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The Honourable Frederick Blake Jr, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

Members of the Legislative Assembly

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(Mackenzie Delta)

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(Thebacha)

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(Great Slave)

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(Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh)

Mr. Kevin O'Reilly

(Frame Lake)

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(Inuvik Twin Lakes)

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Minister of Lands
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Minister responsible for Youth

Hon. Caroline Wawzonek

(Yellowknife South)
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YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**Wednesday, November 24, 2021****Members Present**

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

The House met at 1:32 p.m.

Prayer

---Prayer

SPEAKER (Hon. Frederick Blake Jr.): Colleagues, before we begin today I'd like to provide some clarity on the events of yesterday. In speaking to the Member for Thebacha's motion yesterday, Mr. Norn made the following statement. I quote from the unedited Hansard:

"I will say that I will resign. I will prevent you from making this vote. I will save you that. I will do that and do you that honour. And I -- and that I could feel the will of the people in this room, and I will respect that."

Section 10(1) of the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act lays out the different ways that a Member may resign their seat in this House. One of them is to announce that decision from their seat in session. This has happened on a number of occasions in this past, most recently when the then-Member for Monfwi resigned from his seat earlier this year. The words he used at that time were as follows:

Mr. Speaker, today I am giving notice to this House, to the Tlicho people, the NWT as a whole, that I will be resigning my post as a MLA for Monfwi effective today, Friday, June 4th, 2021.

Similarly, when the then-Member for North Slave, Mr. Henry Zoe, resigned during the 15th Assembly, he stated:

Madam Speaker, I rise in the House today to announce my resignation as a Member of the Legislative Assembly for North Slave effective immediately.

Unfortunately, the words Mr. Norn used in speaking to the motion yesterday were ambiguous, and they lacked the clarity needed to give that resignation full effect. This is why I allowed debate on the motion to continue and ultimately put the question to the House.

I should also say that even if Mr. Norn's decision to resign had been stated clearly and unambiguously in the House, the motion would still have been required and taken effect.

Rule 60 states "A Member who has made a motion may withdraw it with the consent of the seconder provided debate has not begun."

As you know, debate on the motion was well underway by the time Mr. Norn made his statement. Furthermore, section 10(4) of the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act goes on to state that "The resignation of a Member under this section does not affect the conduct of any proceedings that are pending or that may be taken (b) in respect of any complaint brought against the Member under section 100(2)."

The initial complaint to the Integrity Commissioner against Mr. Norn was made under section 100(2). Therefore, even had Mr. Norn clearly stated his decision to resign from his seat in the House yesterday, that resignation would not have ended the requirement of the House to consider the sole adjudicator's disposition on the report and either order or reject the recommended punishment.

To conclude, Mr. Norn did not resign his seat in the Legislative Assembly yesterday. The Legislative Assembly ordered the seat declared vacant in accordance with the recommendation of the sole adjudicator by the motion the Member for Thebacha introduced following my ruling on her point of privilege.

Thank you, Members. Orders of the day. Ministers' statements. Minister responsible for Industry, Tourism and Investment.

Ministers' Statements

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 180-19(2):
UPDATE ON PROCUREMENT REVIEW

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Mr. Speaker, later this afternoon, I will table the Report of the Procurement Review Panel, which provides a review of the GNWT's procurement policies and practices,

as well as recommendations on how these can be improved.

Government procurement, especially in the Northwest Territories, is far-reaching, and the steps that we take to respond to the panel's recommendations will support the GNWT's mandate commitments.

To adopt a benefit retention approach to economic development; increase employment in small communities; increase economic diversification by supporting growth in non-extractive sectors like manufacturing.

Mr. Speaker, to develop the report, this panel was asked to meet with Indigenous governments, industry, and business communities, as well as Northwest Territories residents, to discuss GNWT policies and practices around public procurement and then identify ways in which they can be improved.

They have done that, and they have done it well. In the interest of openness and accountability, their findings and conclusions were shared publicly on September 29, 2021.

The panel has provided 50 recommendations for us to consider, highlighting that our government's procurement processes need to be simpler, more transparent, and easier to navigate for the parties that are accessing them.

The panel's report shows that our government's procurement policies and related activities are spread across too many administrative departments and that the responsibility for up to seven key performance functions is unnecessarily confusing to those that these policies are intended to serve. In many cases the panel's recommendations align with work that is already underway to improve our internal procurement processes such as the development of a 'one stop shop' website that combines all procurement related information into one spot for contractors; the improvement of contract monitoring through the implementation of the first phase of vendor performance management with more work on this initiative is already in progress. Vendor performance management helps us first monitor and, if necessary, enforce compliance with procurement provisions in contracts; and the GNWT's regular review of processes and procedures.

Many of the recommendations in the panel's report will trigger consultation requirements set out in the land claims with our treaty partners and will likely impact or intersect with our commitment to develop an Indigenous procurement policy. Our officials will continue to meet with Indigenous governments to

discuss the panel's report, receive their input, and map out next steps.

The panel's report also includes recommendations to improve information sharing and help suppliers navigate the procurement system and resolve disputes. It recommends streamlining existing rules and oversight to reduce complexity and confusion for suppliers and contracting authorities. These are areas that we can get to work on sooner rather than later. Mr. Speaker, there is much at stake in this review.

In the words of the panel, "Procurement can have significant impacts on individual businesses and sectors of the economy. In some industries within our territory, the GNWT is the largest purchaser of goods and services and, as the panel heard through its engagements, the influence of the GNWT's procurement practices can be enormous in influencing the success or failure of any given business."

The panel suggests that its findings and recommendations provide the GNWT with an historic opportunity to use its buying power strategically and to leverage its public procurement in support of economic and social objectives.

I agree. The report identified that a significant proportion of GNWT's contracts are awarded to NWT-based businesses. Approximately 75 percent of all contracts over the last nine years have been awarded to Northwest Territories businesses with a value of \$2.2 billion.

In our most recent contract report for 2020-2021, the GNWT entered \$338 million worth of contracts and change orders. 70 percent of these were awarded to Northern companies. A share of the remaining contracts received no bids from Northern companies, and a portion required goods and services that are not available in the Northwest Territories. This shows that our policies are working, but I believe there is more we can do.

The panel's report, Mr. Speaker, highlights the potential that exists within our own resources and the economic stimulus that can come from it. In order to restore and grow the Northwest Territories economy, it is essential we limit the migration of dollars out of the territory. While we may never be able to completely eliminate dependency on outside workers or suppliers, this government is dedicated to working closely to close any potential loopholes in the system, maximize benefits to Northern companies, and ensure as much money as possible stays in the territory.

It will take some heavy lifting and strong decision-making, but these are the types of impacts that must be our goal. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Ministers' statements. Minister responsible for Northwest Territories Housing Corporation.

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 181-19(2):
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES HOUSING
CORPORATION RENEWAL STRATEGY

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to announce that the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation is undertaking a review and renewal exercise to ensure that the Housing Corporation's efforts are effective and producing the desired outcome for Northwest Territories communities and residents.

