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**The Honourable Frederick Blake Jr, Speaker**

# Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

## Members of the Legislative Assembly

### Speaker

**Hon. Frederick Blake Jr.**  
(Mackenzie Delta)

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**Hon. Diane Archie**

(Inuvik Boot Lake)  
*Deputy Premier*  
*Minister of Infrastructure*  
*Minister responsible for the NWT Power Corporation*

**Mr. Ronald Bonnetrouge**  
(Deh Cho)

**Ms. Caitlin Cleveland**  
(Kam Lake)

**Hon. Paulie Chinna**  
(Sahtu)

*Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs*  
*Minister responsible for the NWT Housing Corporation*  
*Minister responsible for Homelessness*  
*Minister responsible for Youth*  
*Minister responsible for the Public Utilities Board*

**Hon. Caroline Cochrane**  
(Range Lake)

*Premier*  
*Minister of Executive and Indigenous Affairs*  
*Minister responsible for the COVID-19 Coordinating Secretariat*

**Hon. Julie Green**

(Yellowknife Centre)  
*Minister of Health and Social Services*  
*Minister responsible for Persons with Disabilities*  
*Minister responsible for Seniors*

**Mr. Jackie Jacobson**  
(Nunakput)

**Mr. Rylund Johnson**  
(Yellowknife North)

**Mr. Jackson Lafferty**  
(Monfwi)

**Ms. Frieda Martselos**  
(Thebacha)

**Ms. Katrina Nokleby**  
(Great Slave)

**Mr. Steve Norn**  
(Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh)

**Mr. Kevin O'Reilly**  
(Frame Lake)

**Ms. Lesa Semmler**  
(Inuvik Twin Lakes)

**Mr. Rocky Simpson**  
(Hay River South)

**Hon. R.J. Simpson**  
(Hay River North)  
*Government House Leader*  
*Minister of Education, Culture & Employment*  
*Minister of Justice*

**Hon. Shane Thompson**  
(Nahendeh)

*Minister of Environment and Natural Resources*  
*Minister of Lands*  
*Minister responsible for the Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission*

**Hon. Caroline Wawzonek**  
(Yellowknife South)

*Minister of Finance*  
*Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment, including responsibility for the Business Development and Investment Corporation*  
*Minister responsible for the Status of Women*

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**YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES****Wednesday, March 3, 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 1:31 p.m.

**Prayer**

---Prayer

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

**Ministers' Statements**

**MINISTER'S STATEMENT 126-19(2):  
SYSTEMIC RACISM**

**HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE:** Mr. Speaker, the Government of the Northwest Territories has a moral and ethical obligation to root out racism in our institutions. This obligation extends beyond the overt, visible, and obvious acts of hate and violence that we can easily see and condemn. It includes the subtle, hidden, systemic racism that persists in legislation, policies, and practices.

Systemic racism is real. It exists in the Northwest Territories, and it exists in our government. Some of our institutions, policies, and practices continue to disadvantage or discriminate against black, Indigenous, and people of colour. We continue to see examples of people facing discrimination based on their national origin, race, religion, ethnicity, and culture. It is an uncomfortable truth, but one that we must fearlessly acknowledge and confront if we want to change.

Mr. Speaker, the mandate of the Government of the Northwest Territories 2019-2023 identifies implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as one of our priorities. Done within the constitutional framework of Canada, this work will advance reconciliation, but it is not possible if we do not acknowledge and take tangible steps to eliminate systemic racism.

The United Nations' declaration sets the stage very clearly, "that all doctrines, policies and practices based on or advocating superiority of peoples or individuals on the basis of national origin or racial, religious, ethnic, or cultural differences are racist, scientifically false, legally invalid, morally condemnable, and socially unjust."

The Government of the Northwest Territories is taking steps to ingrain these principles into our legislation, policies, and institutions. In December, we announced the results of our work with the Intergovernmental Council: an innovative legislative development protocol, the first of its kind in Canada, that provides opportunities for the collaborative development of land and resource statutes and regulations for the Government of the Northwest Territories and Indigenous governments.

Mr. Speaker, the decisions we make as a government must reflect our commitment to reconciliation and the affirmation and advancement of Indigenous rights and self-determination. We must foster constructive and respectful government-to-government relationships with Indigenous partners and seek ways to advance reconciliation, recognize and affirm Indigenous rights, and support expanded program and service delivery. We also continue to respond to the calls for justice in the Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, and the calls to action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.

Mr. Speaker, we are firmly committed to addressing systemic racism in the Government of the Northwest Territories. We are committed to learning from the mistakes of the past, and moving on from colonial and outdated ways of thinking. We must embrace the principles of the United Nations declaration and the principles of anti-racism in the way that we approach all of our mandate commitments.

There are some instances where the path forward seems more obvious, like when we talk about settling and implementing treaty, land, resources, and self-government agreements or in our ongoing work with justice, education, and health; but we must also be vigilant in everything that we do, to ensure we do not inadvertently continue to perpetuate the past.

This Cabinet has and continues to update the way we review, discuss, and consider the items that come before us. Mr. Speaker, we have formalized and strengthened the presence of gender and diversity in our financial and policy decisions. I

encourage every Minister and every Member of the Legislative Assembly to embrace the principles of the United Nations declaration and the principles of anti-racism in every decision that you make.

When I worked in social services, I could see the impact that systemic racism has, and eliminating it is a cause that I fully endorse. I do this knowing that the path ahead will be long and difficult. Undoing years of systemic racism against Black, Indigenous, and people of colour will take time. Change will be incremental, but I am determined.

I know there is a lot of great work happening across government, and I look forward to my colleagues sharing examples of the work they are doing to address systemic racism. I am encouraged and inspired by the progress being made, but I acknowledge there is much more to do. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 127-19(2):  
ANTI-RACISM CAMPAIGN

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Mr. Speaker, the Government of the Northwest Territories is committed to providing a safe and inclusive workplace for all its employees. This includes educating our public servants on how racism can manifest itself in the workplace. Racism is a belief in a hierarchy of human value. It is a belief, conscious or unconscious, that some people are worth more than others. Racism is easy to see when it takes the form of specific acts of hate and violence, but systemic racism hides in plain sight. It is the kind of racism where the power of one racial group is exhibited and upheld over others in institutions, including schools, law enforcement, healthcare, and a workplace.

By contrast, anti-racism is about acknowledging the inherent privilege held by certain racial groups over others. Anti-racism is about speaking up when you see racism in action and educating those around you about the benefits of diversity within our communities and workplaces. It is about yielding positions of power to those who are otherwise marginalized, advocating for policies that break down systems of oppression, and promoting not only equality but equity. In addition to the work under way to implement mandatory cultural awareness training, the Department of Finance will launch an anti-racism campaign.

The Department of Finance will launch this anti-racism campaign to run between March 16<sup>th</sup> and April 21<sup>st</sup> that will encourage all GNWT employees to challenge their beliefs and attitudes around racism. The goal of this campaign is to encourage

employees to learn about anti-racism so they can take steps to stand against systemic racism and stand up for marginalized persons within our communities. We recognize that, in order to eliminate systemic racism in the NWT, we must build a culture of anti-racism within the public service.

[English translation not available]

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

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 128-19(2):  
ANTI-INDIGENOUS RACISM IN HEALTH CARE

**HON. JULIE GREEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to voice my commitment as Minister of Health and Social Services, as a Member of this Legislative Assembly, and as a resident of the Northwest Territories to address racism in all its forms in the NWT Health and Social Services system. Throughout the Northwest Territories, the Health and Social Services system works to provide quality services for all NWT residents: care that is respectful, responsive, and accessible. However, research shows that Indigenous peoples experience a disproportionate amount of negative health and social outcomes in comparison to non-Indigenous people. It is our responsibility as a government to address this inequity directly by making sure that all aspects of the Health and Social Services system are culturally respectful and safe for Indigenous peoples. This also includes respecting Indigenous understandings of health and wellness and finding ways to accommodate traditional healing in our system.

Mr. Speaker, leadership at all levels is critical in taking the steps necessary to address racism in the Health and Social Services system and is essential to sustain it. The need for coordinated leadership is one reason I appreciated the opportunity to participate in recent national dialogues to address Anti-Indigenous Racism in Canada's Health Care Systems. The meeting included 500 people from across the country and offered a powerful opportunity for governments and organizations to listen, reflect, and consider ways to advance this work at the national, provincial, and territorial level.

Mr. Speaker, the Department of Health and Social Services established a division dedicated to addressing Indigenous health disparities and included a priority focus on cultural safety eight years ago. Staff conducted research and worked collaboratively with Indigenous residents, knowledge holders, and leaders to set our strategic vision to meet our overall goal of ensuring that clients and their families feel safe, respected, and free from racism and discrimination when they access our Health and Social Services system.

Mr. Speaker, in 2019, the department advanced this work with the release of the Cultural Safety Action Plan. Grounded in community voices, the action plan took a "nothing about us without us" approach. Over 30 meetings were held across the NWT over about nine months. The action plan includes 27 actions organized under four key themes:

- create an organizational culture of cultural safety;
- strengthen staff capacity to deliver culturally safe care;
- honour traditional knowledge and healing approaches in care; and
- improve client and community experience.

Mr. Speaker, since the release of the action plan, the department has worked to pilot 13 cultural safety training sessions. The pilots included content on Indigenous medicine teachings, Indigenous experiences of residential schools and inter-generational impacts, and understanding racism at interpersonal and systemic levels. Approximately 225 Health and Social Services system employees participated in these pilots.

The department is now developing an NWT cultural safety framework, which will be reviewed by the Indigenous Advisory Board and Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Leadership Council. Once finalized, I will share it with Members.

As a final point, Mr. Speaker, we've heard that cultural safety and anti-racism work must be led by Indigenous people. Much of the work that I have just outlined will be led by a new cultural safety and anti-racism unit dedicated to leading our system's efforts to embed cultural safety and anti-racism into the fabric of our Health and Social Services system. The existing team is comprised almost entirely of Indigenous staff from multiple nations and regions in the NWT. As the team expands, we are committed to ensuring that positions are open to applicants from any community in the NWT and that the senior positions are all filled by Indigenous staff who have been mentored and supported to take on leadership roles to advance this work.

Mr. Speaker, we have done the research and the collaborative development with Indigenous peoples and communities in the territory to set our strategic vision and the action plans to guide this work. Now, the focus is on embedding cultural safety and anti-racism in a meaningful and sustainable way to achieve our vision of a territory where Indigenous peoples, families, and communities enjoy physical,

mental, emotional, and spiritual health and wellness. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

### Members' Statements

#### MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON SYSTEMIC RACISM IN THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

**MR. ROCKY SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We only have to watch the news; it is often charged with stories of racism. The last four years of government in the United States has shown us the reality of racism when it is allowed to rear its ugly head from the shadows without consequence. It showed us what happens when those inner feelings and beliefs that one is superior are allowed to surface and be liberated. People are now finding racism acceptable, and some are wearing it as a badge of honour.

Mr. Speaker, the enthusiasm of the racial divide in the United States spilled over into Canada and charged both sides of the debate. We as Canadians, although more accepting, continue to have a facet of the population that believes racism in Canada is exaggerated and that everyone has the same opportunity and is treated equally. In the NWT, we as Indigenous people know this, in fact, is not reality.

The NWT is predominantly Indigenous peoples. We have a government that is predominantly Indigenous, and we still fall short in the make-up of our workforce, in our education levels, in our access to business opportunities, and treatment when seeking medical and other services. This shortfall can be attributed to a number of reasons, with racism being one of them.

For some of us who have been in the North longer than others, we have seen and experienced the effects of what racism can do, both subtly and in its extreme form. When we look at the statistics related to the number of Indigenous children going into foster care, the number of Indigenous people being incarcerated, the number of Indigenous people who are victims of violent crimes, the number of missing and murdered Indigenous women, we see a pattern that proves our system continues to fail Indigenous people. This failure commenced years ago through racist government policy.

Mr. Speaker, how do we eliminate racism? Realistically, it will never be resolved, but it does not mean we give up the fight to lessen the harm it causes to those on the receiving end. As individuals and as a collective, we need to speak up against

racism when we see or hear it, listen to others if we are to understand their pain, be respectful to others as one day it may be you looking for the same respect, be accepting, and, most importantly, be willing to help others. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Hay River South. Members' statements. Member for Kam Lake.

#### MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON SYSTEMIC RACISM IN THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

**MS. CLEVELAND:** Mr. Speaker, employment opportunities, programs and services, and education and training are concentrated in regional centres in Yellowknife. In short, we are an economically and socially uneven territory. To access healthcare, social supports, training, education, and employment opportunities or to flee living arrangements that risk safety or sobriety or to move home to reconnect with family, we first ask Northerners to commit to homelessness. The Northwest Territories Housing Corporation community residency policy requires people to live in a community for varying lengths of time up to one year before adding their names to the community's housing wait list. It can then take years to get to the top of the list and some might say a lifetime. The Housing Corporation stipulates that no local housing authority or organization shall set a community residency requirement that exceeds one year, that the policy must be applied to all applications, and that it is not fair to apply a policy to only some applicants and not others.

When we talk about migration to and from small remote northern communities, we are almost exclusively talking about Indigenous people and their ability to move within the territory for access to healthcare, education, family reunification, and home. Putting your name on a housing wait list could mean a path to safety, a road to opportunity, connection to children in care, or a journey home, and the cost of putting your name on a housing wait list should be an NWT healthcare card. This policy drives the demand for shelters, overcrowding in public housing, forces people to remain in unsafe living arrangements, risks child apprehension, holds people back from accessing education, prevents family reunification; the list goes on, Mr. Speaker.

Twenty-eight of our 33 communities are considered non-market-rent and are dominated by public housing, so if you want to live in a community, your housing option really is public housing. If you want to move to a market-rent community and do not have the financial means to access market rent, the options are couch surfing or a shelter. This means families cannot stay together and boys over 15 stand to be separated from their parents. There

comes a time in the life of a policy where we need to cut our ties. That time has come, Mr. Speaker. It is time to cut ties with this policy that inadvertently does more harm than good and time to prioritize the opportunity, health, and safety of all Northerners. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON SYSTEMIC RACISM

**MS. NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One of the priorities for the 19<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly is to implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. This declaration establishes a framework of standards for survival, dignity, and the well-being of Indigenous people around the world. In the colonial state of Canada, systems were put in place during the formation of the country that mainly benefit the European or white settler. When a process or organization has racism embedded in its very structure, this is known as systemic or institutional racism. Systemic racism is often found in large institutional settings such as schools, healthcare, and the judicial and policing systems. It is different than individual acts of racism. Systemic racism puts Black, Indigenous, and people of colour at a disadvantage before they even start by rigging the system against them.

People of colour are underrepresented in the public service in Canada, and according to Statistics Canada, 23.9 percent of Black Canadians fall below the poverty line and are considered low-income. This is twice the rate when compared to white Canadians, at 12.2 percent. Indigenous people have a higher rate of incarceration in Canada, representing around 26 percent of inmates in correctional facilities, but only 3 percent of Canada's total population.

Systemic racism in our healthcare system creates a dangerous situation for Black, Indigenous, and people of colour when trying to receive treatment or care. It is well documented that health outcomes differ for non-white populations. A tragic situation highlighted lately by the numerous cases in the media of people dying due to being turned away by the system or from having their illness overlooked based on their race. In October, nothing spoke more to the horror of that racism than the video recorded by Joyce Echaquan, a 37-year-old Indigenous mother of seven in Quebec. Joyce's last moments on earth were spent listening to the nurses who were charged with her care, who had sworn an oath to help her, disparage her with racist comments about her worth and intelligence.

