Madam Chair. I am looking under the line item, compliance and licensing. That is a \$3-million price tag. Can you explain what this line item entails? Mahsi.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. There is a variance there. It's actually an increase. No, sorry. There is a variance for increased O and M expenses for the monthly maintenance and support fees and increased travel in 2019 under compliance and licensing. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. BONNETROUGE: Mahsi, Madam Chair. You mentioned maintenance in there. Can you tell me what you mean by maintenance in there? Mahsi.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm going to get ADM Brennan to explain maintenance. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. ADM Brennan.

MR. BRENNAN: Thank you. What the Minister was referring to was the maintenance of our actual drive system. This division, compliance and licensing, maintains the drive system, which is our driver and vehicle licensing system, and we have to provide maintenance fees to keep that up to date on an ongoing basis and move forward towards things like online services. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member for Deh Cho.

MR. BONNETROUGE: Mahsi. Mahsi for that. The other one I'm looking at is inspection services. We've got \$1.6 million. What type of inspection services are these? Mahsi.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm going to ask ADM Brennan to speak a little more about the programs for inspection services.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Mr. Brennan.

MR. BRENNAN: Thank you, Madam Chair. The types of inspections that that division takes care of are inspections for electrical boilers, gas pressure, vessels, and elevators. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member for Deh Cho.

MR. BONNETROUGE: Mahsi, Madam Chair. Mahsi for that answer. You are mentioning that it's electrical, boiler, gas, and electrical. That sounds very familiar because we do have those safety services within the GNWT, whether it's under Infrastructure. Are these the people who you are actually using who are within government? Mahsi.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I don't know if I heard that question, my earpiece was off, but I'm sure one of the staff, Assistant Deputy Minister Vandenberg, may have heard that question. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. VANDENBERG: Thank you, Madam Chair. The \$1.6 million is the staff costs for GNWT staff and for the inspection department, for the group. Yes, indeed. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member for Deh Cho.

MR. BONNETROUGE: Mahsi, Madam Chair. We are using the GNWT staff, so we are paying back to the GNWT with that money. I also note, down on the contract services, what does that entail, that amount there, \$1.7 million?

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. That was asked earlier, but I'm going to see if ADM Brennan can repeat that. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. ADM Brennan.

MR. BRENNAN: Thank you, Madam Chair. I don't have a list of all that entails, but I can give the Member some of the items that it would include. It would include -- jeepers, where do I start -- air, marine, and safety. They have the contract to work at airports, so some of the building work that happens at airports, upgrades and whatnot, that's contracted out. Compliance and licensing, they contract out the maintenance of their drive system. Basically, it's just various contracts throughout all the different divisions that add up to that \$1.7 million. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Member for Deh Cho.

MR. BONNETROUGE: Mahsi, Madam Chair. Most of your contracts for all those services, are they contractors based in the NWT, northern contractors? Mahsi.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm looking at the line item there for contract services in the expenditure category. You'll see a variance there of \$6.2 million in some of the contracting services. I just want to say that \$4 million is absorbed within the MTS deficit in order to stay within its authorized stabilization limits, and then the other \$2 million is a department-absorbed fuel services division deficit in order to stay within its authorized stabilized limits. That's what the variance in the contract is. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Member for Deh Cho.

MR. BONNETROUGE: Mahsi, Madam Chair. I got confused there because I see a line item of \$1.7 million, and she is talking about \$4 million here and there. I'm just wondering. It's the contract services on page 248, Madam Chair. Mahsi.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Red means decrease, so there is a decrease in previous years to now. I'll get ADM Brennan to speak a little bit more about the line item.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Minister. We only have black and white, though. Mr. Brennan.

MR. BRENNAN: Thank you, Madam Chair. I have colour; I've got the good stuff. In terms of the \$1.7

million for contract services, we don't have the breakdown by northern and southern, but the majority of this work is for airports, air, marine, and safety, and most of that work happens in our small communities where our 26 airports are located outside Yellowknife. Unfortunately, we don't have the breakdown right now. Most of that money is spent in the North, but unfortunately, we just don't have that right now. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Mr. Brennan. Member for Deh Cho.