Across the world, affordable housing is a significant issue. We face the same in the north, with the added complications of severe northern climate, real pressures on both supply and labor, and working across extraordinary remote and vast lands.

Mr. Speaker, the 19th Legislative Assembly made safe and affordable housing a priority. On March 4th, 2021, a motion was passed calling for a change in the mandate of the NWT Housing Corporation. A large number of the reports and consultations have been conducted within the last five years, including one of the most extensive surveys ever conducted by the Government of the Northwest Territories with the public. This high level of interest and scrutiny will continue through forums like the Northwest Territories Council of Leaders Officials Housing Working Group.

The NWT Housing Corporation is rethinking its purpose. People need to be at the center of every housing perspective; programs that are no longer practical or do not really serve Northerners need to change; client service needs to be improved; the housing aspirations of Indigenous governments needs to be better supported; our relationships deepened with existing partners as well as inviting more in to become partners.

Mr. Speaker, we have heard a lot in recent years about the housing situation, and we understand the time for further studies is over. Now is the time to implement solutions.

As we move forward, the NWT Housing Corporation is committed to ensuring Northerners are kept informed. Our social media, our website and, as needed, information to the local housing offices or in print and radio will always be refreshed to keep Northerners aware of the ways the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation is serving

Northerners better. Some actions will be quick. In fact, some have already happened.

Just this year, as a result of significant engagement with the federal government, we are partnering in an unprecedented level of housing activity. Over the next two years, a record number of homes will be built throughout the Northwest Territories.

Nearly 200 people who were leasing their property have now had their land in fee simple title; in other words, they've become property owners. 160 public housing units are scheduled for major renovations and upgrades in 2021-2022. Of these 160 units, 38 projects are completed, and contracts have been awarded on further 95 projects.

These is just a few of these actions already underway that will make a very real, tangible difference to the lives of Northerners. We need housing. Additionally, the Housing Corporation continues to make progress on community housing plans. These plans provide communities, and their stakeholders, the tools to plan and direct the future of housing in their communities. To date, the Housing Corporation has engaged with 23 communities on their community housing plans.

New actions will be coming and will not stop until we have made clear our progress based on our four pillars of renewal:

- Rethinking our purpose;
- Strengthening our staff;
- Revising our programs; and
- Deepening and growing our partnerships

We are excited to see how this renewal process with the result in making life better for the people throughout the North, and I hope you will be excited too. At the appropriate time today, I will be tabling the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation Renewal Strategy. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

Members' Statements

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON COVID-RELATED COST RECOVERY FOR SMALL COMMUNITIES

MR. JACOBSON: Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it took 18 months for the pandemic to finally hit my riding of Nunakput. The first scare we had was in Ulukhaktok and I really want to thank our mayor Josh Oliktok and his staff and the health centre staff that did the

awesome job to contain that, and then we didn't really have an outbreak there.

But unfortunately it came to Tuk. I want to thank the community leadership, my mayor Erwin Elias, the TCC chair, and all the nurses and the health care workers, and the Rangers, who have been working nonstop to take care of our people. And I also want to thank our health care workers that were flown into the community, and my Minister for taking the late calls from us in making things happen.

Mr. Speaker, I'm really proud of my entire community. It has come together for each other. It's been exhausting, and the total number of cases are 10 percent of my people in the community of Tuk, there's a hundred people, and we're still on the road to recovery. Mr. Speaker, I'm thankful it wasn't worse and the case numbers are still dropping. It remains much to be seen yet.

Our small communities, Mr. Speaker, do not have the resources to help their residents in regards to increased demand on food, the hampers that we should be giving. People need assistance. They can talk -- they can't go to Inuvik to go buy food or it's not easy to go out on the land because we're on lockdown in the community. Things need to get -- to keep busy for our youth. But I'm happy that IRC and the Community Corp delivered boxes on the steps for the kids, and the school gave them homework. So we're keeping the kids busy. And the mental state, it's a big thing right now because they're under lockdown.

Our community leadership has asked about what financial supports are available to access and to pay for all the financial isolation centre was set up, all the food, the check stops on the highways. The community is willing to do what it takes but in case it has had zero help for payment.

I'm going to be asking the Minister today where -- if the community's lockdown, they should be paying the bill to assist. The community does not have a budget to these costs, it can't come out of their O and M. The money, you can't take it out of their gas tax funding because it's not for that. So the GNWT should cover all the costs for small communities across the territory and assist them. And I'll take my time now.

So Mr. Speaker, it's just -- what we really need to do is make sure if COVID Secretariat or CPHO shuts down the community on lockdown, that's when the bill should be getting sent to them. They should have to pay, not my community, not any community across the territory, because at the end of the day they have enough problems in regards to stretching out the dollar and to try to provide service, you know, for the constituents that we represent.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to remind everybody back home to stay safe and across the territory keep physically distancing, sanitizing your hands, and stay home. And if you're not feeling well, make sure you're getting checked by the health nurse. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON LEGAL SERVICES IN SMALL COMMUNITIES

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, when one lives in any small community in the North, one is subject to higher costs for goods and services.

Mr. Speaker, I want to focus on one area that I am familiar with, and that is the need for basic legal services to those who reside in the smaller communities throughout the Northwest Territories. What we in the larger communities take for granted, those residing in small communities go without. And if they want access to what we have, there is always an additional cost.

Mr. Speaker, as an MLA and a member of the Law Society of the Northwest Territories, I have had the satisfaction, over the last two years, of providing some of those legal supports in my community at no charge to constituents and those from other regions. Some of the legal issues that land on my desk require information, advice, and some drafting of documents. These services include wills and estates; personal directives; power of attorney; guardianship; Rental Office applications; Emergency Protection Orders; Affidavits; Statutory Declarations; land transfer documents; land lease agreement disputes; employment matters; contract/security document review; criminal law and court applications; and other matters.

Mr. Speaker, as you can imagine, if we, as MLAs, are dealing with the foregoing matters in our mid-sized communities, one can only imagine how the lack of legal services in a small community will impact the residents. This government talks about bringing services to the people, and rightfully so, and legal services has to be a priority. We as a government bombard businesses with contract documents. The NWT Housing Corporation place tenancy agreements in front of clients, seniors are signing off on matters that impact their care, finances and assets, and, in many instances, are signed with no legal understanding and no legal advice.

Mr. Speaker, we have only one legal outreach worker in the NWT who can only offer information and advice on certain legal matters but are not in a position to complete documents on behalf of the

clients. We also have legal aid workers however they too are limited in what services they can offer.