It is crucial that the GNWT adopt a culture of continuously reviewing and analyzing its policies

and practices for racial bias, in all departments. This is not just an issue that can be dealt with by human resources or the Affirmative Action Policy alone. It must be a whole-of-government approach with education at its core. The GNWT needs to update its hiring policies to include tangible targets and realistic action plans that will lead to actual change and not just lip service. Accountability must be part of this policy, or we will never see a GNWT that is reflective of the people it serves. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON SYSTEMIC RACISM

**MS. SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What is systemic racism? All I could find as a definition was that it is also known as institutional racism, a form of racism that is embedded and is normal practice within society or an organization. It can lead to discrimination in criminal justice, employment, housing, healthcare, political power, and education, among many other issues. It is an unconscious bias. We have the Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action and the MMIWG National Inquiry Calls for Justice that are all evidence of Canada's systemic racism on Indigenous people of this land.

We cannot deny that Indigenous people in this territory have been victim of this, Mr. Speaker. Over the past year and a half, since being elected to this House, my colleagues as well as Cabinet colleagues are challenged with changing the way we do business and ensuring that policies are made to reflect the people we serve, but it's very hard, Mr. Speaker, steering this ship in a new direction with the obstacles that we have. We have not enough money from our federal government to correct the past policies that were created to try to eradicate or assimilate Indigenous people that caused more damage.

Mr. Speaker, I will give credit where it's due. I'm glad that this government, at least so far in the Beaufort-Delta, is hearing the people and now has created the position of a regional Indigenous wellness coordinator. This position will assist in educating staff on cultural safety programs, oversee elders and residents, and lead the organization in incorporating Indigenous culture throughout. I am very happy to hear this, but again, this is just a start. There is much more that needs to be done to correct the damage history has caused to the Indigenous people of this territory. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON PERSONAL EXPERIENCE WITH SYSTEMIC RACISM

**MS. MARTSELOS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have spoken before about systemic racism existing within government policies and laws, police departments, and other public institutions. However, today, I would like to discuss systemic racism in a slightly different but equally significant context.

Mr. Speaker, I recently had a personal experience of systemic racism in Yellowknife, which occurred last month on February 1<sup>st</sup> at the NWT SPCA. I had been searching for a puppy for a number of months at that point and decided to stop at the SPCA to see some new puppies that had just arrived the day before. When I entered the building, the staff I initially interacted with were great. They treated me very well. They gave me a small tour of the dogs, and even introduced me to a puppy, which I was very interested in adopting. I asked the staff if this puppy was still available, and they said, as far as they knew, she was, since she just arrived less than 24 hours prior.

However, the mood and attitude of this situation came to an abrupt halt when an individual in upper management at the SPCA entered the room. I turned to her, told her my name, and asked if the puppy was still available for adoption. Then, without any introduction on her part or any greeting at all, she pointed and quickly and coldly said, "That dog is already spoken for." Then, without another word, she immediately turned around, left the room, and never came back. Right away, I felt very odd about that interaction. It was a very unfriendly and micro-aggressive response. I considered going to the board of directors, but felt it wouldn't change much. As a Dene woman, I know what racism looks like and feels like, and in that moment, I strongly feel that I experienced systemic racism.

I've shared this story with a few people already, and the response has been mixed. Some believe me, but some are skeptical. Some people seem completely unconvinced that any racism occurred, and they would rather find excuses on behalf of the individual in question. Maybe she was having a bad day, they say. Maybe she was busy in that moment, they say. I'm sure that most Black, brown, or Indigenous folks who hear this story will know the feeling I'm describing. Not all racism or racist behaviour is the same. Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

---Unanimous consent granted

**MS. MARTSELOS:** Mr. Speaker, not all racism or racist behaviour is the same. Some moments are more overt and obvious, while others, it's more subtle and covert.

In closing, I must state that I have nothing against the SPCA as an organization. I recognize the good work they do to help animals. In fact, I donate to the Fort Smith animal shelter regularly, and I am an avid dog lover. I am speaking about this because systemic racism takes many forms and can and does take place anywhere. Mr. Speaker, Black lives matter and Indigenous lives matter. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON DENTAL SERVICES IN SMALL COMMUNITIES

**MR. JACOBSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Dental services in the small communities: nobody likes having a toothache, Mr. Speaker, but many people across the NWT are having that because there are no dental teams coming into our communities such as Ulukhaktok, Sachs Harbour, and Paulatuk. Residents from my riding tell me that they haven't seen a dentist in the community since COVID-19 started last year. Measures are basically preventing dentists from travel into the communities.

In March of last year, we heard the dentists who are also not sure if they would be able to visit the communities because of the problem they may have with the time it takes the airborne contaminants to dissipate in the air with air exchangers in the health centres. In October, the government released COVID-19 standards for managing the infection risks to providing in-person dental care. Last year, we learned from the Minister of Health and Social Services that the department has been working on air exchanger requirements and infection control standards to resume dental services in the small communities. In December, the Chief Public Health Officer approved facilities to reopen in six communities to resume dental services, since we are waiting for the facility upgrades for COVID-19 safety protocols that are met in the communities.

Mr. Speaker, there are 27 communities in the NWT that do not have dental services right now, and teams that are unable to provide services, essential dental services. I come from a small community, very little space in our health centres, and the communities have a single room for centres that dentists can work in with patients with proper air handling units. Let's be clear, I appreciate the work of the front-line staff and Health and Social Services who work every day, and those who need

emergency dental care, the travel that would work much, be appreciated.

Mr. Speaker, building upgrades and installing air exchangers, quality measurement of tools, it's not a 10-year project. It also costs less than flying people out of the community for emergency procedures. There must be portable units that we could look at. I'd like a commitment from the Minister to make a targeted effort to improve facilities immediately so that our communities, our small communities in the territory could have dental teams visiting and doing dental work and procedures in the community instead of flying them out. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON SYSTEMIC RACISM

**MR. BONNETROUGE:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Systemic racism is alive and well within our society. It may not be physically prevalent but does hide behind closed doors and closed minds. Systemic racism is an action that is common to a system such as racism in society. As Indigenous people, we face systemic racism on a daily basis. Just the colour of your skin, the fact that you have a treaty number, the community you live in, the crowd that you hang around with, the people who you represent as a leader, those contribute to the harsh realities of systemic racism. This can happen at schools, stores, hockey rinks, even offices and other places we thought would care for our people. Sadly, this is failing on a daily basis.

Indigenous peoples are treated as second-class citizens in their own communities and on their own homeland. It contributes to the unjust, economic, and resource inequalities as seen for centuries and is still alive today. We are not to thrive but kept at bay with promises and more promises of a better tomorrow. Promises. United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, also known by its acronym, UNDRIP, seeks to recognize the right to self-determination, the right to self-government, freedom from discrimination, a stronger, more equitable future for Indigenous peoples. Are these actions able to wipe out systemic racism?

I would think not but, perhaps, to stem the divide. They could be incremental steps to recognizing that the Indigenous people do have a place in society. Mr. Speaker, these are important steps to curbing and destroying systemic racism in our society. Mahsi.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON  
SYSTEMIC RACISM

**MR. NORN:** Marsi cho, Mr. Speaker. Just listening to some of the comments of some of my colleagues, that feeling of exclusion, I could go on and on about my numerous encounters, those feelings that I have had throughout my working career and childhood. I will share you one of my first encounters.

Mr. Speaker, when I was about seven or eight years old, I visited relatives in Pine Point when it used to exist. My great-great-grandparents were busy with my relatives, and I was instructed to go to the nearby playground. I didn't think too much of it at the time, but I was so excited to jump on the monkey bars and play. That was until I was approached by two youth in their early teens. It was here I was given a hard dose of reality and my first real encounter with racism.

Mr. Speaker, I still remember as if this happened yesterday. I was told by these children: "You're from res, aren't you? You people are stupid. You should go shopping at the dump. You even know what two times two is? You can't play here." I didn't understand what "you people" meant at the time. I was very confused, hurt, and didn't get to play on those monkey bars because I was afraid. As always, Mr. Speaker, I went to my great grandparents who gave me this advice. They said: "My boy, you will run into hate, jealousy, and people who will judge you because of the colour of your skin and where you come from. You might not understand now, but when you get older, just be kind to everyone you encounter and speak straight with them. You don't have to trust them, but always be kind when you can, and do your best to get along with others. That is our way."

They also said, as I grow older, that I will no doubt encounter many people from all walks of life, and they were right. I was always told sternly before I left the house and flew the coop; they said, "Always be respectful and never ever make fun of other cultures." Mr. Speaker, I admit I don't always get this right, but I try to remember this and practice it as best I can in my day-to-day life. I try to instill these values to my daughters whom I hope will pass it on to their loved ones in the future.

Mr. Speaker, the point I'm trying to make is, the best way to deal with this scourge of racism is to meet head-on with respect, love, and education. Since then, up until this point in my working career, I've had countless racist encounters as I mentioned against both myself and towards my children, but I try to teach them as best I can. I can share countless other memories, but I won't. I would rather eschew these unpleasant memories to die with me, and all we can do from hereon in is to

influence each other and treat each other with respect and kindness and be good role models and persevere through it. Mr. Speaker, how do we pass down these values onto our government? Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent from my colleagues? Thank you.

---Unanimous consent granted

**MR. NORN:** Marsi cho, Mr. Speaker, colleagues. My constituent I spoke with recently, Ms. Laney Beaulieu of Deninu Kue, reached out to me in light of recent events in one of our communities. She's currently a student at the Western University in Ontario, and she pointed out a really powerful quote to me from Ibram X. Kendi, an American author and an anti-racist activist. "A policy is either actively trying to minimize the gap in the quality of life between marginalized people and the general public, or is it actively contributing to these disparities." This is a powerful statement, and I'm hoping that it sits with us for a while.

Mr. Speaker, I mentioned in my budget address that I firmly believe in policy reforms, that they need to be fair and they need to be easily delivered to our public service. The goal here being is that our directives are clear and all are as loophole-resistant as possible. This will be needed to dribble down from each of our department heads to ensure that the residents of the NWT get the very best out of our government.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to finish off with this powerful quote by Chief Dan George. "The heart never knows the colour of the skin." I believe this, and I really hope this resonates with us all. Mahsi cho, Mr. Speaker. I will have no questions. I think for the most part, and for most of us, it will be a day of reflection, and I think only a few of my colleagues will have questions. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON  
STANTON TERRITORIAL HOSPITAL  
STERILIZATION OF INSTRUMENTS

**MR. O'REILLY:** Merci, Monsieur le President. The problems with sterilization of instruments and equipment at Stanton Territorial Hospital appear to be over based on a January 14, 2021, update posted on the Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority website. The issues began last July 23 when the hospital's three sterilizer units simultaneously started producing instruments contaminated by moisture. This means the instruments couldn't be considered sterile because moisture can attract bacteria. A series of eight public updates were issued beginning on July

24 and became much more regular and consistent after I pressured the current Minister. The health authority described efforts taken with the facility operator, Dexterra, Boreal Health Partnership, the Department of Infrastructure, and the sterilization equipment manufacturer. The number of sterile instrument packs produced has been increased, but there is no guarantee the packs are reliably sterile.

The authority reported that elective surgeries were cancelled, which caused enormous anxiety and sometimes physical suffering for many residents who were left waiting. The latest report indicates that all surgeries, including total joint replacements, are being allowed again although there continues to be some staining of towels used in the sterilization process. I will have questions for the Minister of Health and Social Services about the cause of the sterilization problems, whether the backlog of surgeries has been cleared, and whether we can prevent this happening again. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON MISSING AND MURDERED INDIGENOUS WOMEN AND GIRLS AND SYSTEMIC RACISM

**MR. JOHNSON:** Mr. Speaker, I am afraid of where our implementation of the Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls is heading. I am afraid it is heading down a road where far too many GNWT action plans end up, a road where some of the low-hanging fruit is picked off, but the larger systemic problems are left unaddressed, caught in an endless cycle of planning and consultation with no meaningful action. Systemic problems can't be solved with a series of minor tweaks to the systems that perpetuate the problems in the first place. Systemic racism is no different, Mr. Speaker. I question whether the GNWT, a government that has had an Affirmative Action Policy in place for over 30 years with little results, is even capable of making the changes needed most.

Mr. Speaker, our government's current work plan goes through each of the calls to justice and is going to assign them into three categories: those that can be implemented immediately, those that can be implemented within one year, and those that require long-term planning. I am afraid that the systemic changes we need most, the calls to justice that we need to address systemic racism, will fall into that third category of long-term planning.

There are a multitude of reasons for this. One, and probably the most significant, being money. All of us in this House know how tight government budgets are, and there is endless need when it comes to government dollars. We in this House

could probably spend a billion dollars tomorrow and still find want for \$10 billion more. Mr. Speaker, this is why, first and foremost, any action plan developed must be costed. If we don't head down the road of figuring out how much we can reasonably afford, it does not matter how great the action plan is how much long-term planning we do if we don't put the money behind our words.

Mr. Speaker, I know that planning work has to be done, but more importantly, work also has to be done that dismantles the systems and barriers that will get in our way. The inquiry interviewed thousands of people, spent thousands of hours already planning, and it gave us in this House direction in the form of 231 calls to justice. In order to honour the work they did, we must not shy away from the most difficult of those calls to justice. I will have questions for the Minister responsible for the Status of Women. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON NORTHERN ADDICTIONS TREATMENT

**MR. LAFFERTY:** Masi, Mr. Speaker. It's only logical that Northerners undergoing addictions treatment do better when their treatment takes place here in the Northwest Territories. Regrettably, the government fails to understand this fact. That failure shows in the amount of money spent on southern-based treatment. I am talking about payments totaling as much as \$2.3 million a year to six southern providers, which the North does without. Regrettably, that is not the only case of the government's failure on the addictions treatment front. Where the Department of Health and Social Services provides for on-the-land healing, it is also falling on its face. Let me explain, Mr. Speaker. At the urging of Northerners, the department has made \$1.8 million available to Indigenous organizations wishing to offer on-the-land healing treatment. It's called the On the Land Healing Contribution Fund. Sadly, as of October 2020, only a couple of applicants have pursued this funding.

Mr. Speaker, it's not that communities aren't interested in on-the-land healing. It's that the department isn't bothering to promote this particular funding. It's that eligible groups aren't being properly encouraged. As a result, Mr. Speaker, Northerners are indeed missing out. It is so sad that this government is not being proactive on this particular, very important funding. These are just some of the words from the organizations that I represent, as well. Masi.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Monfwi. Members' statements. Item 4, returns to oral

questions. Item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery. Item 6, acknowledgements. Item 7, oral questions. Member for Nunakput.

### Oral Questions

QUESTION 629-19(2):

#### DENTAL SERVICES IN SMALL COMMUNITIES

**MR. JACOBSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today, I brought up dental care in the small communities, especially in the community of Ulukhaktok. This past week, I have been getting calls at 4:30 in the morning and text messages on Messenger. People are needing dental assistance, and there's nothing happening. They go to the health centre. They are given Tylenol and penicillin to help them with the pain, but, Mr. Speaker, we need to get this sorted out. We haven't seen a dentist in the community since last year. When are we starting a start-up plan for the small community dental teams to come into the communities? When is that going to happen? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**HON. JULIE GREEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just to begin, I would like to say that it's the Non-Insured Health Benefits program that offers dental services. The NIHB program uses facilities that belong to NTHSSA. Really, the responsibility here is with Indigenous Services Canada. They were the ones who suspended dental treatment service last March when the COVID pandemic lockdown began. What happened after that is that the Health and Social Services authorities, supported by the leadership council, requested that dental services not be resumed in health centres until a number of issues, including safety concerns that went beyond COVID-19, were resolved and there was an establishment of clear roles and responsibilities for the delivery of this service.

All of this inevitably led to a working group. The working group did its job and came up with a resumption of services plan. There are now six communities that are receiving dental services because they have newer health facilities that meet current air exchange and infection control requirements. Those communities, unfortunately, are not in the Member's riding, but work has not finished on this front. We are calling that Phase 1. In Phase 2, a working group has identified seven more communities where resumption of services might happen, depending on the assessment of the facilities in which those services would be offered. In this case, it is more promising for the Member's riding because it includes both Paulatuk and Ulukhaktok. Once again, the department will be doing facility assessments prior to the end of June

and will then be developing a plan to resume services. Thank you.