MR. BONNETROUGE: Mahsi, Madam Chair. Contract services, that's not for any specialized services or anything, is it? What type of contract work does this entail? I think you may have answered that before; I'm not sure.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes, we did answer that already, but if the Member likes, we can get ADM Vandenberg to answer it again.

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

MR. VANDENBERG: Thank you, Madam Chair. For the most part, these are contracted services, and I believe ADM Brennan mentioned airports. The majority of this money is spent with northern contractors and northern businesses.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Member for Deh Cho.

MR. BONNETROUGE: I just wasn't sure what type of work that entailed and if the small contractors can access it. Anyway, I heard talk when I was working with Infrastructure back in 2018-2019 about MTS getting their own maintenance personnel. My question is: did that happen? Mahsi.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I will get ADM Vandenberg to talk in a little bit more detail about MTS. Thank you.

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

MR. VANDENBERG: Thank you, Madam Chair. In the interest of time, I will be brief on this one. With MTS, with the program, we are committed to hire through PSAC, the union. We're working with three bargaining units there, and MTS does, through the staffing contractor, bring on their own maintenance people, whether that be maintenance people for the

shipyard, for the facilities, the mobile equipment, the vessels. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Mr. Vandenberg. Are there any further questions from Members under programs and services? Member for Hay River South.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. Can the Minister just maybe clarify air, marine, and safety and the \$4.309 million? What does that number encompass? What is the money used for? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. The air, marine, and safety is responsible for some of the planning, monitoring, managing airport and ferry infrastructure, which includes five ferry vessels, four ferry crossings, and runways and lighting at 26 airports. It also provides strategic direction to be able to optimize commercial development at airports and is responsible for developing system-wide asset management, maintenance and operations standards, and administering these safety management system so we can comply with some of the federal legislation. Yes, that's what that is. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'd just like to talk a bit about marine and the ferries. What we have here is, I think, an aging fleet. They're probably upwards of 40, 50 years old. At some point, we're probably just patching them and giving them a little bit more life. I would like to ask if there's been any planning with respect to building new vessels or doing any real major retrofits to the ones that we have in the fleet right now? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. The Member is right. He sees these aging infrastructure every day when he probably drives by the Marine Transportation Service in Hay River. We continuously look for federal funding to be able to get better improved tugs and better improved, to comply with some of the Transportation Canada rules around what is required for some of our aging infrastructure. To speak more specifically about this is ADM Vandenberg to talk a little bit more about where we're at. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Mr. Vandenberg.

MR. VANDENBERG: Thank you, Madam Chair. In fact, that is correct. The vessels are aging. It's fair to say that they're used in fresh water, and so the hulls do have some life. We certainly have to comply with Transport Canada inspections every year, and the vessels have to be seaworthy in order to be able to operate. We have drawn upon federal funding, and we look to federal funding. We've re-engined a couple of vessels, spending some significant money on those ferries. However, indeed, we need to look to the future to consider future capitalization of replacements when the time comes. Thank you.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. One of the concerns I have is: with the amount of ice that came down, say for instance, the Liard last fall, the integrity of the hulls of those ferries could very well be compromised. It resulted in the ferry there being stuck out in the ice, and it had to be rescued. That's why I am just wondering why or if we are going to look at upgrading them, maybe upgrading the hulls to account for possible, for running them longer during the fall and when there's ice out there. In reality, it's a safety issue, and if there would have been vehicles on that ferry when it did get away there and get stuck, there could be some real liability there for the government. Is there anything that we're doing to ensure that the safety of the passengers on those ferries are looked after? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Absolutely. This is something that we need to look at, and I mentioned earlier about the stricter requirements from Transport Canada about having single hulled barges, tugs versus double hulled, and the amount it would cost to be able to look at that. Even just looking at some of our ferries across the Northwest Territories and the need to, perhaps, have a look, every year, we do a little bit of work, and I hear the Member's concern about what happened in one of the communities by Fort Simpson and how we need to ensure that we have safety as the utmost respect for these tugs and our staff, as well. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just previously, we were talking about energy initiatives, so I'm wondering if there's any planning with respect to converting some of these ferries to electric and with a diesel backup because the amount of diesel they go through even though