Mr. Speaker, it is important all residents in outlying communities have access to legal services so they are provided with an understanding of their legal rights along with an understanding of legal processes. I will have questions for the Minister of Justice later. Thank you, Mr. Speaker

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON SERVICES IN SMALL COMMUNITIES

MR. BONNETROUGE: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. I wish they would have renamed this week 'the small communities appreciation and funding week'. But maybe that will come sooner than later. I also want to thank my colleagues for their indulgence in helping our small communities to address their issues. Mahsi.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to bring attention to the lack of many services and infrastructure in my small community and of other similar small communities.

Mr. Speaker, far too often the residents of small communities have to leave their home communities to access programs and services offered in larger centres. The reason many have to leave their home communities is the lack of available programs and services.

Mr. Speaker, our communities lack infrastructure and funding to offer services such as women's shelters, family violence shelter, emergency shelter, community freezers, child care spaces, aftercare centres, and a host of other programs and services easily afforded to larger centres.

Mr. Speaker, it is very hard on residents when they're faced with having to leave their community to access shelters and programs in the larger centres. Many leave with their children, much to the dismay of immediate family, especially the grandparents. Many cannot stay to take in activities and other celebrations that bring the community together and to enjoy cultural activities.

Mr. Speaker, our small community, and others in similar situations, are never afforded much-needed infrastructure, programs, and services. We seem to always be an afterthought, if we are even thought of at all by the Government of the Northwest Territories. Mr. Speaker, we need to bring these issues to the forefront and ensure small communities are treated equally and provided the programs and service that will make a better life for the residents.

I will have questions for the Health Minister at the appropriate time. Mahsi.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON HOUSING IN SMALL COMMUNITIES

MS. SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This week as we highlight the issues in the small communities, I'd like to talk about core housing need.

A household in core housing need is one whose dwelling is considered unsuitable, inadequate, or unaffordable, and whose income levels are such that they could not afford alternative, suitable, and adequate housing in their community. It should come as no surprise, then, that our core housing needs are greatest in our small communities where, in my community, six percent of homes are deemed inadequate. That jumps to 29 percent in Tsiigehtchic. Over 14 percent of households in the Beaufort Delta communities have someone who can't get into their own home. And for the vast majority, it's because there are no units available in their community.

For those who can get into homes, almost one-third of the homes, for instance in Tsiigehtchic and Fort McPherson, are in need of major repairs. The Beaufort Delta communities have the lowest rate of home ownership in the territory. Only 28 percent of homes in Aklavik are owned, rising to 40 percent in Tsiigehtchic. This is far below the territorial average. Even in famously expensive Yellowknife, over 58 percent of homes are owned by the occupant.

Mr. Speaker, the majority of homes available to rent in the communities are owned by the government. Core housing need isn't a community problem. It's a government problem. And I will have questions for the appropriate Minister at the time.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON INCREASE DECISION-MAKING AUTHORITY IN SMALL COMMUNITIES

MS. MARTSELOS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the people living in small communities do not have the same level of access to government services or medical care as residents living in the capital do. By this very nature, the quality of life and social health are reduced compared to people living the capital, which is not okay. Moreover, the capital is the central hub of the government so all major programs and services and government agencies

and departments are headquartered here. This means that most government decisions are usually made from the capital which, in effect, deprives small communities from proper regional decision-making authority.

Mr. Speaker, continuing to go down the route would go against the heart of one of the priorities of the 19th Assembly, which is to increase regional decision-making authority.

The Government of the Northwest Territories has always structured itself from a centralized approach, when really it should be the other way around, especially since our territory encompasses so many Indigenous and self-government communities as well as regions with ongoing land and rights-based agreement negotiations.

Mr. Speaker, for these reasons our government needs to function with a decentralized approach so we can empower small communities with more autonomy and a better quality of life. Too often I see some very basic seemingly no-brainer decisions that could, and ought to, be made at a local level but instead are being made from the capital.

I will have questions for the Premier later today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON SMALL COMMUNITY EMPLOYMENT

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a mandate commitment and a priority of this Assembly to increase employment in small communities, specifically, in the mandate, by 125 jobs, Mr. Speaker. I will have some questions later today for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment about exactly what that looks like and what that means. It's a hard number to put in context.

But I think firstly, Mr. Speaker, in developing this work, we have to realize what we're up against. The Northwest Territories is not immune from the globalization that affects all communities where somehow High Liner fish bought in a supermarket is cheaper than the fish that a fisherman catches right out in the lake in their front yard, Mr. Speaker. We are not immune from urbanization. We are seeing the population of many of our small communities decline and, in fact, our territorial population is largely static as people move to urban centres all across the planet, Mr. Speaker.

And Mr. Speaker, at the heart of this debate about increasing employment in small communities, there

is a tension that the Northwest Territories has more jobs than people, Mr. Speaker. That is why many of our mines are southern. It's why the majority of our workforce is not Indigenous and not going here. But those jobs do not align with our current education and our current workforce skills. Many of those jobs are not in the small communities. Therefore, if someone in a small community goes and successfully becomes an engineer, it is most likely they're not returning to their community to work.

Mr. Speaker, but people in a small community have a right to meaningful employment. And that can look in many things. There is pride in driving the water truck. There is pride in getting your ticket and becoming an OBM. There is pride working at your local band office. We need to make sure we are in every community and everyone working in a small community can have a job if they need them.

Mr. Speaker, in 2018 we completed a small community employment strategy. The Premier at that time was the Minister responsible. It was a six-year plan. When I look at that plan, it has a bunch of kind of lofty goals and objectives and it has no hard measurements. I'm confused what it was intending to accomplish and, more importantly, what it has actually accomplished in the last four years.

Mr. Speaker, we have a number of mandate commitments and a number of things happening across this government to increase employment in small communities. However, I'm unsure whether we are actually doing that, and I'll have questions for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON CORE HOUSING NEEDS

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, housing is in crisis. Lack of adequate and suitable housing has forced families to sacrifice safety, mental wellness, and sobriety; has meant more children in government care; and impedes education levels and education rates.

This is not news to the 900 Northerners on housing wait lists or the thousands living in core need, meaning their home needs repairs, is overcrowded, or unaffordable.

We have one of the highest levels of core housing need in the country, where over 50 percent of housing in NWT communities requires major repairs.

The success of healthy, inclusive, creative communities starts with housing as a human right.

The UN Declaration of Human Rights assures everyone the right to housing and a dignified standard of living. The UN declaration of the rights of Indigenous peoples invokes self-determination in health, economic and social sufficiency, and housing.

Housing is a key pillar to the United Nation's sustainable development goals and the international covenant on economic social and cultural rights. The emerging international and green new plans recognize housing as critical to the knowledge economy and climate-sensitive industrial system. Canada's first national housing strategy identifies Indigenous housing as a priority and set aside \$40 billion to meet their ambitious goals.

With so many people saying all the right things, why is this not translating to housing for remote northern Indigenous communities and an elimination of core need in our territory?

This Assembly is adding 90 new public housing units to its stock. This is the largest increase in housing stock that the NWT has seen in decades. But if we add 90 housing units in every term, it will take 36 years to fulfill our housing waitlist. I will be 75 years. The MLA for Nunakput will be 84 and the MLA for Frame Lake will be 99.