**MR. JACOBSON:** I have a phase, and it's "phase right now." "Phase now." We need help. People are having to fly out. How much is it costing our government to fly people out into Yellowknife and into Hay River for the young children? Why can't we purchase portable units for those health centres across the territory? There must be portable units and some way to be able to provide that service. In regard to that, why is it taking so long? As a government, we have to cover the cost because I have a T in front of my healthcare number. They have to provide service. \$38,800 a year we are provided for each resident in the community across the territory. Why is this service taking so long? One year.

**HON. JULIE GREEN:** At the Department of Health and Social Services, we really prioritize the safety of our patients. Where facilities were not meeting infection control and ventilation requirements, work could not be done in those facilities. This is not a long-term ban on dental services in these communities, but it's my understanding that teams are now working through potential solutions. The Member has mentioned a couple of potential solutions and maybe they are solutions, but nothing is going to happen with putting portable buildings into Ulukhaktok at this time of year. What is going to happen is that there will be this assessment done by the end of June and a plan developed then. Unfortunately, the residents of Ulukhaktok are going to wait longer for dental services to resume, but that is not because of a lack of money; it's because we want them to receive those services safely.

**MR. JACOBSON:** I am not asking for a portable unit, Mr. Speaker. I am asking for a portable air exchanger into the building, portable, being plugged in and able to provide service for dental, for air handling. I want commitment from this Minister, Mr. Speaker, in regard to improving dental care in the communities, all 27 communities and my four communities that I represent. We need help, Mr. Speaker. This has to be dealt with. We are not going to wait another year. It's costing this government numerous thousands and thousands of dollars to ship people out when they could do something simple, portable air exchange units. Is it possible for this Minister to commit to getting that done right away?

**HON. JULIE GREEN:** Among my many, many, many accomplishments, engineering is not one and so I cannot actually make a commitment to providing a portable air handling unit for the Member's health centres so that dental services can be resumed. What I have told him, and he is not satisfied with, is that there is an assessment

that will happen within the next four months and a plan will be developed because, obviously, it is very important to a person's overall health that they have good dental health. The department does not argue with that. I know the Member is really big on "right now," but unfortunately, this is not a problem that lends itself to "right now."

**MR. SPEAKER:** Final supplementary. Member for Nunakput.

**MR. JACOBSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want a commitment. Government has to come. The six communities that get dental services, all the power to them. Our communities are hurting, and it always becomes the communities are an afterthought in this government. Is that the way we are going to keep on going for something like this under COVID-19? How many studies do you have to do? Get a portable unit; give it to the dental team; fly them in. We need help. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. JULIE GREEN:** Generally, Ulukhaktok has two dental visits a year, so at this point, they would have missed two. My hope is that that's all they are going to miss. There will be two more dental visits in the next fiscal year. I want to just correct the perception that it's only big communities with dental services. The Fort Providence health centre, the Fort Simpson Health Centre, the Fort Resolution Health Centre, the Norman Wells health centre, and the Aklavik Health Centre have all had dental visits within the last two months. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 630-19(2):  
SYSTEMIC RACISM IN GOVERNMENT OF THE  
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES HIRING

**MS. NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Minister of human resources or Finance. What is the GNWT doing to eliminate systemic racism in its hiring practices? Will the Minister commit to setting numerical targets for the hiring of Black, Indigenous, and people of colour within the GNWT at senior levels of management, not just in entry-level positions? Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Great Slave. Minister of Finance.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I had indicated earlier in my Minister's statement, I have two things I want to say. Firstly, is rolling out a very express anti-racism campaign, really speaking to the idea of challenging all of our own mindsets about what is racism and what is anti-racism, as a starting point. That is just one small starting point. Getting to the rub of what I think the MLA is asking me about targets, Mr.

Speaker, I have also spoken in the House frequently about the Indigenous recruitment and retention framework that is being developed and put into place over the course of this next fiscal year. It will include targets. The idea of even including those targets is exactly that, that it's more than just the entry level; they are targets that are going to apply to each department, that each department is going to have a responsibility for, but that it will be coming back to human resources so that there is an overarching approach to what is happening in each department.

Mr. Speaker, although this is the Indigenous recruitment and retention framework and we are starting there, this is meant to be really a change of mindset in the way that we are -- representative of the way people think about the government, the way people think about public service, and it's only a starting point. It is really meant to be one that is going to make us more inclusive and more representative of Black, Indigenous, and people of colour. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MS. NOKLEBY:** All great news I am glad to hear. I just hope things go more quickly rather than dragging out. In our current Affirmative Action Policy, Indigenous Aboriginal men are not designated as a distinct priority group under that policy. Will the Minister commit to including this as part of the upcoming review of the Affirmative Action Policy, including the Indigenous retention and recruitment framework, and ensure that this should lead to ensuring that there is an increased representation within the GNWT itself for Indigenous Aboriginal men?

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** I have previously said we are going to take a review of the Affirmative Action Policy. Those reviews have been done many times and many ideas brought forward. There does need to then be collaboration on all sides of the House about bringing forward the actual changes and seeing them through. If, in the course of that review, it's brought to our attention that Indigenous men are a group that requires some specific attention over and above Indigenous persons generally and over above Indigenous women, I am open to receiving that feedback. For the time being, Mr. Speaker, again, I am going to say that going through that process of reviewing that policy is the direction I am going to go, and that is where we will see where that takes us. If, in fact, this is a group that is distinctions based, that requires specific attention. Then again, that review is underway.

**MS. NOKLEBY:** I did not have the luxury of listening to the Minister's statement ahead of making my questions. Some of it might get a bit repetitive, but that never hurts, to repeat ourselves if we want to be heard. Often as MLAs, we hear of direct-appointment hires or non-hires for that

matter, that seem to directly contradict the GNWT's own Affirmative Action Policy. Will a fairness review of direct-appointment hires be implemented as part of the new Affirmative Action Policy to oversee the ministerial appointments? What sort of corrections or sanctions will be built into the policy for individuals who do display racial bias in their hiring practices?

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** There are a couple of questions there, Mr. Speaker. I want to address the second one first, about people having sanctions for displaying racial bias in their hiring. There should not be racial bias in hiring. There should not be racism in hiring, and if that is happening, I want it brought forward. There are meant to be teams who work together. Human resources is involved precisely to ensure that the process is fair and that the policy of affirmative action is applied fairly and appropriately.

With respect to the first question, whether or not there will be some changes or a fairness review, again, Mr. Speaker, I made a previous commitment this session that the direct-appointment process is one that needs some information and some information-sharing, and I would like to bring that to committee. The direct appointments process right now has very specific rules, very specific targets of what is allowed and not allowed and right now actually achieves a higher percentage of affirmative action candidates than the usual hiring processes. All that said, though, to the extent that a fairness review should be part of it, that is still between the Affirmative Action Policy review that we are doing and the recruitment framework that we are doing. That is something that can be included in either one of those.

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

**MS. NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One of the ways that I get my opinions into those types of policies, reviews, et cetera, is to bring them up here in the House. This one is a little bit more on the philosophical plane, but we often hear that increasing the population of the Northwest Territories is a great way for us to increase our revenues by upping the number of transfer payments that we get from the federal government. However, our priority is to increase our local employment and hiring and keeping with northern businesses, et cetera. My question is: does the Minister find that these two goals are somewhat contradictory to each other, and if so, how do you plan to address that in your upcoming affirmative action and other policy reviews? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** I think that is exactly the kind of question that should be debated

in the House, and I am pleased to have it brought to the floor and, frankly, pleased to have it come back, if necessary, for reconsideration or further discussion or debate. I don't think that they are necessarily in conflict with one another. I don't think they should be in opposition to one another. As a government, we want to do everything we can to ensure that Northerners have the skills, the training, the education, the underlying health, the housing, all of the parameters that are going to allow them to apply for any and every job in the public service. At the same time, I am well aware that, in this moment, we bring teachers, doctors, nurses, and various other professionals and individuals to the North to fill the positions that we are still not filling from amongst northern graduates.

I don't think they are mutually exclusive. If we're doing things right, we are creating a public service that is inclusive; we are creating communities that are inclusive; and we are building an economy that can grow so that everybody can be welcomed, so that every one of our graduates has a great job to go to, and so that people can continue to move to the North and stay here as residents, and not just come up as visitors. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 631-19(2):  
COMMUNITY RESIDENCY POLICY

**MS. CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My questions today are for the Minister of the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation. I am wondering if the Minister will commit to removing the community residency requirement that is currently used by local housing authorities and local housing organization in communities across the Northwest Territories? Thank you.

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

**HON. PAULIE CHINNA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I hear the Member's comments about the residency requirement, but it does provide consistency for the Northwest Territories as to how we allocate units. We have a significant wait list, I do hear the Member on that. Looking at the tenants in the smaller communities, whether they are going off to school, fleeing a domestic situation, and they are wanting to return back to the communities, the Housing Corporation will work with those clients and there are specific forms and paperwork that they would have to complete and fill out just to maintain their housing unit in the smaller communities. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MS. CLEVELAND:** I had the luxury of listening to one of my colleagues, the Member for Tu Nedhe-Willideh, earlier today, and he had a quote that actually works quite well in this moment in time: "This policy is actively contributing to the social and economic disparities of Northerners, and the harm currently outweighs the good." I appreciate the Minister's desire for consistency. I believe that this policy has run its course, and it's time to get rid of it. I am asking the Minister, in the interest of creating safe spaces for Northerners and ensuring that all Northerners have access to housing and returning to their home communities, if the Minister will please remove the community residency requirement currently used by local housing authorities and local housing organizations.

**HON. PAULIE CHINNA:** No, I will not commit to that. I will not remove the residency requirements for local housing authorities. We have to maintain and make sure that, if we have a housing list in one of our smaller communities and we have new residents coming into the smaller communities and they are able to get on the housing list while we have a housing list that has already existed, the Housing Corporation has to maintain consistency and maintain how we allocate the units at the local level. I do want to keep in mind that I do know that we have a wait list of 900. We need to get houses on the ground, and with that, we're looking at partnerships at the local community level. With that, the Housing Corporation has made a significant impact throughout the territory, and we are working toward putting houses on the ground; slowly, but it's coming along.

**MS. CLEVELAND:** One of the things that the Minister referred to was making sure that she maintains fairness within the housing lists. The housing lists that are created are created on a first come, first served basis, and then people are prioritized within those lists based on their needs. I feel that, if it's based on need and it's based on first come, first served, you are still maintaining the integrity of the process, but what you're allowing people to do is to access education. You're allowing them to access healthcare. Maybe somebody has a child, and they need to come to Yellowknife in order to access inclusive schooling opportunities that aren't available in their home community. Potentially, somebody could be moving to Yellowknife in order to access Aurora College, or they could be moving to Inuvik for that same reason.

When we're going out to communities and we're talking to our constituents and we're wanting people to take advantage of different opportunities and to bring those opportunities back to their home communities, we also have to make sure that they have the housing available to do that. What I am asking the Minister is: how does she intend to get

around this policy so that people can access different opportunities and bring them back to their home communities?

**HON. PAULIE CHINNA:** As an Indigenous woman who comes from a smaller community and has relocated outside of my home community and tried to look for career opportunities in order to become successful on my own and represent my people at this level, it had taken me to move out of my community. Returning back and looking at the housing wait list and looking at if I were to relocate, the Housing Corporation is not the only housing solution that is available at the community level. Right now, the Housing Corporation is working toward looking at our Co-investment Fund applications and encouraging Indigenous groups to come forward. Not only that; I do hear the Member talking about the domestic violence and the tenants who are wanting to pursue educational opportunities. The Housing Corporation has developed I want to say a formula, almost, an application process that, should the applicant be wanting to exit the community for a number of months, there is an opportunity for them to return and the house will be available for them upon their return.

The other thing is that I don't want to discourage local individuals from leaving their community to pursue other goals and other education opportunities and other positions and looking at that. I will be bringing this back to my department, but then, I'm not going to be removing the residency requirement.

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

QUESTION 632-19(2):  
NON-INSURED HEALTH BENEFITS AND  
DENTAL SERVICES

**MS. SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just listening to my colleague from Nunakput, I know that has been an issue that I have raised in the past on NIHB and dental services in the communities, and I know that NIHB pays 100 percent for people with a T and who are First Nation status, all the travel costs for dental, just from my past career. However, I do know that they have really stringent travel criteria for travelling for medical emergencies. That's one of the problems. Another problem is that, when they access emergency dental care, they don't have it, so they go to the health centre. They go there usually after hours or during regular appointments, and the staff don't always realize what the process is because, as a health practitioner in a health centre, it's a non-insured health benefit. It's not an insured service, so sometimes, they turn them away or tell them to call the Inuvik dental clinic, for my region. That's what

usually ends up happening, and then it ends with that. Then we get the call.

My first question is: will the Minister have her department or her working group that she had mentioned reach out with NIHB to come up with a plan to allow for a quick and easy process to access out-of-community dental services, as needed, and possibly lightening up some of those restrictions, knowing that we haven't had dentists in over a year? They have bad teeth in the communities, and a lot of them are on wait lists for oral surgery. 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. As the Member mentioned, this is an NIHB service and the travel requirements are their travel requirements. I do not have an opportunity to address those requirements. Thank you.

**MS. SEMMLER:** I just want to advise the Minister that the NIHB, actually, we have a department in Inuvik in the office, an NIHB office, that gives money to pay for travel for the travelling dentists, so we are kind of involved with this. I think that having that discussion at that table, again, I will ask the Minister to commit to having a discussion with that NIHB office about the travel restrictions and the criteria so we can access dental services for the people in the communities that don't have it.

**HON. JULIE GREEN:** I can have that conversation.

**MS. SEMMLER:** Thank you to the Minister. Will the Minister also have a discussion with the department in the emergency, because I know the last time the previous health Minister had made the commitment and said that there are instructions on how to access emergency dental service in the health centres, and just make sure that I can get commitment that there is this information in the health centres and the staff are aware of it?

**HON. JULIE GREEN:** I do not have that information at hand, but I can find it.

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

QUESTION 633-19(2):  
STANTON TERRITORIAL HOSPITAL  
STERILIZATION OF INSTRUMENTS

**MR. O'REILLY:** Merci, Monsieur le President. My questions are for the Minister of Health and Social Services. The problem with sterilization equipment at Stanton hospital began in July 2020 and took almost six months to resolve. I do want to acknowledge that the new Minister certainly updated the public and myself more regularly when

she took over the portfolio and did contact residents who were waiting, but I still have a basic question. What was the cause of the problem with the sterilization equipment, and has it been permanently fixed? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

**HON. JULIE GREEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Stanton sterilization issue is actually two issues. The first is wet packs, and the other is mineral staining. I am going to talk about each one. Wet packs: once ideal humidity levels were achieved and sustained, the wet pack issue was resolved at Stanton, and that happened in the fall of 2020. As the Member said in his statement, the importance of this is that, if the instruments are not dry, they can attract bacteria, which would then lead to infection. This issue has been resolved.

Mineral staining is another issue, and it continues. The root cause is not yet fully determined, but sterilization and water experts who have looked at the situation believe that the staining is caused by mineralization in the water, specifically copper and iron. There have been very many investigations into this and how this water supply system can be adjusted so that the water no longer stains the fabric that the instruments are wrapped in when they are sterilized. There has been some improvement, and now the fabric has light-coloured stains, which are thought to be not an issue because the instruments themselves are not stained. What is really important to know is that we have a very rigorous quality-control process to do the sterilization of instruments that are used in surgery to confirm that they are, in fact, sterile and that people are not being infected by the instruments that are used in their operations. Thank you.

**MR. O'REILLY:** I want to thank the Minister for that. Of course, during the problems over the last six months, patients were often left in pain, and really, many surgeries were delayed. I just want to get some reassurance from the Minister whether there is still a backlog of surgeries and whether that has been cleared up.