they're running for part of the year, it may be something that is worth trying. I would like to ask the Minister if that's being considered, and if not, why? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Chair. That makes a lot of sense, but there's a lot of work to be able to put some of these projects into play. I am going to look to ADM Vandenberg to see if that's something the department thought of in terms of how we, to be able to efficiently do things better. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. VANDENBERG: Thank you, Madam Chair. At this time, we haven't gone into it in great depth. We'd be prepared to look at that in future, however. Certainly, there could be a possibility for federal funding for the right program for that type of application. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I thank the assistant deputy minister for that answer because I think there's a real opportunity to try something and to maybe have some cost savings on diesel fuel. Also, you'd meet some of the energy initiatives that we're trying to achieve for replacement of diesel. That's more of a comment, and no further questions. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member for Hay River. I will take that as a comment. Any further questions from Members under programs and services? Seeing no further questions under programs and services, please turn to page 248. Infrastructure, programs and services, operations expenditure summary, 2021-2022 Main Estimates, \$15,727,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Members. Please return now to the departmental summary found on page 233. Is it page 233 or 231? Yes, 231. Infrastructure, operations expenditures, total department 2021-2022 Main Estimates, \$278,894,000. Does committee agree? Mr. Norn.

COMMITTEE MOTION 82-19(2):
TABLED DOCUMENT 286-19(2): MAIN
ESTIMATES 2021-2022 - INFRASTRUCTURE -
DEFERRAL OF DEPARTMENT (PAGE 231),
CARRIED

MR. NORN: Thank you, Madam Chair. I move that this committee defer further consideration of the estimates for the Department of Infrastructure at this time. Marsi cho, Madam Chair.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

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

---Carried

Consideration of the Department of Infrastructure, 2021-2022 Main Estimates, operating expenditures, total department is deferred. Thank you, Minister, and thank you to the witnesses for appearing before us. Sergeant-at-Arms, you may escort the witnesses out of the Chamber. Mr. Norn, what is the wish of committee?

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

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): The motion is in order. The motion is non-debatable. All those in favour? Opposed? The motion is carried.

---Carried

I will now rise and report progress.

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

Report of Committee of the Whole

MS. SEMMLER: Mr. Speaker, your committee has been considering Tabled Document 286-19(2), Main Estimates 2021-2022, and would like to report progress with one motion carried, 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 Yellowknife South. All those in favour? All those opposed? Any abstentions? The motion is carried.

---Carried

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

Orders of the Day

DEPUTY CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Rutland): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Orders of the day for Wednesday, March 3, 2021, at 1:30 p.m.:

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Prayer 2. Ministers' Statements 3. Members' Statements 4. Returns to Oral Questions 5. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery 6. Acknowledgements 7. Oral Questions 8. Written Questions 9. Returns to Written Questions 10. Replies to Commissioner's Address 11. Petitions 12. Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills 13. Reports of Standing and Special Committees 14. Tabling of Documents 15. Notices of Motion 16. Motions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Motion 29-19(2), Systemic Racism 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 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bill 3, An Act to Amend the Public Highways Act - Bill 12, An Act to Amend the Apprenticeship, Trades and Occupational Certification Act - Bill 13, An Act to Amend the Interpretation Act - Bill 14, An Act to Amend the Securities 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 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Committee Report 10-19(2), Standing Committee on Economic Development and Environment Report on Bill 3: An Act to Amend the Public Highways Act - 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 <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 21. Report of Committee of the Whole 22. Third Reading of Bills 23. Orders of the Day <p>MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. This House stands adjourned until Wednesday, March 3, 2021, at 1:30 p.m.</p> <p>---ADJOURNMENT</p> <p>The House adjourned at 7:55 p.m.</p> |
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