Building new homes has also become more expensive due to labor shortages and supply chain disruptions. In addition, the NWT continues to lose valuable CMHC maintenance funding every year without a plan to replace it. This crisis is snowballing, and we need a plan to address this now, in our generation. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON JEAN MARIE RIVER FLOODING AND RESPONSES

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. Tough act to follow there.

On the theme of small communities, this past summer our family took a trip to Sambaa Deh Falls Territorial Park, one of the NWT's hidden gems. While we were there, we took the opportunity to visit Jean Marie River on August 11th to see some of the spring flood damage firsthand. I had contacted the Chief ahead of the visit but unfortunately he had some other meetings that took him outside of the community. I was able to briefly meet with the senior administrative officer and drove around the community.

The community administrative offices were damaged by the flooding but repairs were underway. Much of the community's housing is close to the Mackenzie and Jean Marie Rivers and was heavily damaged. At that point in August, little work had been done other than assessing some of the damage. Some other housing owned by the NWT Housing Corporation is a few hundred meters away and was also damaged and remained that way. Some other housing is set back to the west of the airstrip and was not damaged. Two temporary camps were in the process of being set up - One for Elders closer to the rivers and the other to the west of the airstrip for families. Unfortunately, the community water treatment plant was, at that point, still not in operation.

I want to acknowledge the work of the Member for Nahendeh and I also had the opportunity to visit him briefly in Fort Simpson on this same trip. I was also pleased to see that Cabinet listened to the Regular MLAs and modified the disaster assistance policy to allow for advances and also took off some of the caps. Further work is still needed to review our response and assistance overall.

I will have some questions later today for the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs on the status of the flood relief work, particularly for the small community of Jean Marie River. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON INFRASTRUCTURE IN SMALL COMMUNITIES

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just one sec here; my computer has been very finicky these days.

The Mackenzie River Valley Highway will provide an all-season connection between the small communities in the Northwest Territories Sahtu Region, from Tulita to Norman Wells. The highway is being advanced as a series of projects along the Mackenzie River Valley route, with one such project being the Great Bear River Bridge.

The proposed Great Bear River Bridge will be constructed adjacent to the hamlet of Tulita, replacing a section of the winter road that is currently constructed across the Mackenzie River around its confluence with the Great Bear River; a river that has historically proven problematic for ice road construction due to its high flow and configuration.

The bridge alone will be a huge boon to the smaller community, connecting Tulita to its only quarry or borrow source, which the community can currently only access during the winter road season. The two-

lane bridge will span 460 meters in length and provide new social, recreational, and economic opportunities for the community. Eventually, this road will connect Tulita to Norman Wells' Road to Nowhere, a connection that will be a huge economic game changer for the people of the Sahtu.

For example, the resource industry has long supported the construction of the bridge and subsequent highway as better access for exploration will lead to greater economic opportunity for the communities along its route. But the benefits from the highway from this sector will not be realized for many years.

The people of Tulita should not have to wait until the full highway is complete to take part in the economic prosperity that it will bring. Rather, all efforts should be made to ensure that any contract being issued as part of the bridge's construction remains with businesses in the small community that will have the bridge in their backyard. These contracts must benefit the people that actually live in that community and not outsiders that make many false promises of trickle-down economies that never seem to materialize.

Regulatory permits and approvals are expected to be in place in the spring with construction slated to begin the following winter. It is expected that the bridge and its approaches will take about three years to complete. This substantial amount of money must remain in the small community that supports the bridge and its work going forward. I will have questions for the Minister of Infrastructure at the appropriate time. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON EULOGY FOR WILLIAM KONISENTIA

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, on July 22nd, the community of Nahanni Butte lost a respected Elder, William Konisientia.

William was born at Netla on September 23, 1943. He was the second eldest child in the family of Joseph and Margaret Konisientia. He was raised in the Netla River area until families were relocated to Nahanni Butte in the early 1960's. The family was happy with this move as this is where William met his sweetheart and future wife Bella Matou. On May 18, 1967, they got married in the log-built church.

They were very fortunate to have six children. They enjoyed life together, especially when it come to having picnics along the Liard River. When family

talked about their time together, it always involved making a lunch in the largest kitchen in the world - outside.

William was a very hard working man. He took pride in looking after his family. He was an amazing trapper and hunter. Where possible, he would go out to provide for his family. Trips involved him and some of his siblings and later on involved his children. He was very proud of his children. Besides trapping and hunting, he would take on work as it came his way. He was very proud of the slashing job that three of his brothers and three cousins did for Can Jay Exploration. They were known as the 'Can Jay Boys' and the best slashers, efficient and fast workers. They were in such high demand that they did work in BC, Alberta, Saskatchewan, and the NWT.

William loved his family deeply, and once you received a nickname from him you were family. His favorite was Snoopy.

The family would like to extend their gratitude and appreciation to all those who came to pay their respects to William. Mahsi for showing him support, love and compassion. The family are grateful for everybody's kindness during this difficult time. Mr. Speaker, he will be sadly missed by all of us. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Nahendeh. Our thoughts and prayers are with the family and community. Members' statements. Returns to oral questions. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Acknowledgements. Oral questions. Member for Nunakput.

Oral Questions

ORAL QUESTION 792-19(2): COVID-RELATED COST RECOVERY FOR SMALL COMMUNITIES

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I rise in regards to my Member's statement regards to helping our communities recover funding through our lockdown that we've been having up in the communities, all across the Northwest Territories, whoever's been locked down or having road checks and stuff like that, they're not getting any help or funding from our government. They could correct me today if I'm wrong.

Mr. Speaker, does the GNWT policy require all small communities to pay for the COVID response during the outbreak including isolation centres and road check stops? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: No.

MR. SPEAKER: Not Honourable Premier but the Member wants to ask questions of the Minister of MACA.

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the Member for the question. Before I answer the question, I'd like to thank the leadership from Tuk. I had numerous phone calls, as well as the Minister from Health and the Premier. They worked very hard. I know there was numerous phone calls. Also, I'd like to thank the SAO from the community and the regional superintendent for Municipal and Community Affairs.

In regards to the question that the Member asked, so in regards, the community received over -- well, received \$213,506 through three payments as COVID started in the territories. So we were able to give that to the community.

In regards to isolation centres, if it's medically-appointed, then it's very much about the COVID Secretariat. They look after that there. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So all the -- I guess across the territory, that includes everybody that has a -- was locked down, our COVID Secretariat with the outbreak for the isolation centre. What about the road, the check stops? Is the community going to be reimbursed for that through MACA because it's coming out of the local community's purse. And that shouldn't be. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the Member for this question.

So the Government of the Northwest Territories gave the community \$213,506. We gave that money to the community, and they could use it for however they see fit. If they were going to use check stops and they wanted to do that, that money could be used there.