**HON. JULIE GREEN:** At the time the sterilizer had to be shut down, there were 124 pending surgeries. They have now all been completed except for those people who asked for later dates in the spring. One thing that Stanton has done to address elective surgeries on the wait list, okay. I have to just start the sentence again. There came a point where they were not taking any more people onto the wait list because they had no idea when they could get through it, so there are an unknown number, unknown to me at this point, people who would have liked to have had surgery but did not get onto

the wait list. What is happening now is that Stanton, instead of closing through March break, is open to catch up on any of those surgeries that did not make it even onto the wait list because the sterilization equipment was down. I hope that's clear.

**MR. O'REILLY:** I want to thank the Minister for that. It sounds like the backlog is going to be taken care of maybe before the end of March, and I really do appreciate that. These problems with the sterilization equipment, though, appear to have started soon after the new building was opened. Of course, this was a very large public-private partnership P3 arrangement, so I want to know from the Minister if she can tell us what the total cost of the investigations and delays were and who is responsible for these costs?

**HON. JULIE GREEN:** Just to clarify the timing here, the first hospital day was May 26, 2019, and the sterilization equipment functioned without any issues until July 23, 2020. That was the point at which they discovered that there were wet packs that were wet and material that was stained. What we do know is that Stanton has spent approximately \$50,000 to date for equipment testing and consultant expertise. As a matter of fact, it could have been more but for the fact that the sterilizer manufacturer has been providing extensive support throughout this time, much of which has been provided at no cost. It's important for the Member to know that the materials, the equipment inside the building, is the responsibility of the NTHSSA and not of Dexterra, the P3 operator.

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** Merci, Monsieur le President. I want to thank the Minister for that financial information. Of course, finally, I think it's important to know whether the -- we have cleared up the backlog, but I just want to get some reassurance from the Minister that this is not going to happen again, so can the Minister tell me what the likelihood is that the problems will re-occur? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. JULIE GREEN:** The staff at Stanton would like to put this issue behind them, but unfortunately, this is historically a recurring problem that is most often occurring in April and May and aligns with the spring melt and the difference in the water chemistry. It has turned out to be a very unpredictable problem. It will appear and disappear, making it very difficult to investigate the root causes as much as we would also like to do that. What we have done, though, in preparation for this year's spring melt, is taken measures to mitigate potential

future occurrences with the purchase of new equipment for the sterilization service in the form of new trays that will require less use of towels and fabrics. That should assist with the wet-pack problem, which is the problem that really reduced the number of surgeries. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 634-19(2):  
MISSING AND MURDERED INDIGENOUS  
WOMEN AND GIRLS ACTION PLAN

**MR. JOHNSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It seems we are going to have to bring the federal government kicking and screaming for them to actually come up with their action plan to implement the calls for justice for the Inquiry into the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. I am happy to see that the GNWT is rolling out their own action plan, but I have concerns about whether we will implement some of the most serious calls to justice in the life of this Assembly. My question for the Minister responsible for the Status of Women is: when are we going to see our action plan?

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Yellowknife North. Minister responsible for the Status of Women.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Keeping in mind the principles that were set out by the national inquiry for the put through the final report, which included stating that we need to take a decolonizing approach, that we need to have the inclusion of families and survivors, that the conclusions should be self-determined and Indigenous-led solutions, I have decided, Mr. Speaker, that, when work that has been done to date, organizing, as the Member has already described earlier, organizing the work that is happening within the government already, that could be happening soon and that may take longer to happen, it is not good enough for the government to simply make our own list of what we are doing. We, in keeping with those principles, need to take that out to the Indigenous people, to the communities of families and survivors, and let them confirm if, in fact, us looking at ourselves is accurate. If what I'm seeing, where we think we are is actually accurate, they should be the ones. If we're going to do this right, they should be the ones that tell me, "Yes, you're right. You're doing okay here, but you're not doing okay there." We can't look at ourselves without going back out to those that we are hoping to be actually benefitting. As such, Mr. Speaker, instead of having it ready by June, by taking this additional step, I am expecting that the draft plan shall be ready by October. Thank you.

**MR. JOHNSON:** I hear what the Minister is saying, and I recognize we have to take direction from those who are closest to the plan. My biggest concern is: when I go through the plan and if I cost it in my head, it's millions and millions more dollars than we actually have to fully implement. I think this has been a systemic problem across the GNWT is that we often create great action plans but don't back them up with the dollars. Will the action plan that is presented at the new date be costed for each of the calls to justice?

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Implementing all 231 calls to justice will, indeed, cost probably not only millions. It may well cost billions of dollars. That's not going to deter me from putting forward the implementation plan, the action plan, and, again, the draft plan because, again, the point to be is: it's going to be a living document that goes back out into the community, to the people who we're purporting to be serving.

No, it's not going to be a full costed plan. What I do intend to do is to try my best to subscribe to the principles that are in the final report and speaking to those principles, which is what they say very clearly is the foundation for all 231 calls to justice and really looking at way we do things, how we do things, and where we're going. Along the way, that can, then, filter back into each department as we prepare our business plans, different levels of government as they prepare their own budgets, looking at what we do already and where we need to go. While that won't necessarily be costed one by one, I do believe that, by laying all this out, we are going to be better placed to make better decisions about how we properly address the budgeting to achieve the things that are in that plan.

**MR. JOHNSON:** I'm hoping that the Minister, I'd like to get into the weeds a little. There are certain calls to justice that, no matter how much consultation or how much talk we have with people, simply costs money, and it's a yes or no. One example is calls to justice 4.5. We call upon all governments to establish a guaranteed annual living income for all Canadians, including Indigenous peoples. I've spoken numerous times about a guaranteed income in this House. Our current Income Assistance is neither guaranteed nor annual. Will we implement this calls to justice?

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** I watched as an advocate at the national inquiry, as the national inquiry struggled to be something that was built in a legal system and built in a government system, which is, in fact, the same system of legality and government that they were trying to address and to change, and it is a struggle. I can't say whether or not we, as a government or the national government, are ultimately going to implement this specific calls to actions or when or how.

What I can say and what I want to do is do what the national inquiry was calling on, which was to implement the principles, to look at the principles, and to apply them to every single one of the 231 calls to justice. That is not a small task, but we're going to do our best to lay that out in that spirit, to do it in a way that responds to the principles. It takes it out back out to the people who are meant to be served, to include the families and survivors, and to be decolonizing in our approaches, and then, rather than being stuck within the systems that we are still stuck in, do what I can to try to be thoughtful and progressive in how we put forward this draft plan.

No, I can't say whether or not we're going to address the specific one that the MLA has singled out. I'm not going to prioritize or hierarchize the different calls. We're going to look at the whole thing, and once we have that draft plan in place, it may well be that the individual families or survivors, Indigenous governments, may then say, "This is how you need to roll it out, and these are the priorities." At this point, Mr. Speaker, it's not for me to make that determination.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister. Final supplementary, Member for Yellowknife North.

**MR. JOHNSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think the Minister could have just said no. I've asked the Minister of ECE multiple times, and he gives me pretty clear nos on that one. I didn't expect a different answer there, but I'm going to try again with another call to justice: 5.6(4), guaranteed access to independent legal services must be provided throughout court processes as soon as an Indigenous woman, girl, or 2SLGBTQQIA person decides to report a defense, before speaking to the police, they must have guaranteed access to legal counsel at no cost. Mr. Speaker, I don't know how you can go out and consult with victims and they will not want free independent legal advice. There is really no one who is going to say, "No, I don't want that." This is a simple yes or no. Do we change our legal aid policy to provide legal services to victims of crimes? Are we going to implement this calls to justice? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** I am going to do my best to maintain the principles from the national inquiry which say, that you must look at all 231 of the calls to justice, that we have to take decolonizing approach, inclusive approach, a self-determining approach, a trauma-informed and cultural safety approach. I simply am not going to pick out one and give an answer right now, Mr. Speaker, of which one will or will not be implemented when or how. I am struggling, Mr. Speaker, with how to be decolonizing in the approach to the action plan, working within a system that is still the system that people were

telling us is colonial. It is challenging to figure out how to create an action plan which is a thing that governments do. When that is something that is so historic and so built into the structures and the systems that we have, how do I go out? I'm sure that most survivors would like to have free legal advice. That seems self-evident. As far as an action plan that is meaningful in a response to the national inquiry and the totality of all 231 calls to justice, I am determined to try my best to go about differently how to create that draft plan, and that means not picking one out right now and not being premature about what that draft plan's going to look like or where one individual one of the calls to justice is going to fall. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 635-19(2):  
HOUSING NEEDS IN HAY RIVER

**MR. ROCKY SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In Hay River, we have a housing issue, so I'd like to ask the Minister of the Housing Corporation, when will we see a real plan to either put houses on the ground or some other solution to take care of a backlog wait list of those seeking housing? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Hay River South. Minister responsible for the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation.

**HON. PAULIE CHINNA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Housing Corporation is right now looking at retrofits in our smaller communities and abandoned units that we could bring back up to living conditions. We have expedited our plan right now for the RCMP units, but those are market units that are not specifically for residents of the territory. We also have a list of duplexes and units that are going up throughout the territory. I will have to provide that to the Member. I don't have that information with me on hand. Also, looking at the housing wait list, I am working right now with my federal counterpart for Canada. We, actually, just had a conversation this afternoon, just before this session. I'm quite optimistic about the outcome of that meeting, and I will keep my colleagues informed of the outcome of those discussions. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. ROCKY SIMPSON:** Ever since the high rise had the fire, what happened there was -- prior to that, the number of people who were considered homeless wasn't that great. However, since the fire and the closing of it, the number has substantially increased. What this increase has done is cost this government between \$10- to \$15,000 per month per person to house them temporarily. I'd like to ask the Minister: there was a working group. I'm just

wondering if that working group is still looking at potentially having a high rise open and where they are with respect to communication and working with the owner of the high rise?

**HON. PAULIE CHINNA:** The last update that I did receive in regards to the high-rise in Hay River was that they did submit an application for co-investment to look at the deficiencies that are existing in the high-rise. There were a number of expectations to be met prior to that building being open. With that, I will provide the Member with an updated status on where we are with the high-rise in Hay River.

**MR. ROCKY SIMPSON:** I was elected here by the constituents in Hay River South, but I am also here to ensure that people are provided the opportunity to have housing and other services. This isn't happening. This has been going on with the Housing Corporation year after year. My issue here is that I don't see an end to it. At some point, I am going to have to ask the Minister. I need something concrete. We keep hearing the same rhetoric, and we don't hear anything new. We hear about the smaller communities. We hear something about the larger ones, as well, but I need to be able to take something back to Hay River. What can I take back to them to give them some hope that we are actually going to have some houses?

**HON. PAULIE CHINNA:** Our scheduled delivery, we don't have any expectations for Hay River for this year. I just want to just inform the Member that we did address the homelessness issue in Hay River this year for the COVID response. We did respond accordingly and dealt with the homelessness situation in the community, as well. Conversations are still going on with the Hay River high-rise. Looking at other situations that do burden us from constructing in Hay River, as well, is that we need land. We need land to build. In Hay River, it's quite challenging, to be honest. Looking at those opportunities going forward, those discussions are currently happening, as well.

I do hear the Member, like every other community and region, as well, that housing is quite significant, but I will keep the Member updated, as we do have a couple of co-investment applications that are coming forward. Like I had said earlier, the conversation that I did have with the federal government, I am quite optimistic about those outcomes of the applications. I am very confident, and I hope I am able to make an announcement prior to this session ending.

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

**MR. ROCKY SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There is a property in Hay River referred to as

"Disneyland." It's a fairly big area. The houses have been removed, and my understanding is that was to be for senior housing. I would ask the Minister if she would look at talking to some of the private developers in town and see if they are interested in building something and using that piece of land. Otherwise, I don't see anything happening, and I am very concerned because the Housing Corporation is important. It's a big budget. If nothing happened, I am hoping that, at some point, the Premier will take a look at the whole issue and maybe take a look at the top management. Maybe we have to do something there, some changes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. PAULIE CHINNA:** Putting houses in Hay River is quite complicated right now. There are other discussions that I will inform the Member about, as well. We are working with the community, looking at the vacant property that is there. We are looking at addressing the seniors issue there. That pretty much is the ongoing conversation in that specific community. We are really optimistic about the co-investment applications that are coming forward. I would really like to press on those, as well, because we were given a significant amount over the next three years to be addressing those applications and to making sure that they are successful. Once they are submitted to the federal government, the territorial government will receive them and were able to proceed with them. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 636-19(2):  
PROCUREMENT POLICY REVIEW

**MS. CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have questions for the Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment. Procurement in the Northwest Territories is very important. It is something we hear about lots in this House and something we are hearing about lots in our meetings, as well. In the interest of that, I am wondering if the Minister can tell us if the northern manufacturing policy is within the scope of the procurement review that is happening within ITI. Thank you.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Mr. Speaker, yes. Thank you.

**MS. CLEVELAND:** I hope questions like that happen in Committee of the Whole for ITI next week. Thank you. My second question is: time is money, Mr. Speaker, especially when you run and own your own business. I am wondering what the

average time is between receipt of an application for the Business Incentive Policy and the northern manufacturers policy and confirmation of the application, as well, for the business owner.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** I was looking for some information rather quickly. I can give an average, and the average is four to six weeks. I am not clear if that includes an application that is for both of those. I expect that it is. It may be that it is less complicated if it is only under BIP. Mr. Speaker, I should note it doesn't include a timeline if there needs to be further information, if an application is incomplete at the front end. As such, the clock would get stopped on the government end to allow a proponent to add to their application if need be.

**MS. CLEVELAND:** Like I said, time is money. If somebody is trying to add something under either their Business Incentive Policy or trying to add something under the northern manufacturing policy, those timelines don't match up with a lot of our procurement timelines. If somebody is trying to do that, and it's taking two months, four to six weeks, potentially, for them to add that under, they are missing out on tenders. Every week, either I am notified about somebody missing out on a tender, or I am copied an issue to do with procurement policy, every week within my role representing the people of Kam Lake where there are a lot of business owners.

My next question is in regard to streamlining the process, in order to kind of help simplify those timelines. I'm wondering if the process for the northern manufacturing policy can be streamlined so that businesses aren't burdened by administrative demands of repetitive paperwork. What I find within the northern manufacturing policy is, if somebody, for example, manufactures coffee tables, they have to go back to ITI to say, "This month, I'm going to manufacture side tables." After that, if they want to then manufacture kitchen tables, they have to go back again. This adds a huge administrative burden to businesses. Instead of making kitchen tables, they're filling out paperwork asking to make kitchen tables and bid on government procurement for that. I am wondering if we can streamline this process with ITI to better serve northern businesses.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** I want to say "procurement review" instead of simply saying "yes," because, really, the intention of the procurement review is to do exactly this, to look at barriers and to ensure that the barriers that may exist are brought to the attention of the government in a specific way so that we can identify the barriers broadly and systemically, not one by one, not solving one problem at a time for one proponent,

but to truly look at having a system that is functional for everyone who is applying.

Again, the northern manufacturers policy is part of procurement review. I want to acknowledge that the Manufacturing Strategy is only barely a year-and-a-half or so old. I heard, in the course of doing that, that manufacturers are struggling with some of the systems. We are well aware of that, and that information is part of what has gone out in the discussion paper on the procurement review. Panel is well aware of it. I am confident that we are going to hear back from the manufacturers and have lots of good ideas of how this policy can be improved in the next few months.

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

**MS. CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate that, and I am very appreciative that the government is going through this procurement review. We have been in House now for a year and a half. We are a year and half into our term, and I believe a lot of us came into this job wanting to reform procurement and make sure that we are retaining benefit for northern workers and northern employers. I think that this is something that we need to, as my colleague says, get on the ground sooner than later. We need to have results for the people that we serve, and we need to have results for the businesses that keep our communities afloat.

My next question for the Minister is: what are the service standards for responding to northern businesses and processing northern manufacturing policy applications? What kind of communication happens with businesses and what are the standards that ITI expects their employees to adhere to when they are dealing with an industry where time is money? Thank you.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** At present, there is not a set service standard for responding under the northern manufacture policy. Again, the average time right now for processing the application, ensuring that it goes from start to finish completed, is four to six weeks. If having set standards is something that the manufacturers believe would be beneficial, would be useful, then, again, I would hope and expect that that is going to come through in the procurement review and that we can find something that is more functional and more workable, ensuring that, again, if there are other certain standards that are expected beyond simply the timelines for applying under this one process, then that is all part of what should be coming through. I am confident we can figure out what an appropriate standard can be in the course of this process. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister. Oral questions. Item 8, written questions. Item 9, returns to written questions. Item 10, replies to Commissioner's address. Colleagues, we will take a short recess. Thank you.

---SHORT RECESS

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, colleagues. We will now continue. Item 11, petitions. Item 12, reports of committees on the review of bills. Item 13, reports of standing and special committees. Item 14, tabling of documents. Minister of Health and Social Services.

### Tabling of Documents

TABLED DOCUMENT 336-19(2):  
FOLLOW-UP LETTER FOR ORAL QUESTION  
499-19(2): HEALTHCARE SERVICES TO  
SENIORS DURING THE PANDEMIC

TABLED DOCUMENT 337-19(2):  
FOLLOW-UP LETTER FOR ORAL QUESTION  
512-19(2): COVID-19 EFFECT ON TEACHERS  
BEING ABLE TO TRAVEL

TABLED DOCUMENT 338-19(2):  
FOLLOW-UP LETTER FOR ORAL QUESTION  
546-19(2): DIABETES PROGRAM IN SMALL  
COMMUNITIES

TABLED DOCUMENT 349-19(2):  
FOLLOW-UP LETTER FOR ORAL QUESTION  
561-19(2): WASTEWATER TESTING

**HON. JULIE GREEN:** Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following four documents: "Follow-up Letter for Oral Question 499-19(2): Healthcare Services to Seniors During the Pandemic;" "Follow-up Letter for Oral Question 512-19(2): COVID-19 Effect on Teachers Being Able to Travel;" "Follow-up Letter for Oral Question 546-19(2): Diabetes Program in Small Communities;" and "Follow-up Letter for Oral Question 561-19(2): Wastewater Testing." Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

TABLED DOCUMENT 340-19(2):  
FOLLOW-UP LETTER FOR ORAL QUESTION  
568-19(2): INMATE REHABILITATION

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following document: "Follow-up Letter for Oral Question 568-19(2): Inmate Rehabilitation." Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister. Tabling of documents. Item 15, notices of motion. Item 16, motions. Member for Thebacha.

### Motions

MOTION 29-19(2):  
SYSTEMIC RACISM,  
CARRIED

**MS. MARTSELOS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The motion is on systemic racism:

WHEREAS half the population of the Northwest Territories is Indigenous;

AND WHEREAS the population of the Northwest Territories is becoming more racially diverse;

AND WHEREAS Indigenous peoples have faced colonialism and cultural genocide;

AND WHEREAS the Government of the Northwest Territories has accepted the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the principles of the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and the calls to justice of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls;

AND WHEREAS there is growing public awareness of the impacts of racism in society brought to light by the grassroots efforts of Black Lives Matter and other anti-racism organizations;

NOW THEREFORE I MOVE, seconded by the honourable Member for Deh Cho, that this Legislative Assembly calls upon the Government of the Northwest Territories to review its policies and practices for racial and cultural bias, especially as they relate to education, health and social services, justice, housing, and government hiring;

AND FURTHER, that the Government of the Northwest Territories provide a comprehensive response to this motion within 120 days. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Thebacha. To the motion. Member for Thebacha.

**MS. MARTSELOS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This motion is very much in line with my entire life philosophy of improving government for the people we serve. I have been fighting my entire adult life for the betterment of Black, brown, and Indigenous people. As a chief in leadership and now as an MLA, I firmly believe that anything is possible if we work together to make change. Change must come from the top. Change must be felt from the bottom. Only then, we have made a difference.

Racism takes many different forms, especially in government. Gaps in cultural barriers have always been a problem. Affirmative action and the procurement policy are prime examples of bureaucratic systemic racism. This has to change. Only then, we will make a difference. Mr. Speaker, I would like a recorded vote on this motion. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Thebacha. I will allow the seconder to speak to the motion and open it up to others, if they wish to. Member for Deh Cho.

**MR. BONNETROUGE:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. I support the motion. For far too long, we've had lots of racist overtones happening to our people. It has currently been happening in my community for well over a year at a specific institution that I probably have mentioned many times in the House and within meetings, and it is still continuing to this day. I made a Member's statement on it, and I don't want to have to go through it all. Mr. Speaker, I do support the motion. Mahsi.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Deh Cho. To the motion. Member for Frame Lake.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Merci, Monsieur le President. I want to acknowledge and thank the mover and seconder of the motion for bringing the matter forward in the House. I didn't use my Member's statement to speak to the issue today, but I'm not sure I really have a lot to add that is profound or different from what my colleagues have already said. I acknowledge that racism continues to exist here in the Northwest Territories and that we do need to work to stop it and put in place measures that will help people reach their full potential. I acknowledge that my colleagues on the Cabinet side have started some of that work, and I look forward to working with them on this issue for the remainder of this term. I do support the motion. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. To the motion. Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

**MR. NORN:** Marsi cho, Mr. Speaker. I want to acknowledge the mover and seconder of this motion. These motions, you can see a lot of motions that come through. Some of them, they take guts to come forward and do it, and courage. I think this is one of those motions. I commend my colleagues for bringing forth this motion. Going back, like I said, a lot of us covered this in our Member's statements. Yes, we have all these nice words, we have all these nice well-worded documents, but at the heart of it all is actions. I am hoping that all of us, all my colleagues, work really hard and back up our words with actions. Aside

from all that, Mr. Speaker, I support this motion. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh. To the motion. Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes.

**MS. SEMMLER:** Thank you. I support this motion, as well. I know that our Cabinet colleagues have been doing a lot of work in this area, and I know that there are many people within our public service who are doing this work as we sit here, not just only for Indigenous people, but Black, Indigenous, people of colour. We all have to make the Northwest Territories safe for everybody and our policies reflect that so that we all make sure that we all have access to education, the justice system, our child welfare. All these programs are all intertwined in what I spoke to, about the statement that we made today in this House on systemic racism. We just need to make sure that we have this motion here to move things forward, to continue that momentum, so we can move forward. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes. To the motion. Member for Great Slave.

**MS. NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't have anything prepared, and I am the last person who is going to stand up here and tell everyone else in this room what racism means to them. I do commit to being an ally and to educating myself and to always trying to check my own privilege when I can. I look to all my colleagues to help me do so and commit to continuing to do so. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Great Slave. To the motion. Member for Hay River South.

**MR. ROCKY SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to thank the mover and the seconder for the motion, as well. I did a Member's statement on it today. I said what I had to say. At the same time, I think that it's incumbent upon all of us to stand up against racism. It's incumbent upon us to support each other, support people, and just treat people with respect and help people. If we go through life like that, I am hoping that we can make a real difference here, at least in the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Hay River South. To the motion. Government House Leader.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Mr. Speaker, this Cabinet and the Government of the Northwest Territories recognize and are committed to addressing systemic racism. As the Premier stated earlier today, we have a moral and ethical obligation to root out racism in our institutions. While there is

much work already being done on this, we acknowledge that we have much more to do, both within government and society more broadly, and we are committed to doing that work. In our system of government, it is convention that Cabinet abstains from voting on recommendations to government, so we will be abstaining. However, Cabinet fully supports the principles behind this motion. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Government House Leader. I will allow the mover to make closing remarks if she wishes. Member for Thebacha.

**MS. MARTSELOS:** Mr. Speaker, I think this motion is vital to improving how we deal with people of colour, Black people, and Indigenous people. Coming from the heart, I think that it's a very important motion, that we all have to recognize that things are not the way they should be all the time. Having a personal experience that happened to me on February 1<sup>st</sup>, I have never had that happen to me, and I never felt that way in all of the years that I have lived in the Northwest Territories. I have been very fortunate. A lot of the people that I represent, especially the Indigenous people of Salt River and all of the Indigenous organizations in the Northwest Territories, that's where you see the difference. With that, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank you for giving me this opportunity to speak. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Thebacha. The motion is in order. To the motion. The Member has requested a recorded vote.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Question.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Question has been called. All those in favour, please rise.

#### RECORDED VOTE

**DEPUTY CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Rutland):** The Member for Thebacha, the Member for Nunakput, the Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh, the Member for Hay River South, the Member for Great Slave, the Member for Kam Lake, the Member for Frame Lake, the Member for Deh Cho, the Member for Yellowknife North, the Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes.

**MR. SPEAKER:** All those opposed, please rise. All those abstaining, please rise.

**DEPUTY CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Rutland):** The Member for Yellowknife South, the Member for Range Lake, the Member for Yellowknife Centre, the Member for Nahendeh, the Member for Sahtu, the Member for Inuvik Boot Lake, the Member for Hay River North.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The results of the recorded vote: 10 in favour, 0 opposed, 7 abstentions. The motion is carried.

---Carried

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; 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; and Tabled Document 286-19(2), Main Estimates 2021-2022, with the 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 consider Tabled Document 286-19(2), Main Estimates 2021-2022, Department of Justice. Marsi cho.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, committee. We will proceed with the first item.

Committee, we have agreed to consider Tabled Document 286-19(2), Main Estimates 2021-2022. Does the Minister of Justice have any opening remarks?

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Yes, I do. Should I just take it away? Thank you. I am here to present the 2021-2022 Main Estimates for the Department of Justice. Overall, the department's estimates propose an increase of \$136,000 over the Main Estimates 2020-2021. These estimates continue to support the mandate objectives for the Department of Justice while continuing to meet the GNWT's fiscal objectives to prioritize responsible and strategic spending.

Highlights of these proposed estimates include forced growth funding of \$877,000:

- \$99,000 to fund increased external counsel costs in the Office of the Children's Lawyer;
- \$123,000 to fund increased inmate services costs being incurred at the North Slave Correctional Complex;
- \$233,000 to hire two additional sheriff officers to address staffing shortfalls; and
- \$422,000 for the Territorial Police Services Agreement to allow the staffing of three additional RCMP constable positions in Yellowknife;

Initiative funding of:

- \$303,000 for the implementation of a community safety officer pilot program within an NWT community. This program will be developed by Indigenous peoples for Indigenous peoples;

Funding sunsets of \$1.424 million, including:

- \$20,000 that supported the activities related to the legalization of cannabis;
- \$339,000 to defer the establishment of two legal counsel positions in support of the initiative approach to unauthorized and rights-based occupancy;
- federal funding of \$316,000 thousand from the Indigenous Justice Program fund; and
- \$749,000 from the A Framework for Enhancing Victim Services Agreement in the NWT;

In other funding adjustments of \$415,000, including:

- \$158,000 incremental investment under the federal gun and gang violence action fund; and
- \$257,000 for the implementation of the Judicial

Remuneration Commission Report  
recommendations.

These estimates continue to support the priorities of the 19<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly by allowing the department to:

- work with the RCMP to ensure that all 33 communities in the Northwest Territories have policing priority action plans in place that are based on the specific needs of each community and are developed in partnership with community leadership;
- support community justice committees in the development of alternatives to the criminal justice system, such as diversion programs, and community service and crime prevention programs;
- make ongoing improvements to corrections programming to address the root causes that lead an individual to crime, integrate Indigenous culture and traditions, and support inmate reintegration back into their community; and
- finalize the transition of the South Mackenzie Correctional Centre in Hay River to a therapeutic community model to ensure that participants in the program have person-centred care and much needed support to turn their lives around.

This concludes my opening remarks, and I look forward to answering questions from Members. Thank you.

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

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. We have Charlene Doolittle, deputy minister; and Mandi Bolstad, director of corporate services. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you and welcome. Committee has agreed to forgo general comments. Does the committee agree to proceed to the detail in the contained tabled document?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Committee, we will defer the departmental summary and review estimates by activity summary, beginning with community justice and policing, starting on page 274, with information items on page to 277. Minister.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you. As we get into this, our first item is community justice and policing, and I just want to remind everyone that policing services is later on, so this is not the section to discuss the RCMP. Thank you.

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

**MS. CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I promise not to discuss the RCMP. My first question is in regard to victim services, and I am just wondering: there was a report that was published in 2020, the victim services program evaluation, and as part of that there were recommendations to the GNWT, many of which requested items that would cost money, one of which was to allocate additional resources for travel to outreach for communities. I am noting that travel has gone down by about half, so is there a costed plan associated with the victim services program evaluation available from the Department of Justice? Thank you.

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

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Some of those recommendations, the department has already acted on, things like the travel. I can send it to the deputy minister for some more detail, though. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. deputy minister Doolittle.

**MS. DOOLITTLE:** Madam Chair, we are currently working with our partners and our stakeholders, too, based on the recommendations coming forward, and that would include a costed action plan. We are also discussing this with the federal government, where we receive a lot of funds in this area. Yes. Thank you, Madam Chair. We are currently working on that.

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

**MS. CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. One of my concerns is that I think, as I go through my other questions, we want to pull a lot out of this, but this page and the funds that go along with it have come down by about \$600,000. We are wanting this section of Justice to do a lot more with a lot less money and not the additional funds that we are looking for. That is definitely a concern that I have, but I am happy to know that the action plan is coming. If the action plan does not come with dollars from the federal government, is there room for Justice to move money around to accommodate that plan within this fiscal year? Thank you.

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

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you. The Member noted a decrease of about \$600,000, and that is due to the sunseting of the victim services agreement. That is about \$749,000. However, I believe we may have signed that, a new agreement -- no, we are working on negotiating a new agreement, and we are confident that it's going forward. It's just a matter of time, but it was not ready for these main estimates. That is in the works. There is limited money in Justice to move around. It is very mandated, and we require budgets for specific things such as RCMP, such as courts, and we do not really control those budgets, necessarily. They are largely driven by the organizations, the RCMP and the courts. It will be a challenge, but we will do our best. We were unable to really include those costs here, given that we do not have the action plan yet and this budget is already set. Thank you.

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

**MS. CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Is there intent then, if the plan does come back and the money is not within justice, that justice would put forward a supplementary appropriation? Thank you.

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

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you. Perhaps I can pass it to Ms. Bolstad for some details.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Ms. Bolstad.

**MS. BOLSTAD:** Thank you, Madam Chair. We are very confident in our funding allocation from the federal government, so we really do expect an agreement to be finalized here within the next few months. We are confident within that funding allocation that we will be able to implement some good changes on the program and move forward from there. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MS. CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I really appreciate that, and I look forward to good news down the road. My next question is in regard to the integrated case management program. I am a hundred percent a supporter of this program. I believe it does very good things here in Yellowknife. That being said, it is located here in Yellowknife, and the good work that they do and the way that they serve clients would be wonderful if that could work its way throughout the Northwest

Territories. I have had multiple conversations on the floor of the House about the integrated service delivery model or just the way of working for public servants within the Northwest Territories, and I understand from the Minister that there is a working group working on implementing some changes to the government. I am wondering if that is going to cost money, and if so, will that also come out of this page of the budget? Thank you.

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

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you. This is where the integrated case management program is found, and what the Member is referring to, I believe, is the integrated service delivery approach, which is an approach to not just delivering services but delivering services, developing policies, developing legislation, and working together as a government as a whole for the benefit of the recipient of those services. Ideally, it should not take more money to do things in a different way if it's just a culture shift, so we do not anticipate increased costs. However, government finds a way sometimes, and so perhaps, there could be. The work that we are doing in the coming year on that does not necessitate an increase right now. Thank you.