We didn't ask for an inventory checklist or invoice, receipts, and that. We gave the money to them to help them deal with the COVID situation. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we need more money. Tuk is running in a deficit in regards to what's happening with the COVID outbreak this last two weeks. Everybody's been tired and stressed and trying to do what they can. My leadership has been running ragged. We've been on phone calls all day, with the Premier and Health Minister. I thank them for that, but the thing is, Mr. Speaker, if the COVID Secretariat is going to call a lockdown, they should be paying the bill and not

saying they gave the money. And we should be worrying about it after the outbreak. Like, is everybody COVID free, then we should worry about paying the bills. But in this case, it's upfront. People -- the community doesn't want to pull the trigger because in regards to having to pay out themselves. And again, then it's going to take away from the community itself. If they call the outbreak and lock the community down, at that time they should be paying the bill, Mr. Speaker. And is this government going to do that for us? Thank you.

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as we move forward and as we learn from our experiences with this COVID issue, the biggest thing is that in my communications with leadership and that is for their SAO to reach out to our superintendent. Reach out to them. We're willing to work if there's some challenges or concerns that community have, then we can work with them.

We are trying to help as best we can, getting clarity where we're doing things. But the biggest thing I have to say is get the leadership to get their SAO to reach out to our superintendent, because they can work together. They've been doing a great job pre-COVID, during COVID, and hopefully at some point in time post-COVID. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I just -- no, I don't want to take away all the good work that's been done by my leadership by our government in regards to providing all the help they could with the health and our medical staff up in Tuk have been awesome. They flew in people, Arlene Jorgensen. Thank her so much in regards to the service that she's been doing for the people. But this is the biggest thing, is to make sure that we are able -- if we're able to help the community in paying their bills instead of shortchanging, taking busing away from here, and doing -- taking other monies from other pots of funding, to make sure our government comes forward to help them. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we're not trying to shortchange people. We're trying to work with the municipal governments. We're all learning as we move forward. Like I said, we've given the community of Tuk over what I think was \$213,506 that they can use to help deal with this COVID. If there's some deficiencies or there's some challenges, I just need their leadership to work with their SAO to reach out to our regional superintendent.

Now if it's a COVID Secretariat, she is able to work with that. If it's a health is there, if it's a municipal and community affairs, she's able to coordinate this. So I understand this is very challenging. And again I have to applaud all the small communities and all their leadership for all the work they've been doing through this. It's amazing that we're able to be so successful. But again, it's about working together and more than willing to have -- like I said, get the SAO to reach out to our superintendent, and we'll start working that way. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

ORAL QUESTION 793-19(2):
LEGAL AID FOR SMALL COMMUNITIES

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, can the Minister of Justice confirm how many outreach legal workers we have in the NWT and what their role is when it comes to dispensing legal advice information and how are small communities accommodated in that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Hay River South. Minister responsible for Justice.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There is one legal aid outreach lawyer in the Northwest Territories. There is also one court worker who works in that office. People call the Legal Aid Outreach Clinic for a number of different reasons, most commonly, by far, is for family law questions. So questions, you know, what steps do I take now that I'm separated? What do I need to do to get a divorce? A lot of questions where they just need guidance and where to go. And from there, people can either get a lawyer or take the appropriate steps.

Traditionally, there's been a lot of travel with the Legal Aid Outreach Clinic. But this past year and the previous year there's been no travel unfortunately. Before that, there was a significant travel to most communities in the territory going back to between 2014 and 2019. But anyone in the NWT can call the Legal Aid Outreach Clinic. Thank you.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, can the Minister confirm how many NWT residents use the service of the legal outreach lawyer and if those services occur mostly in Yellowknife. Thank you.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So in the 2020-2021 fiscal year, there were 692 people who accessed the Legal Aid Outreach Clinic. 46 percent of those people were in Yellowknife and the rest were throughout the territory, and it roughly breaks down to the populations of the specific

regions. So the South Slave region had about 15 percent of the people, the Inuvik region about 15 percent, and so on. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, one of the issues that I guess I come across is that when people come into my office, they're looking for I guess more than legal advice. They're looking for assistance in drafting, you know, documents.

So I'd ask the Minister, would the Minister consider expanding the legal outreach lawyer's responsibilities to include the drafting of documents for clients in less complicated matters. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I know when people go to the Member's office, they go there looking for free legal work is what they go looking for and he obliges on a regular basis. So I'm thankful for that, and I know his constituents are.

The Legal Aid Outreach Clinic does provide assistance with some forms, but probably not the variety of forms that the Member's talking about.

I can look further into that. The issue comes down to the fact that that office is stretched pretty thin as it is. Their workload is maxed out so we would really need additional staff in order to do that type of work, and I would love additional staff, and I'll leave it at that for now. Thank you.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Yellowknife North brought up increased employment. So with my next question, and also the comment just from the Minister about requiring extra staff, the Minister can make more employment, create more employment in the communities.

So will the Minister commit to reviewing the need to expand the current number of legal outreach lawyers to include Hay River, Fort Simpson, and Inuvik. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I have identified this as a priority with the department.

There are court workers in those communities, and I know that they do provide quite a bit of assistance. As MLA, I often send constituents to them, and they do help. I know that we have asked the outreach clinic to make sure they're keeping good records on who's contacting them and about what issues, and I know they have that. I read some of those stats here and so we're doing our best to make a case to get some more positions but I can't promise anything at

this point. But I would be as happy as the Member to see that happening. Thank you.

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

ORAL QUESTION 794-19(2):
SERVICES FOR SMALL COMMUNITIES

MR. BONNETROUGE: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my Member's statement highlighted the need for much needed infrastructure and services to small communities. I stated several of the types of programs and services, but one that we could start with is a safe space for women and children who are victims of domestic violence.

Can the Minister of Health and Social Services ensure and look into creating these spaces to provide the necessary staff required for the shelter. Mahsi.

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

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for the question. Mr. Speaker, the Department of Health and Social Services funds five family violence shelters in the Northwest Territories. They're operated by nonprofit organizations in Tuk, Inuvik, Yellowknife, Hay River, and Fort Smith. There is a gap in service in three regions - Sahtu, Deh Cho, and Tlicho. To that end, the YWCA NWT obtained money from the federal government to do a safe house pilot project where they could establish safe houses in communities in those regions, one community in each of the three regions I've just mentioned.

I don't know if the YWCA has chosen the communities that they're going to establish the safe houses in. But I would recommend to the Member that he contact the YWCA of the NWT and express an interest in having the pilot program in his community if that's what his community wants. Thank you.

MR. BONNETROUGE: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker, and mahsi to the Minister for that answer. It's too bad that I have to go ask somebody else rather than the department for help.

Mr. Speaker, most of the victims of domestic violence have family that they count on, but there is the issue of overcrowding, and we all know too well the health issues that come with this situation. Many of the families don't want to see anyone leave their community, especially with children in tow.