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

**MS. CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Another program that I am wondering about with my couple of minutes here is the men's A New Day program. The Minister and I recently had a conversation on the floor in regard to kind of the new look of the men's A New Day program. I am wondering if the men's A New Day program funding currently sits under community justice and, if possible, what the budget line item is for that program. Thank you.

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

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you. Yes, that is correct. This is the section where it is. I believe it is community justice projects. Sorry. You know what? How about I hand it over for the budget particulars to Ms. Bolstad.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Ms. Bolstad.

**MS. BOLSTAD:** Thank you, Madam Chair. The line above, under program detail, that says "protection against family violence" has a budget of \$543,000 for 2021-2022; \$292,000 of that is for the men's healing program. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MS. CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. One of the conversations that I had with the Minister on the floor was that the Department of Justice was looking at making this an application-based program where communities would be able to design a program that works for them. Given that this really is a prevention program and that Justice deals largely with corrections, kind of downstream, I am wondering if the Minister is having conversations with the Minister of Health and Social Services to move this program upstream to Health and Social Services. Thank you.

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

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. The Member brings up a good point. This, the A New Day program, has been in Justice for, I believe, it's about seven years now, and we have had a couple of reviews of the two different iterations of the program, and neither of them showed that we are doing exceptionally well. I think that part of that is due to the fact that it's not really a program that Justice traditionally delivers. It is more of a community wellness program, and that is not necessarily Justice's forte. They do many things very well, but these types of programs, they require some sort of clinical oversight. There are counselling aspects to it, and so perhaps Justice is not the place for it to be. I have started to have those conversations to determine if there is a better location, perhaps with more expertise. I think the takeaway is that this government is committed to delivering men's healing, and we want to make sure we do it in the best way possible and the most effective way possible. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Minister. Are there any further comments or questions under community justice and policing? Member for Great Slave.

**MS. NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I am looking at the line item on 276, the gun and gang strategy, and noting that it is a new program that has started. I'm assuming that's why there are no actuals for 2019-2020. Given the conditions in our jail, we have been hearing over the last while that this is leading to increased gang activity in the Northwest Territories, as southerners are in our jails with northern people and are using that almost as a recruitment location. Could the Minister speak a bit to whether this is enough money? I notice we do have a \$150,000 increase this year. Do we see this as needing to be increased over the coming years, or will we see results from allowing it to almost work itself out? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you. This is federal money, and there really is a federal push for this. Perhaps it is not as relevant as it might be in some other jurisdictions, but the Member makes some good points about how, perhaps, it is becoming more relevant. My deputy minister can provide some more detail on this. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Deputy Minister Doolittle.

**MS. DOOLITTLE:** Thank you, Madam Chair. The University of Alberta has been contracted to research and develop this guns and gangs strategy with the support from this fund. The research completed to date has and will inform how we target community-based interventions for youth, so this is prevention activities. We have had over 14 school-based presentations completed. These include presentations from Michael Bull Roberts, a former gang member who shares his story of turning his life around. At the end of January 2021, a request was sent to all communities calling for proposals to fund projects prior to the end of this fiscal year. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MS. NOKLEBY:** I think that's great. I am really glad to hear it's more of a prevention issue versus a reaction to things that are happening. Just through corrections, people have heard about that recruitment and the increase of southern gangs. Why I know is just that they are coming from the region in which I grew up. I just maybe have been more alive to it. I would just like to speak to the contribution to the YWCA of Yellowknife, the \$105,000. Could the Minister confirm that that is the money that is used for the EPOs, or is that another line item? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you. The Member is correct.

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

**MS. NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. As I am listening to the national dialogue and the Status of Women, there seems to be an increase or we are expecting an increase in family violence, intimate partner violence, domestic violence as COVID continues. Knowing that the YWCA is the provider of the EPO function for the RCMP, do we anticipate that we are going to have to increase funding here to ensure that the YWCA can continue to provide that service? As well, how do we then ensure that the EPOs can be done in communities where the

YWCA does not have staff? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you. EPOs can be done over the phone, so someone doesn't have to be physically present. I can ask, perhaps, Ms. Bolstad for some details on the monetary aspects of this. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Ms. Bolstad.

**MS. BOLSTAD:** Thank you, Madam Chair. We currently aren't aware of a funding increase need there that has been identified, but if there was one, they would be communicating with the community justice and policing division and would be raising that as part of the business planning process. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MS. NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Maybe the Minister can comment, then, on outreach to the YWCA to sort of feel this one out. I feel like this could potentially be an area where it won't be noticed until it's already being incurred by them. I'm not sure how far ahead they are at times in being able to come and say, "We see this as an uptick." They have a new ED; she's great. No comment there. Just curious to know what the department is doing to be proactive to reach out to all of their NGOs and the groups that they liaise with regarding the potential increase for domestic violence and intimate violence situations. Thank you.

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

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Perhaps I can ask the deputy minister to respond.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Deputy Minister Doolittle.

**MS. DOOLITTLE:** Thank you, Madam Chair. We are in regular contact with our partners and our stakeholders on a regular basis, and particularly, in this case, the community justice and policing division would be with the YWCA. There is also a Department of Justice family violence working group that meets regularly and is actually going to take a look at the recent report that came out, study that, analyze it, and consider recommendations going forward. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MS. NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Just a comment that, yes, I think that's great. Perhaps it's

just my own ignorance of how the Department of Justice works, but I think, in this area, when I was with the YWCA as a director, it just felt like this was one area where we could always be communicating more and more and really -- again, I am going to use my geology analogy -- mine them for their data and maybe being proactive to look at where trends are going. I think that they would be a good source for that. More of a comment. I'm done. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MR. NORN:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I was looking at page 276, community justice committees and projects. I used to deal with community justice committees way back in the day. My first question for the Minister is: how many community justice committees do we have in the NWT? Thank you.

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

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you. I will ask the deputy minister for an exact figure. Thank you.

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

**MS. DOOLITTLE:** Thank you, Madam Chair. So far, in 2021, we have 30 communities that access funding for community justice programs. We have three that have not, but we are in regular communication with them, encouraging discussion of tapping into this funding. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MR. NORN:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you for that answer. I kind of was going in this direction. I know that a lot of community justice committees and boards are really tough to staff. I would just ask the Minister: are there a lot of vacancies in the communities that we just mentioned? Thank you.

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

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you. For that detail, I will ask the deputy minister, as well.

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

**MS. DOOLITTLE:** Thank you, Madam Chair. We do have the 30 communities as mentioned that offer restorative justice programs and have active justice coordinators and/or community justice committees. I do take the point and understand the Member's point that volunteers in communities are

often overtaxed with volunteering in the community. There will be some regular turnover and, perhaps, burnout, but communities, as we all know, stand up and volunteer quite heavily for their communities. We work with them to support them and do that. We do have 30. I understand that they are up and running, and we are working with the remaining three communities to try to support them to move in that direction. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MR. NORN:** Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you for that response. In this line item, too, it also mentions community justice committees and projects. Can the Minister just highlight some of the projects that are ongoing within this line item? Thank you.

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

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you. I would ask the deputy minister.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Deputy Minister.

**MS. DOOLITTLE:** Thank you, Madam Chair. We have received incremental funding under the Indigenous Justice Program for 2021. Some of those programs will be purchasing laptops to develop delivery of a series of web services to justice coordinators and their committee members, so some training there and easier to do it in the current situation that we are in. We have some money for a pilot program for the development of a restorative process to address intimate partner violence, as well as the development of case management software for community justice program to improve their data collection. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MR. NORN:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you for the response. It's just good to hear some of the proactive stuff we need, too. A lot of our Justice initiatives are, I want to say, kneejerk, but a lot of it is reactive. It's good to see some of the proactive projects like this happen with the department. I did have one other question here, too, just moving on to this other line item, victims assistance support projects. Can the Minister just briefly describe what that line item covers? Thank you.

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

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you. Perhaps I can ask the deputy minister for detail on that.

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

**MS. DOOLITTLE:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Victim services contribution.

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

**MR. NORN:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I guess it was kind of misleading, the way I read it, but that's good. Thank you for that response. I don't have anything further at this time. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Are there any other Members who have questions under community justice and policing? Member for Frame Lake.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Madam Chair. I just want to add my voice to the call for more resources for victim services. I raised this in the last Assembly, the Minister knows well. I pushed his predecessor to conduct a review. The review was done. I think it was done well. The report of the evaluation, though, is dated April 30, 2020, so the department has now had it for almost 10 months. I really want to urge the Minister to work with his staff to get the departmental response. I know the evaluation report came in during the pandemic, but I really want to encourage that the department develop a full response, a costed one was mentioned by the deputy minister, and get the resources for the people who carry out that really critical service. Please move it forward. I'm happy to consider a supplementary appropriate, if necessary, but those people do completely thankless work, and we need to resource that service properly. Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you. I had this discussion with the department very soon after I took this file. I think the Member knows that I like costed plans with timelines, and so I've asked the department to go ahead and do that work. We hope to have something in the near future. Thank you.

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** No. Thanks, Madam Chair, and thanks to the Minister and his staff. I'll probably be asking about the status of it in May/June, so just a little head's up. Thank you. That's all I've got. Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

**MR. ROCKY SIMPSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. On page 276, community justice committees and projects. What percentage of that money stays in Yellowknife, and what percentage goes to the communities? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you. I think Ms. Bolstad might have that breakdown. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Ms. Bolstad.

**MS. BOLSTAD:** Thank you, Madam Chair. The Yellowknife contribution from that is \$129,000. The remainder goes to communities. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MR. ROCKY SIMPSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. That's good to see, that we've got a good amount of money going out to the communities. With respect to the projects, is there anything specific that works better than anything else in there? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you. Every community is different, and I think that's why we have this money distributed, because it's up to the communities to identify. Perhaps I can ask the deputy minister to provide some insight, as well.

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

**MS. DOOLITTLE:** Thank you, Madam Chair. That's exactly correct. Each community, based on their own needs, will develop their own programming, but some of the programs that they do, of course, are diversions, very important; they support community service options; and then, crime prevention programs specific to their community needs. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MR. ROCKY SIMPSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. With respect to victims assistance support projects, what percentage of that stays in Yellowknife and what percentage goes out to communities? Thank you.

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

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Ms. Bolstad can answer.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Ms. Bolstad.

**MS. BOLSTAD:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Of that amount, \$220,000 goes to Yellowknife-based victim services workers. The remainder goes out to our other victim services organizations. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MR. ROCKY SIMPSON:** That will be all for now. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Are there any further questions under community justice and policing? Seeing none, please turn to page 275. Justice, community justice and policing, operations expenditure summary, 2021-2022 Main Estimates, \$5,990,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, committee. We will now turn to corrections, beginning on page 278, with information items on 281. Questions to corrections? Member for Yellowknife North.

**MR. JOHNSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Can I just get an update on when we expect the Corrections Act to be implemented?

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

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you. We're aiming for this summer.

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

**MR. JOHNSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm glad to hear we're still on track. I look forward to that. I note there is not a huge increase in the corrections budget. Can I get an update on whether we expect an increase to corrections, both with bringing in the new Corrections Act, which requires a number of changes to the system, as well as bringing online the therapeutic model? I'm just wondering how we expect to do both of those things with the same budget. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Of course, there have been a number of capital expenditures to bring NSCC up to the point where it can accommodate the therapeutic model. Those

are expenditures into the millions, so a lot of money has been spent on that. The transition to the new Corrections Act will require additional training, and perhaps I can ask Ms. Bolstad for some details on how we expect to pay for that. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Ms. Bolstad.

**MS. BOLSTAD:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Currently, we're assessing that the corrections training budget is going to be sufficient to cover the one-time training for the Corrections Act implementation as well as our therapeutic community transition. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MR. JOHNSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I think corrections is probably one of those areas that always gets thought of lost for money, but to me, it's not just the training under the Corrections Act and the work under the therapeutic model. I don't really understand how we can do that without increased money for programming. There are a number of things, I think, to truly bring the Corrections Act online in the way it was intended. Is the department currently doing any work to review its programming needs across corrections and see if we can increase some of the programming for inmates?

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

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you. Corrections takes an ongoing improvement approach to the programming, so there is always a thought to what is happening, what we can do better, what needs to be done. In the not-too-distant past, there has been a significant amount of work done on programs for offenders. Perhaps the deputy minister can expand. Thank you.

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

**MS. DOOLITTLE:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes, we are constantly, continuously trying to improve our programming. Some of the work that we are currently doing is we are revamping the corrections recruitment training program, the CRTP. We are providing mental health leadership training to our corrections supervisors and managers as well as trauma-informed care training, along with a long list that is available and that we can certainly provide but that is also on our website by facility of the training that we do provide in the corrections service. However, we are constantly reviewing it to make sure that it is appropriate and meets the needs of our inmates who we provide services to. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MS. CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. One of the things that comes out of the corrections budget would be anything associated with any ways in which the Minister intends to address the concerns raised in the employee assessment done. I'm wondering, given that there isn't an increase in this budget, if the Minister feels that the concerns addressed in the employee assessment will be able to be met with the existing budget. Thank you.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you. Yes, I believe so. A lot of the issues aren't ones that take money to solve. A lot of them are culture changes and things like that, and that kind of work can be done with no additional cost. Costs associated with things like uniforms aren't exceptionally high, and so things like that can be dealt with, as well. There may have been some savings over the past year in corrections, I'm not sure, what we may be able to use for that, as well. Maybe the deputy minister can respond. Thanks.

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

**MS. DOOLITTLE:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Currently, right now, there is a working group that's been formed with the Department of Justice, Finance, and the Union of Northern Workers. They are currently assessing this work and developing an accountability framework, and this will help inform any funding needs going forward. Otherwise, we are continuing to work within our budget appropriation. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MS. CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I'm wondering if, in future, one of the things that we talk about quite a bit is the need for healing within correctional facilities and also the need for cultural programming, as well. I'm wondering if the Department of Justice would be willing to break out the financials that it spends year after year on cultural programming within its correctional facilities so that we can see that, as well? Thank you.

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

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you. I'll ask Ms. Bolstad if she has that information on hand. If not, I guess we can. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Ms. Bolstad.

**MS. BOLSTAD:** Thank you, Madam Chair. The numbers, I don't have here with me today. It is a little difficult because it's portions of staff time, portions of it that get allocated to this. It's a difficult exercise when we go to cost it; however, we can definitely take a look at it. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MS. CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. On page 280, there is contributions of offender reintegration. Would that be considered the after-care supports received by inmates when they are released from care? Thank you.

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

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Deputy Minister, I think, or Ms. Bolstad. Ms. Bolstad can answer that. Thanks.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Ms. Bolstad.

**MS. BOLSTAD:** Thank you, Madam Chair. That contribution money is for when the therapeutic community is operational, and it is for after-care reintegration services with our community partners. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MS. CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. One of the things that we hear about quite often is that people who are released from different correctional facilities have a hard time finding stable housing on the other side of that, and I'm wondering if there is a budget line item in here for stable transitional housing of any sort for people, once they finish their term within any correctional facility within the Northwest Territories? Thank you.

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

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you. No, but the Government of the Northwest Territories does provide options for housing through either Income Assistance, which pays market rent, or the Housing Corporation. Justice doesn't do everything, but the government as a whole does a lot of things. Where one department doesn't do it, there are other departments to help out. Thank you.

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

**MS. NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm just curious. I've heard a lot of stories from corrections officers who are Indigenous and maybe not feeling necessarily supported in their role, and I know that

there's a difference between the North Slave Correctional Institute and the South Slave, as far as Indigenous representation of employees. I've also heard concerns around positions not going out for competition and being internally hired, people's friends, all of the similar stories we hear often when people come to us with complaints about the GNWT and the hiring practices. Can the Minister speak of it to what is being done within the corrections department to support their Indigenous staff and to correct some of these issues? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you. I'll get the deputy minister to speak to that.

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

**MS. DOOLITTLE:** Thank you, Madam Chair. The corrections workplace assessment will provide answers for some of this. As everyone knows, we were hearing concerns that there are issues that folks feel are in our facilities. This is something we think is important to look at, and we look at it for all staff. We also work with our Department of Finance HR division to support us in building capacity within our facilities and following their policies and supporting our Indigenous staff. There are programs specifically for Indigenous staff to support them for training opportunities, as well as the gateway entry program, which we use a lot of the CNRTP staff. We are trying to actively recruit Indigenous staff, and clearly, we do better in some facilities than in others. This is certainly on our radar and part of the corrections workplace assessment, and staff have been given direction by our Minister then by myself to keep this a focus and priority. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MS. NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate hearing that, and I want to actually pass along a quote that I do have in my notes here that Ms. Doolittle was awesome to talk to when the report was being done. I just wanted to pass that along to the Minister. Maybe just to further that or to get a little bit stronger wording around it, I think some of the issue, though, is that the after-care of Indigenous recruitment is that it's not so much always getting those people in the door and working but supporting them afterwards in the fact that, a lot of times, this is their family. These are people that they've grown up with and such. I don't want to tell anybody how relationships are, but the North is a very small place. It's very communal. It's a community. How do we work to embrace that and

use that as a strength to rehabilitate versus making it difficult for those employees to actually function in that role? I don't know if there's really any question in that but more of a comment for the Minister, and I'm done with my questions. Thanks.

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

**MS. MARTSELOS:** Thank you, Madam Chair. The corrections workplace assessment was a positive document. I want to commend the Minister and the Justice staff for acting on it very quickly. All the changes that happened in Fort Smith are all positive. People are very enthused, and I want to ensure that you pass that on to your staff. I think the way that it was handled, because I was the one who brought this whole thing up in the first place, and I think, when positive change happens and employees are now extremely happy, they actually went and gave a statement and felt safe with that. I think, when that happens, your job is done. I always believe that leadership at the top, and when it's felt at the bottom, then the leadership is good. I want to thank you because I hear lots of criticism in this place, but there are also a lot of good things that happen here, not only with Justice, but with other departments. I want to thank you for taking such fast, fast action on this whole file. I also want to thank your deputy minister and their staff, because I think that it takes a whole team to make change. I don't have any questions for you today. I just want to tell you that you did a great job. Thank you so much.

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

**MR. NORN:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Just looking at page 279, one thing I had a question about is this CNRTP, the Corrections Northern Recruitment Training Program. From what I've heard so far, it's been a pretty good program to keep staffing levels up in that area. My question for the Minister is: where is this training program primarily held? Is it just in Yellowknife, or is it held in places like Inuvik or Fort Smith or Hay River? Thank you.

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

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you. For some detail on the program and maybe some of the changes and the renewed focus on it, I can ask the deputy minister to elaborate.

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

**MS. DOOLITTLE:** Thank you, Madam Chair. We recruit for each facility. The staff in the department

pay very close attention to the needs for staffing in the facilities, and if there's a need in Fort Smith, they will hold a CNRTP program in Fort Smith; if there's a need in NSCC in Yellowknife, they will do one there. They keep track of that. I believe there's at least one held each year, and they'll often do regional recruitment, as well, so you get local people working in the local facilities and folks who know the community better. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MR. NORN:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you for that response. My next question is: as in with any program, when you recruit, you are going to have some turnover and stuff, so I just want to get a sense of what the success is and what the retention rates are for this program. Thank you.

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

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you. I know we have a lot of corrections officers with very long careers, a lot of local people. There is a lot of turnover happening in that we have a lot of people ready to retire and who are retiring, and they are of that age. I am not sure about this, people who went through this program and started working with corrections. I am not sure if we have that information on hand. The deputy minister might be able to offer something. I am not sure. Madam Chair.

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

**MS. DOOLITTLE:** Thank you, Madam Chair. We do not have that information on hand, but there can be significant turnover in this area because this is a focused training program. Then these staff, with their security expertise and experience, are then highly recruited by perhaps the mining industry because they have that specific training in the North and focused on security. We do have some turnover, but then, as the Minister mentioned, we have some very long-time staff who provide significant experience in the facilities that they work in. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MR. NORN:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes. Thank you again for that response. I will just leave this with a comment. In our committees, we say our morning prayers and stuff. I always say we should say prayers for people, our staff, and our public servants who put themselves in harm's way. This is one of them. I have done it myself. It's a dangerous job, and people just do not realize corrections does not stop. It's a 24/7 operation. You always have to

be alert. You always have to be in it all the time. Like I said, like my colleague from Thebacha said, you have to look out for each other and work as a team. I think this is one of those ones that do that. Again, good job, and I wanted to say I am thankful for those guys, for that crew. Like I said, I have been there before. I am going to leave that as a comment. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Any further comments, questions? Seeing none, please turn to page 279. Justice, corrections, operations expenditure summary, 2021-2022 Main Estimates, \$38,574,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. We will now move to court services, beginning on page 282, with information items on 284. Questions for court services? No questions for court services? Seeing no questions for court services, please turn to page 283. Court services, operations expenditure summary, 2021-2022 Main Estimates, \$14,759,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, committee. Committee, please turn to legal aid services, beginning on page 285, with information items on 287. Legal aid services. Member for Great Slave.

**MS. NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I am looking at page 286, at the Office of the Children's Lawyer, just noting, that this is an item that would be very difficult to predict each year how much would be spent here. Having had friends who have used this service, I was told it was actually extremely helpful and very worthwhile and rewarding, so I am just wondering if there is a need or the potential to fund this area more. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you. When the office was first set up, there was an estimated number of cases that it would be dealing with, and it was budgeted accordingly. It turns out that, in reality, it deals with significantly more cases, and so there is a proposed increase of \$99,000 to cover the increased costs associated with that. Thank you.

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

**MS. NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Does the department have any idea or indication: do we think that this is going to rise and that we would be looking to put more money there? I am looking:

here, it's another \$100,000 over last year's estimates. However, would it not make more sense to put more money there now in the event that they do need it as it is something that I don't think we would just not fund? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you. I agree that it's probably not something we would just not fund, but based on our experiences, the \$99,000 should be sufficient to cover the costs that we expect in the coming year. It is based on experience, whereas the first number was really based on a guess. Thank you.

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

**MS. NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. That gives me more confidence than other times in other departments where it was like, "Well, we have just put this number there," so I am glad to hear it's a good solid estimate. I am just looking at the legal aid clinics and the Legal Aid Commission, and I would assume that the legal aid clinics is the line item, the \$3.2 million, that covers the actual provision of legal aid services to residents. What mechanism do people have to go back if they should have found that they were not given good legal aid services or advice? Is there a mechanism for them to then recoup that or have some help further with the subsequent costs that they incurred as a result? Thank you.

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

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you. My deputy minister has some experience with legal aid. Perhaps she can take this. Thank you.

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

**MS. DOOLITTLE:** Thank you, Madam Chair. There are appeals processes, appeals that clients can take to the commission, and the commission will hear those appeals and make an appropriate decision. That is the monetary aspect. If clients are not satisfied with their services, there are mechanisms, as well, with the law society where they can raise those concerns. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MS. NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I am just looking at the court workers line item and noting that we do have the actuals for 2019-2020. We are at \$894,000 but have gone up now in the

last two years to \$1.24 million on page 286. Maybe could the Minister speak to what that increase reflects, and is that just more positions within the court and maybe where those positions lie? Thank you.

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

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you. For some of the variation between the 2019-2020 actuals and the current budget, I can ask Ms. Bolstad. Thank you.

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

**MS. BOLSTAD:** Thank you, Madam Chair. There were collective bargaining increases between the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021, so between those actuals. In addition, we did receive an additional court worker position under our federal funding agreement and under access to justice for the outreach clinic, so that grew that budget, as well. For the position breakdown for court workers, we have one in Inuvik, one in Fort Simpson, four in Yellowknife, one in Norman Wells, one in Fort Smith, one in Hay River, and one in Behchoko. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MS. NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I am good, thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Member for Kam Lake.

**MS. CLEVELAND:** Thank you, Madam Chair. The Member for Great Slave covered off much of my questions. While we are here, I am wondering if the Minister can speak to the difference of roughly a million dollars between the 2019-2020 actuals? There is about a million-dollar difference where the budget has come down, and I am wondering why the budget changed so drastically between 2019-2020 and 2021-2022 for Legal Aid Commission. Thank you.

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

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you. Ms. Bolstad has that information. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Ms. Bolstad.

**MS. BOLSTAD:** Thank you, Madam Chair. The Legal Aid Commission fluctuates significantly based on the number of vacancies in staff lawyers and then the use of private bar, as well. Where we have partial-year vacancies or a higher need for panel lawyers, the Legal Aid Commission expenditures go up, and then the legal aid clinics where our lawyers

are staffed will usually compensate, but it is really dependent on cases and the number that they have in that year. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MS. CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. How many vacancies are currently in the Legal Aid Commission? Thank you.

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

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you. I'm not sure if we have that information. Perhaps the deputy minister can offer some information.

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

**MS. DOOLITTLE:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I believe we are close to fully staffed, but we can provide that information to confirm that. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MS. CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I've had this conversation with the Minister before, just about concerns with making sure that NWT residents are able to have the same lawyer all the way through their legal aid needs and the consistency that that provides, and so I appreciate that information. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Minister?

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** I appreciate the comment. It is difficult to staff lawyers. We, I think, have more lawyers per capita in the Northwest Territories than any other jurisdiction in Canada, four times as many as some jurisdictions, I think, per capita, so there is a real demand here for lawyers. What often happens is we get young lawyers coming up and staying a few years and then moving on, and so it does create some turnover. Part of the issue is that, as I understand it, the lawyers who work with the Government of the Northwest Territories are actually paid less than counterparts in other jurisdictions, which is not generally the case for government jobs up here, so there are a few factors that make it difficult to retain people. I'll just leave it at that. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Minister. Are there any further questions or comments under legal aid services? Member for Yellowknife North.

**MR. JOHNSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. One of the big gaps in this area is that there are a lot of lawyers, but they are all in Yellowknife. It's really

hard, once you get outside of Yellowknife, to get access to Justice. Legal aid largely deals with criminal matters and family matters. I know the Legal Aid Commission runs an outreach legal aid clinic, but it is staffed with one lawyer and one court worker. I know we've had trouble staffing that. I think there's a lot of work to be done in this area. I've worked in legal clinics previously that had dozens of staff and articling students, and they were largely federally funded. The John Howard Society runs them across the country. I think there really is potential in the Northwest Territories to create some sort of legal aid clinic that deals with all of the other issues that the outreach is starting to work on. The question out of that is: I believe there is a federal access to justice services agreement that funds quite a bit of our legal aid. Can I just get a clarification on how much federal money we get in this area?

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

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Yes. I will hand it off, but I'll just first say that there is federal money. I've been on calls with other federal, provincial, and territorial Ministers, and everyone always asks for more money. There is that lobbying going on, with an understanding that it is expensive. Access to Justice is expensive. In the Northwest Territories, we have probably the most generous legal aid system in Canada, which means it's even more expensive up here. We spend much more proportionately to what we receive from the federal government compared to other jurisdictions. I'd like to hand it to Ms. Bolstad. Thank you.

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

**MS. BOLSTAD:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes, the legal aid federal funding agreement is called Access to Justice, and it is \$2,808,000 for 2021-2022. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MR. JOHNSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I wish that was higher. I think the area of priority here is not just on the typical legal aid, but that outreach clinic. I can't even imagine how difficult it is to get someone to give you family law advice in the Beau-Del. It can be difficult getting hold of a lawyer in Yellowknife for that. I would encourage the Minister and the department to put together some sort of proposal for that outreach clinic because I do believe the federal money exists and there are different funding pools. It just really needs a champion to write the proposals and put together a vision of what an outreach clinic can actually look like. Other than the Access to Justice services

agreement, is there any other federal money flowing in in this area? Because I do believe there are a number of pools. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you. For those details, I'll go to Ms. Bolstad.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Ms. Bolstad.

**MS. BOLSTAD:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I know our executive director of the Legal Aid Commission is an active participant in FPT groups, and she would be live to any federal funding opportunities. Currently, our main stream is through the Access to Justice services agreement. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Are there any further questions under legal aid services? Seeing none, please turn to page 286. Legal aid services, operations expenditure summary, 2021-2022 Main Estimates, \$7,130,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, committee. We will take a short recess and resume with the next activity.

---SHORT RECESS

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Committee, we are moving on to the Office of the Regulator of Oil and Gas Operations, beginning on page 288, with information items on page 290. Member for Frame Lake.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Madam Chair. I know how much the Minister of Justice likes my questions on this area. I had understood that OROGO had retained a third party to do an assessment of their resourcing needs, recognizing that there hasn't been any oil and gas activity here now in years, or very little, shall we say. Has that consultant or the contractor been hired, and when is a report expected? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you. The report is expected at the end of this month, I believe. It's a third party, and it is doing everything the Member has asked in the past, looking at not just whether the budget is adequate to operate as is, but considering what's going on in the territory and what a future budget should look like. Thank you.

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Madam Chair. Thanks to the Minister. Is the Minister going to share that report with the Standing Committee on Economic Development and Environment? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Yes, I can share that. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Are there any further questions on the Office of the Regulator of Oil and Gas Operations? Seeing none, please turn to page 289. Office of the Regulator of Oil and Gas Operations, operations expenditure summary, 2021-2022 Main Estimates, \$1,928,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, committee. We will now start on policing services, beginning on page 291 and information item on page 292. Questions? Member for Tu Nedhe-Willideh.

**MR. NORN:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Looking at page 292, Territorial Police Services Agreement, can the Minister just describe what this line item is and how much of this line item is contributions from the federal government? Thank you.

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

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you. I can ask Ms. Bolstad for a breakdown because I believe it is 70-30. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Ms. Bolstad.

**MS. BOLSTAD:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes. This line represents the GNWT's 70 percent share of the Territorial Police Services Agreement for the provision of policing services in the territory. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MR. NORN:** Thank you for that. That's good to know. Like any other agreement, it sounds like there is a contract involved, probably a tripartite. What is the commitment from the GNWT and the other parties? Thank you.

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

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you. I will go to Ms. Doolittle for some accurate information on this. It's a long contract. Thank you.

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

**MS. DOOLITTLE:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It is a 20-year agreement, and it's actually posted on the website, available for the public to see. It is up for renewal March 31, 2032. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MR. NORN:** Thank you. That's good to know. 2032, hopefully, by then, some of our land claims agreements are settled upon. It would be nice to see down the road where we could see some of our own police forces come down the road, and we actually could start having those discussions. I thought I would just leave it at that. I have no further questions. Thank you.

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

**MS. CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Under the same line item of Territorial Police Services Agreement, I notice that there is about a \$400,000 increase between last year and this year. I am wondering what the people of the Northwest Territories get for that. Thank you.

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

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. That is a variance due to the drug-impaired driving funding initiative sunsetting the forced-growth submission for three RCMP constables. It's a combination of those two things. Essentially, it's three new RCMP officers. I think it's the first increase in RCMP officers since 2005 in Yellowknife. Thank you.

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

**MS. CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much. Can the Minister confirm if all three new RCMP officers will be stationed in Yellowknife, or will they also be stationed in the communities? Thank you.

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

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you. These three are in Yellowknife. There were a couple of new positions in the Tlicho as of last year, I believe, and in the South Slave, there were a couple of new positions a few years ago. Justice and the RCMP work together to identify needs, put together business cases, and submit those. Thank you.

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

**MS. CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I just have one more question. The Minister did just say that the RCMP and the GNWT work together to establish a business case. I am wondering if the Minister can briefly speak to, given that we contribute 70 percent, what are the boundaries within the RCMP and the GNWT that the GNWT is able to kind of reach into the operations of the RCMP? I am wondering if the Minister can speak to that a little bit. Thank you.