In small communities, we seldom ask for anything, but will the Minister take a serious look into providing the necessary infrastructure and services so we can

provide this service to families of domestic violence in our small communities. Mahsi.

HON. JULIE GREEN: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. We don't have in the business plan or the capital plan a plan to build more shelters in more communities in the NWT. We have some supports available to people in remote communities such as a help line and the Department of Justice offers the emergency protection order program to assist as well. We realize that that is not the same as having a shelter. There is money available to bring people in to a family violence shelter. It's my experience that often women want to leave their communities in order to obtain safety. In the event they want to stay, the emergency protection order is the right tool for them. So there are resources available. But building a shelter in the Member's community is not part of the capital plan at this time. Thank you.

MR. BONNETROUGE: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker, and mahsi to the Minister for that answer. Yeah, I have a problem, we have to phone a help line. You know, this government recognizes that there's reconciliation with First Nations and First Nations communities, and some of the ways that we do that is to provide them the services needed in their communities without having to leave home. I know there's a need for some of them that want to leave the community but we can still do it in a safe manner within our communities, Mr. Speaker.

I see that, you know, we need an action plan from this government to address the lack of much needed programs and services in the small communities. You know, they're much needed. Our people are the most vulnerable of all in the Northwest Territories and probably across Canada, and we really need that help and we need that government focus to look at an action plan to actually help us so that, you know, we can have such services, shelters for victims of violence, aftercare services that we've talked about quite a bit previously. We don't have any buildings at all. Nothing in our communities. There's no focus there. We want this department to start focusing on those things and with the help, probably of the whole Cabinet, all the departments should look at something for small communities, an action plan.

Can the Minister commit to beginning the action plan specific to the small communities. Mahsi.

HON. JULIE GREEN: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it is not possible for the Government of the Northwest Territories to provide a family violence shelter in each of the 33 communities of the NWT. We simply do not have the money; we do not have the staff. And it is, I recognize, an important need. I spent many years of my career working for the YWCA on family violence issues. And if we were

going to invest money in anything, I'd like it invested in putting police into every community. There are a third of communities that do not have police resident in the community. We also have a third of the communities that do not have nurses resident in the community. So if I was going to spend money, I might have different priorities than the Member has.

In terms of an action plan, I am going to narrow that down to a family violence action plan. My colleague, the Minister of Finance, has under her control the gender equity unit. There's a family violence coordinator hired into that unit, and that person is working on a family violence strategy. I'm sure there will be robust engagement with small communities about their needs and aspirations in order to come up with a document that will address the family violence needs that we are aware of. Thank you.

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

MR. BONNETROUGE: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. I see the Grinch has shown up early. Christmas is around the corner, and my stocking is going to be empty going home. I'm not too pleased with the government's action plans for our small communities, and stating that we need to increase RCMP presence in our communities. We already did that when the Deh Cho Bridge was built. They added two more staff, so we got a total of four RCMP in our communities. They're overworked. You know, there's lots of issues within our small communities and we really need that help, and we need that government to have that focus to help our small communities. We're just not getting that here. I'm not sure where we're going to turn to. I guess we'll just have to keep addressing the issues and bringing them up. You know, I really -- we're going to be counting on my colleagues here to really put the pressure on this government to help our small communities. I don't have any further questions, Mr. Speaker. Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Deh Cho. I will take that as a comment. Oral questions. Member for Thebacha.

ORAL QUESTION 796-19(2):
DECISION-MAKING AUTHORITY IN SMALL
COMMUNITIES

MS. MARTSELOS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in the mandate of the Government of the Northwest Territories document, there's a section with regional decision-making authority where the government states it will empower regional and community staff with training to increase their awareness of the decision-making authority.

Can the Premier tell us if this training has been developed yet and if the Department of Executive and Indigenous Affairs will be on track with its goals on this initiative. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Training, we realize, is an ongoing process but, yes, we've started some of initial training within this regional decision-making and there will be more as we go on because we've still got more work to do.

But the areas of training that we've developed, and based on our findings so far, we'll be doing delivery of training on the human resource manual and human resource delegations of authority. That began in October, already, with all the regions. We're going to be doing training on the Cabinet process, and that's been developed, and the delivery will begin in December of this year, 2021. And then training modules on the Financial Management Board handbook and financial delegations of authority are currently being finalized and the delivery is expected to begin early in 2022.

So, Mr. Speaker, EIA, Executive and Indigenous Affairs department is on track with its goal on this commitment. However, in stating that, we have more work to do which I'll get into further. And as we identify training needs, then we constantly, as a government, should be trying to address those training needs, so. But we're beginning the process. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. MARTSELOS: Mr. Speaker, can the Premier provide us with some details as to the extent of the departmental review into regional decision-making authority, including any Executive Council amendments that were proposed or enacted. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So that is some of the areas that we want to talk about.

Throughout our review, we started with doing an internal review of the current processes in regards to human resource and financial authorities. We looked at job descriptions, etcetera, and we realized that there weren't any discrepancies within them. There is an issue. And when we did a -- we've done surveys with the senior managements in the rural -- smaller communities, etcetera, and they identify that there's an issue, the feeling of empower. So that led us to say even though our job description say it's all good, you know, we're equal, there's a perception of not. So that's why I wanted to say that, you know, we're doing training on right now what your authority is, but

there's other issues that we need to look at and make sure that those are addressed.

So with that, like I said, at this point we're not doing any changes to the Executive Council because we haven't seen that there's a need. The need isn't on changing the Executive Council at this point, and delegations; it's about making sure that employees, both in headquarters and regional staff, understand the delegations of authority. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. MARTSELOS: Mr. Speaker, can the Premier tell us of any legislation based on her departmental review will need to be amended or enacted to better provide and improve regional decision-making authority. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So, again, like I had said earlier, in regards to making legislative changes or changes to the Executive Council, that wasn't seen to be an issue. The job descriptions are on par. The initial service that we did identify, that there are problems. When we asked what the problems were, people just identified headquarters, not enough power in the regions. So in fact, that didn't give us enough information in all honesty to be able to do a final assessment. So we're now in the process of hiring a contractor -- last question -- and we'll be doing one on one interviews.

The other thing that's really important to know is because it's easy to hire a contractor and go into the communities and say what do you need, but I take a real firm stance that if you're going to be doing things for the people, by the people, about the people, the people need to be involved.

So we have hired a contractor, but we've also got a working group that we started, and the working group has staff from both the regional and the headquarters. And that working group has delegated the task of developing the questions that will be used in the small communities so that we can hopefully gain more insight.

Like I said, it's not enough just to say, headquarters has all the control and yet your job description said it doesn't. So we need to find out what exactly that means and that's the process we're working on now. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Honourable Premier. Final supplementary, Member for Thebacha.