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

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you. The GNWT is not able to reach too far into the operations, nor do I know if we want to. We contract that out for a reason. They know what to do, but I can ask the deputy minister for some more nuanced detail on that. Thank you.

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

**MS. DOOLITTLE:** Thank you, Madam Chair. The Minister sets the high-level policing priorities, which are shared and posted, and were going to go out recently. He is engaging with Indigenous governments on that. He gives the high-level direction, and the commanding officer of "G" Division manages the operations. There is an independence there with the operations. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MS. MARTSELOS:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Policing has always been a problem, with \$47.6 million spent on the RCMP, and the visibility within the community is almost zero. That is a problem in my community. We haven't had any drug busts for over 20 years. They're not visible in the community. I've had a problem with that for many years, even as a chief of Salt River. I just feel that more could be done. That's a lot of money spent on an independent organization that doesn't have a lot of communication with First Nations. I have a real problem with that.

How to fix it? I don't know, but there has to be some solutions. I feel that that Zoom meeting we had with Commander Zettler was -- I mean, he couldn't even read his notes. It was disgusting. I'm friends with him, okay? Mutual friends, but I don't agree with the way things are done, and when I don't agree with something, I usually say it. I'm very open about how I feel about the RCMP because they are not visible, and everybody in the community comments on that. Having the sergeant just go and talk to the leaders

once a month is not okay. They've got to be able to do their job and be visible in the community, take part in the community, and be part of the community. It's very important, and I don't know how we can come to a solution with that. Maybe the Minister will be able to facilitate some change, but there has to be change. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you. I can't say I'm familiar exactly with what's happening in Fort Smith. I know that a lot of the interactions in the communities are really based on who might be there at any given time, and you might have someone who comes in who is stronger in communication than someone else. Communication is the cause of probably 80 percent of the problems that I come across in this job, anyways, and improving communication is always probably the easiest fix to some of the biggest problems. That being said, I know the Member said she is friends with the commanding officer. From my conversations with him, at his level, they are doing things to try and make the members parts of the community in ways that they don't do outside of the territory. When a new recruit moves to a small community, they are required to attend community events, really interact with the community, so there are things like that that go on. There is an understanding that we do need that type of interaction. The Member's frustration about lack of drug busts and things like that, I hear that in my community, as well. There are frustrations that are expressed, but they are not falling on deaf ears. I don't know if the deputy minister has anything to add to this. Thank you.

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

**MS. DOOLITTLE:** Thank you, Madam Chair. One thing to raise here is the First Nations Policing Policy. We do now have positions in the Northwest Territories, and this is something we continue to advocate for and have in our communities, as well. The commanding officer for "G" Division has made it an organizational priority that RCMP detachment commanders work and are meaningfully connected with their local leadership. They work with the local leadership to come up with community policing action plans, and those are the priorities of the local communities. Every community has one of those community action plans.

As well, the commanding officer has also prioritized community-specific involvement by his members. When they move to the community, they have to attend feasts and meet with elders and have visits. These activities need to be part of the initial introduction, but they also need to be ongoing, as

well. This is prioritized by the RCMP. When there is a need, and we will certainly take note of this, we have biweekly meetings with the commanding officer. We meet with him and have discussions, and recently, there were concerns raised for Fort Providence and for Behchoko. The commanding officer has made extra efforts to have those discussions in those communities where the leadership has shown concerns locally. This is something we will certainly take back and try to have a focus on. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MS. MARTSELOS:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I am very familiar with the community action plan. It's the same thing every year. I've been in leadership in Fort Smith for 14 years as chief. We have two lines: one of them is the priority is drugs; the second is whatever; and the third. Every year has been the same thing, and you've got to sign off on it. Finally, I told them, "Don't come around anymore." Nothing ever comes to fruit anyways. You know, \$47.6 million for an independent police force, and have no say on what happens in the community, is unbelievable and unacceptable. I feel very strongly about this.

Sure, we've had some incredible sergeants at different times, and talking about First Nation policing, not all First Nation policing is perfect, either. Lateral systemic racism is even worse than the RCMP, sometimes, with First Nation policing. Yes, we would like First Nation policing, but we have to make sure that they do their job the way they are supposed to do it, and be part of the community, and be visible, not stay at home all day with their families. That's exactly what is happening. Ever since this pandemic hit, it's even worse. They use the excuse about the pandemic, and you can't even get hold of them. You can go buzz the door there, and you have to wait for a good while in the cold if you have a concern. That's happened a few times, even with myself, Madam Chair. Things have got to change, and I want change in this area. When is the last time Commander Zettler has come to Fort Smith to meet there, or even come to Fort Smith to meet with anyone? Ask him that. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Member for Thebacha. Did you have any comments, Minister?

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** I hear the Member's frustration, so I will take that. I appreciate all input. I am still getting a handle on this department, and so I'm glad to hear input from different MLAs from different regions so I know what's going on and what the sense of different organizations related to the department are. Thank you.

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

**MS. NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm looking at the biology casework line item. It's a \$183,000 item. Just from looking at the page before, it appears this would be the cost-sharing agreement with Public Safety Canada for our part of the DNA work, et cetera, for our legal services. Could the Minister speak to whether or not we have any backlog in DNA testing, that type of work? I may be watching a little bit too much Law & Order SVU, but I'm just curious to know: is that ever an issue for us in the North, where our case work, our biological work, doesn't get processed in time, and does that impact court dates, et cetera? Thank you.

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

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you. We have no backlog. Perhaps, for a bit of history, Ms. Bolstad might be able to enlighten us. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Ms. Bolstad.

**MS. BOLSTAD:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Backlogs have been a discussion at the DNA labs nationally, so this has been a discussion for the provinces and territories. We have been assured by the commanding officer that we have no delays that are impacting our cases here. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MS. NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. That's one instance where being a small territory actually benefits us. I have no further questions. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Member. Any further questions under policing services? Seeing none, please turn to page 292. Justice, policing services, operations expenditure summary, 2021-2022 Main Estimates, \$48,234,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, committee. We will now turn to services to government, beginning on page 293, with information on pages up to 296. Questions? Member for Frame Lake.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Madam Chair. I have a couple of questions here. There were some media reports about, basically, implementation of the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act. I had understood that regulations were

required first before the full changes that were passed in the last Assembly, almost two years ago, could be brought into force. Perhaps the Minister can provide some clarification of where we're at with the implementation? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. The privacy office, which has been centralized in Justice, which we will be coordinating, not necessarily doing all the leg work for all of the departments, has come into effect this month. That should help the GNWT provide more, I don't want to say more streamlined, but I am trying to think of the right word here, coordinated requests. What we are seeing is that there are not more access to information requests; there are more complex requests coming through. That requires a lot of time from departments, so by centralizing this and creating a bit of expertise, the government is better able to respond.

The Member is correct in that the regulations are required for the amendments to the act to come into force. As I have said before in this House, we are still looking at this summer, and that has been a bit delayed with staffing issues in the ATIP office. There are some regulations that will be coming into force sooner. Those are the regulations to reduce some of the fees that are charged for ATIP requests, and those will be coming into force on Friday. Thank you.

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Madam Chair. I appreciate that response from the Minister. Certainly, I pushed for him to separate the issue of reducing the fees from the other matters that need to be regulated, so I appreciate that very much. Can the Minister point to me, in the budget here, are there any additional resources, then, for Justice to carry out these additional coordination functions related to ATIP? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you. This has been the plan for some time, so those have been accounted for. Perhaps I can ask Ms. Bolstad. I know we had been delayed in implementing this, so I believe the funds were already in the budget. Ms. Bolstad might be able to add some more. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Ms. Bolstad.

**MS. BOLSTAD:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes, the additional positions for centralizing the ATIP requests were established in the 2019-2020 Main Estimates. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Madam Chair. I appreciate that. My last area of questions here is with regard to legislative drafting. I know the Minister and I had an exchange in the House the other day that was a little bit mischaracterized by some in the media. How many people do we actually have in the legislative division that support the development of legislation, or is this function actually in each of the departments? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you. Yes, the Member and I weren't at war the other day. We weren't taking shots. It was some good-natured ribbing. We were sort of trading war stories, if anything, from the last Assembly on legislation. Perhaps I can ask Ms. Bolstad for some of the particulars about how many people we actually have drafting. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Ms. Bolstad.

**MS. BOLSTAD:** Thank you, Madam Chair. There is a total of 11 positions within the legislation division. That includes the director, a couple of administrative staff, and then a few drafters, as well. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Madam Chair. Look, I don't want to drag this out, but has that capacity increased or decreased? Has it changed over time? As I said, I am happy that you guys come forward and ask for more resources here so that we can get more legislation before the House and committees. Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you. I am not sure about the historic numbers, but I think that part of the issue is the timing of legislation. We made it through the last Assembly, like it or not, with the outcome. We were able to do it, and I know that the drafters put in a lot of hours. We are hoping that, by controlling the flow of legislation a little better, we will be able to do a better job of managing their work loads. I am not sure if Ms. Bolstad has any of the history or the deputy minister. Yes, the deputy minister. Thank you.

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

**MS. DOOLITTLE:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes, we do go forward when there is a need, and we track that, as well. We also have contract drafters that can assist us when needed, and these are in times of when it's very busy and legislation does need to get through. We use those contract drafters when needed. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks. That's something I will just continue to keep an eye on, and I want to thank the Minister and his staff for the collaborative exchange. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Member. Are there any further questions or comments on services to government from committee? Justice, services to government, operations expenditure summary, 2021-2022 Main Estimates, \$12,574,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, committee. We will now turn to services to the public, beginning on page 297, with information items on page 299, and there are three other information items up to page 302 on this section. Questions? Member for Great Slave.

**MS. NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. One of the line items here that I really hear a lot about is the rental office. It's one where I do probably need to learn a little more on its operations and such. \$238,000 is not very much money. I do know that a lot of our more vulnerable constituents do interact and need help at the rental office, and we often end up, as MLAs, kind of being that go-between or a navigator in helping them figure that out. My question is: could the Minister speak to whether or not that is actually adequately funded? Perhaps we need to be looking at expanding the rental office so it's a bit more of a customer service type. I'm not disparaging how the rental officers are working now; I just meant that it seems like it could be more robust. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you. I think that we can always do a better job with public interaction and customer service, but I think that, right now, we are in a good place with the rental office. I know that, a few years back, there were some staffing issues, and there were delays that were months long. It was really not fair to landlords or to tenants. There have been some changes made. There is

some stability in that office. The timelines that are being met are as good as they have been in quite a while. According to the last report that came out of the rental office, the timelines really couldn't be shortened any, based on the amount of time that the parties involved have to participate. They have to get documents in and those kinds of things. Things are working quite well there right now, I have to say. Thank you.

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

**MS. NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you for that. Again, the one time I was in the rental office with my constituent, they were very lovely and helpful. Maybe the Minister could speak to what is the percentage of clients that are public housing clients at the rental office?

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

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. The most recent numbers I have, which are a few years old now, it was around 60 percent of the cases involved public housing, but that is going back early in the last Assembly. I am not sure if we have more recent stats. I don't think it would be a stretch to say it's probably the majority, but I will see if the deputy minister might have some information. Thank you.

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

**MS. DOOLITTLE:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes, the Housing Corporation is the highest user of the rental services. I'm just trying to see if I have that number with me. I believe it is in the 50 percentage, Madam Chair, but I don't have that exact number, what 50 percent, with me. They are the highest user, and it is in the 50 percentage area. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MS. NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Just further to that, then, with the way that COVID is impacting our rental community at the moment, there is a lot of fear I'm hearing from constituents about making their rents, and the rent reliefs were really needed and helpful. However, I'm just wondering if we anticipate that we're going to actually see an increase again in the demands and services of the rental office, and I'm wondering if it is perhaps going to be underfunded for the upcoming year, given the COVID implications that we're seeing? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you. I'd like to ask the deputy minister to respond.

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

**MS. DOOLITTLE:** Thank you, Madam Chair. At this time, we are carefully watching our numbers and taking our statistics. I'll just mention that, as of December 21, 2020, the average time between date of application filed within the NWT rental office and hearing date for the matter was five to seven weeks, and this is consistent with previous reporting. The average time between the date of the hearing and the date of an order of a decision has dropped to less than two weeks. We are watching that carefully, and we'll go forward through the business planning process if we do see an increased need. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MS. NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It's good to hear that the numbers are improving and wait times are improving. I just am really concerned, or I just want to maybe make a comment to emphasize, and perhaps this isn't quite the right spot for it, but the Minister and just looking at ways to help our constituents. I'm concerned that we're sort of a few months out from a little bit more of a pandemic or housing issue, with people being evicted, with our larger landlords being REITs that aren't necessarily invested in the North. I've been hearing that real estate trusts have almost a bragging thing in their shareholders' reports about how they turn over so many units every year, and then they can up the prices on those units. I'm really concerned that's creating an issue and an unaffordable market for the North. I don't know if the Minister wants to comment in response to that, but I do think there is a piece here in the rental office that has to accommodate for that. Thank you.

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

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you. I don't think it's a secret to anyone that there's a rental crunch in places like Yellowknife and places like Hay River, and there's limited housing. Everyone is alive to the effects of the pandemic. The rental offices are definitely keenly aware of what's going on, and we watch the trends. If there is a need for additional support, it's something that I'm in favour of supporting because I've seen what happens when you really do have those backlogs and how it can negatively affect people. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. No further questions? Any further questions under services to the public? Member for Kam Lake.

**MS. CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I just have one quick question in regard to legal registries. I'm just wondering if the same kind of tracking of turnaround times that happened in the rental office happened within legal registries, as well, and if there is a backlog there? I'll start with that. Thank you.

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

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you. I'll ask the deputy minister.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Deputy Minister.

**MS. DOOLITTLE:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes, and we do track our metrics. I'm not aware of any backlog or that we're behind too far where we need to change the course we're tracking on right now. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MS. CLEVELAND:** No. Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I appreciate that, and I'll stop there. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Are there any further questions to services to the public? Seeing no further questions to services to the public, please turn to page 298. Justice, services to the public, operations expenditure summary, 2021-2022 Main Estimates, \$4,564,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Members. Please return now to the department summary found on page 271. Justice, operations expenditures, total department, 2021-2022 Main Estimates, \$133,753,000. Does committee agree? Mr. Norn.

COMMITTEE MOTION 83-19(2):  
TABLED DOCUMENT 286-19(2): MAIN  
ESTIMATES 2021-2022 - JUSTICE - DEFERRAL  
OF DEPARTMENT (PAGE 271),  
CARRIED

**MR. NORN:** Marsi cho, Madam Chair. I move that this committee defer further consideration of the estimates for the Department of Justice 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 Justice, 2021-2022 Main Estimates, operating expenditures, total department is deferred. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Thank you, Minister, and thank you to the witnesses for appearing before us. Sergeant-at-Arms, please escort the witnesses from the Chamber. What is the wish of committee, Mr. Norn?

**MR. NORN:** Marsi cho, Madam Chair. I move that the Chair rise and report progress.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. 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 I 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 Deh Cho. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried.

---Carried

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

### Orders of the Day

**DEPUTY CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Rutland):** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Orders of the day for Thursday, March 4, 2021, at 1:30 p.m.:

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

5. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery
6. Acknowledgements
7. Oral Questions
8. Written Questions
9. Returns to Written Questions
10. Replies to Commissioner's Address
11. Petitions
12. Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills
13. Reports of Standing and Special Committees
14. Tabling of Documents
15. Notices of Motion
16. Motions
17. Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills
18. First Reading of Bills
19. Second Reading of Bills
20. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters
  - Bill 3, An Act to Amend the Public Highways Act
  - 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
  - Bill 16, An Act to Amend the Income Tax 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
  - 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

21. Report of Committee of the Whole

22. Third Reading of Bills

23. Orders of the Day

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Clerk. This House stands adjourned until Thursday, March 4, 2021, at 1:30 p.m.

--ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 5:46 p.m.