MS. MARTSELOS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, can the Premier provide us with any other notable facts or examples not yet mentioned where her government has improved regional decision-making authorities since the start of the 19th Assembly. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, I think for me the most notable change I made on the mandate, we did talk about doing this work, we talked about developing training and delivering it to people, but in the mandate we never talk to who was going to do that. So the mandate could have been that headquarters because traditionally headquarters does do those things and would have defined it. What's different now, Mr. Speaker, is that it's not only headquarters defining this work. It is the regional managers that are helping define it because it's the regions that are experiencing this problem. So, again, I feel it would be totally inappropriate if headquarters alone did this. Headquarters is one party at the table but the regional managers are the ones that need to be guiding this work. And so that is a change that we've done, is that it's a -- we're working together on this. It's not top down. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

ORAL QUESTION 796-19(2):
INFRASTRUCTURE IN SMALL COMMUNITIES

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, getting back to my original roots here, I'm going to ask the Minister of Infrastructure some questions about the Great Bear River bridge.

Could the Minister speak to whether or not the regulatory review and permitting process is on track to maintain the timelines previously stated on the project website. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Great Slave. Minister responsible for Infrastructure.

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, given some of the challenges to get in the communities in during this pandemic, the regulatory permitting process timeline has been revised so that applications will be submitted in early 2022. Staff are working with the community of Tulita and the Department of Lands to obtain required land reserves. This will not, however, cause any impact to project delivery within the expected bridge completion date being 2026. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that we have a lot of conversation around small communities and retention of money there, can the Minister briefly describe the community engagement process that's been undertaken until now and tell us what she's been doing differently to ensure that the benefits of the project are retained within that small community and are not being lost to businesses from the south or in regional centres. Thank you.

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Great Bear River Project has potential to bring significant socio-economic benefits to the Sahtu. My department has been working very hard to optimize how we can retain benefits in the region and community, as well as how to involve as many local businesses and contractors as possible. Engagement meetings have been taking place since August 2018. The project team has also held public meetings in each of the five Sahtu communities. Also have met with Sahtu Secretariat, community councils, land corporation, resource councils, all throughout the Sahtu.

Topics addressed during meetings have included discussions on how business and people of the Sahtu can be prepared to provide services to the project. So the next round of meetings are being scheduled for December and January.

The NWT business incentive is in place to favour bids with local and northern content. We will work with Department of Finance with regards to procurement options and also utilize the Northwest Territories Business Incentive Policy which is in place to favour bids with local and northern content. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm glad to hear that, although I do want to caution the Minister that BIP is only for a small portion of that overall contract so it may not actually have much weight in this.

And further to that, could the Minister speak to what is the estimated value of the work from the project that could realistically be executed within the community by local contractors. So this includes opportunities such as camp provision, work for laborers, catering services, camp attendants. What do we realistically see that Northwest Territories businesses could actually execute. Thank you.

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can't really give an exact figure at this time. However, it is expected with a project of this complexity that a higher portion of cost will be attributed to bridge construction itself. That's what we've been telling the communities in the Sahtu that, you know, it -- this is a complex bridge. As a matter of fact, it will be the second biggest bridge here in the Northwest Territories.

We could expect that local and regional and Northwest Territories contractors would be able to carry out quarry operations, roadway work, earth works, bush clearing, just to name a few, Mr. Speaker.

Additionally, businesses are available to supply camp services, heavy equipment operators, skilled

and unskilled labourers, camp cooks, attendants, to name a few. There are many components to a project of this size and the work will take more than two years to complete, providing opportunities for local, regional, and territorial participation. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I'm glad that the Minister supplied even some further examples of areas in which the local community can benefit.

And so I guess my next question is what is the Minister going to do or what requirements will be filled into the project plan in order to ensure that those small and local businesses and contractors are competitive in bidding on work for this project. Does the Minister commit to changing how RFPs are written to ensure greater scoring for those who incorporate training, Indigenous and community engagement. Thank you.

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned, there has been and continues to be significant engagement with the Sahtu and community folks that are interested in this project. In addition, the Northwest Territories BIP program, which provides support to local contractors bidding on projects, small and local businesses have an advantage when bidding on local work as they do not need to build in costs for things like accommodations or mobilization, because they're already there. This gives local businesses and contractors a competitive advantage over someone that perhaps is outside the Northwest Territories.

As the project is still in the early stage of design regulatory permitting, it's kind of early to discuss the method of procurement. But I can assure Members our department is making every effort to optimize local and regional opportunities for this important project within procurement framework of the GNWT while also respecting the procurement framework and trade rules that are associated with this primary project funder, the federal government.

I would also remind the Member that I am appearing in front of SCEDE tomorrow morning with some of my senior staff to discuss all the projects that are happening in the Sahtu and be able to answer a little more detailed questions to some of the project that's occurring. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

ORAL QUESTION 797-19(2):
HOUSING IN SMALL COMMUNITIES

MS. SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I mentioned in my Member's statement speaking about the Beaufort Delta and the core housing need, can the Minister of the NWT Housing Corporation tell us what is the current waitlist for the Beaufort Delta communities right now. Thanks.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes. Minister responsible for Northwest Territories Housing Corporation.

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question. The total number that we have as of today is 178. We've got Inuvik has 73, Aklavik's got 18. Fort McPherson 21, and Tsiigehtchic 9. Those are the numbers that I was provided that are on the waitlist. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to ask the Minister what immediate actions are being taken to reduce this waitlist. Thank you.

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As of today, the number that I have for the Beaufort Delta, including Inuvik, Aklavik, Fort McPherson and Tsiigehtchic, is 26 million that has been invested into this region. We have 17 of the market housing units which are the RCMP constructed units. They should be completed by the end of this government.

But we have got two units going into Inuvik. In Aklavik, we had 600,000 that was invested into six public housing units. Also home ownership repair programs for private homeowners and minor unit repair, all expected to be completed in 2022-2023. McPherson, we've got four public housing units coming available. And also Tsiigehtchic two housing units and three major repair home ownership programs as well too. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Sorry, Mr. Speaker. I also wanted to add that we continue the effort working with the Indigenous groups in the Member's riding as well to continue lobbying the federal government for further additional housing infrastructure money. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Minister for those numbers. You know, Housing keeps bringing up these RCMP units. They don't resolve our housing crisis. They do provide our RCMP with new units in that, you know, since the Minister has brought that up, what I want to know is with all these new units that are being for RCMP, what are we doing with the old units? Are we going to absorb them into GNWT and are we going to use those to reduce our public housing waitlist? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate that question coming from the Member.

Right now, as these RCMP units are being constructed, I am in conversations with the federal government and I want those units to be transferred over to the Housing Corporation so we would be able to work with the Northwest Territories and add that to our public housing stock. And also that there is possibly an opportunity to work with the Indigenous groups as well too, as they would have preference before the GNWT. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MS. SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll go back to my other question that I had. So knowing that we've heard in this House many times that there's communities and there's boarded up and there's vacant units, what is the Housing Corporation -- how many housing units are in the Beaufort Delta communities that we are talking about, and what is the plan for those units that are vacant that Housing Corporation owns. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I'm going to provide the Member with some numbers.

We've got 11 in Inuvik. We have two that are under repair and four that were scheduled for repair in 2022-2023, and five require funding.

Aklavik, we've got eight. Two are under repair. One is scheduled for 2022-2023 completion. And also five require funding as well too.

In Fort McPherson, we have four. Three are under repair, and one is required funding.

In Tsiigehtchic, we don't have any numbers.

But then, you know, I look forward to looking at those numbers as well too because we don't have the funding to repair those units and have them available for the clients. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

ORAL QUESTION 798-19(2):
LAND OWNERSHIP ISSUES IN SMALL
COMMUNITIES

MS. WEYALLON-ARMSTRONG: Masi, Mr. Speaker. [Translation] I am thankful for today and I also thank my colleagues. The things that they are bringing up is very important, especially to the smaller communities and we are in need of a lot of things, and it's the people that are needing these things; I thank them for that. And we're not going to stop asking for these things for our small communities, and we're trying to make sure that we -- we help our community.

Yesterday's Member's statement. So I'd like to ask a question towards Housing Minister. [Translation Ends]

This is not to be disrespectful for the loss of loved ones, especially in my regions. There are some family that I know that are still grieving. So this is a question for the Minister.

Can the Minister share what types of assistance are available to residents regarding the transfer of property and land ownership from deceased relatives.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Monfwi. Minister responsible for MACA.

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, that there is not a Municipal and Community Affairs issue. I think that's very much about wills, about working with the justice system. But if the Member is talking about land transfer and that, that there is very much about a municipal government.

It's been very confusing, and I thank the Member. She's hit me a few times with this question, and I greatly appreciate it. It's trying to understand how it works in the Tlicho government, but it is my understanding land belongs to -- or is looked after by the Tlicho government, whether it's Behchoko, Gameti, Whati, or Wekweeti. And they need to develop a bylaw to do that type of work. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. WEYALLON-ARMSTRONG: Thank you for the question. I just wanted to know if the Minister is aware, knows, Behchoko, Whati, Gameti, and Wekweeti is a public government. So it is responsibility of Municipal and Community Affairs.

With that, can the Minister advise what possible assistance is available relating to accumulated tax arrears. Thank you.

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, I'm well aware that it's a public government. And, again, it's understanding the complexity of a new government and how we do things.

So in regards to taxation, this was an issue that I brought up in the 18th Assembly and what we were able to do is work with the Minister of Finance is that we were able to do a reverse mortgage, I would call it. Basically we would just pay -- come up with a payment plan to work and pay off the taxes and then as the interest would be reversed. So that option is available. You would have to reach out to the Department of Finance. That's what I have had to do with working with my community members in my riding, and my understanding that option is still

available but would need to confirm with the Minister of Finance. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. WEYALLON-ARMSTRONG: Thank you for the answers. Mr. Speaker, can the Minister commit to instructing staff to reach out to the Tlicho and community government to address barriers in the transfer of land and property title. Thank you.

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you. From the Municipal and Community Affairs side, with the bylaws, we would be more than willing to come with the municipal governments to come up with the bylaws that they need to do that. If it's something to do with lands, more than willing to work with the municipal governments, the Tlicho government, moving forward.

Again, I appreciate the Member asking these questions. And she's been very true to her word. She's been asking the questions numerous times, and I appreciate that. And all we need to do is work together to help solve that issue. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MS. WEYALLON-ARMSTRONG: We have to be persistent. If we're not persistent, then it's going to be shelved, so.

So the final question, can the Minister commit to having discussions with the Tlicho and community government regarding amendments to the Tlicho Community Government Act to address the legislative barriers of transferring lands and property title. Thank you.

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you. Thank you, and the Member for Thebacha kept on reminding me about land issues. I asked them the same questions so I appreciate the commitment by the Member. I love it, I think it's -- that's how we get things solved here.

I'm more than willing to work with the municipal governments. Our staff is more than willing to work with the Tlicho government. Again, though, I just want to make sure we know what we're looking at, what we need to do. So if the Tlicho governments can work -- reach out to us, work with their MLA, we're more than willing to sit down and have conversations how we can improve things moving forward. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

ORAL QUESTION 799-19(2):
JEAN MARIE RIVER FLOODING AND
RESPONSE

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. My question is for the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs. I visited Jean Marie River and the Minister on August the 11th to see some of the flood damage. Can the Minister provide an update as to the status of funding expended to date by this government in Jean Marie River and efforts to carry out any of that work from other sources. Merci, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. Minister responsible for MACA.

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you. First of all, I'd like to thank the Member for touring my riding. It was greatly appreciated. And the community of Jean Marie greatly appreciated him stopping in to sit there. I also have to give a shout out to the Member from Hay River South. He was very much involved in that as well.

So in regards to how much money we spent right now, presently, as of September 30th -- sorry, I just had a mental block there -- we spent \$1.7 million for the flood recovery for activities in there. We are projecting that the total for the 2021-2022 fiscal year, we'll spend approximately about \$6 million in total.

The GNWT is making a claim for reimbursement for flood-related costs to the Government of Canada through the federal disaster financial assistance arrangement, and Municipal and Community Affairs has engaged Public Safety Canada throughout this. So they're not being surprised about it; we are actually being proactive and saying here's what our costs are and, you know, is this something that we can or cannot claim through the process. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. I want to thank the Minister for that response.

The community of Jean Marie River was particularly hard hit by flooding as we all know. Can the Minister tell us if and when the water treatment plant was put back into operation and what arrangements were made for clean water for the community before that. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to answer the last part of the question first, and then we'll go from there.

So when the flood hit, the leadership from the department and local governments from Hay River and Yellowknife provided bottled water to the community. So we were bringing in bottled water to help address that issue. Then as the ferry was kicked

in in Fort Simpson and people were moved back into their homes, or they were still in their homes that weren't impacted by the floods, we were bringing the water from Fort Simpson, the water truck.

Now we continue to do that. In July and August, the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs and contractors worked on improving getting the reservoir up and running and as of September 30th -- or September, it is now operational. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. I want to thank the Minister for that. Good to hear that the water treatment plant is up and going again.

I noted in my statement the housing closest to the Mackenzie and Jean Marie rivers was particularly heavily damaged. The previous Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs had promised publicly that people would be in accommodations, be back in their communities before winter.

What's the status of the assessment or repair work for both private and publicly owned housing in Jean Marie River, and are people back in their own homes. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: I'd like to thank the Member for asking these questions. I think these are questions I asked weekly with the staff on it.

So the status is basically we've been working on it. For the homes that we're able to repair, we're hoping to having everything as of December 17th. For the ones that may or may not be back into their home, we brought in a camp. So we have two camps. One for the Elders, and one for the family. When we were asking the community about getting a camp in there, we gave them some options. They provided the option -- they selected the options, and that's why the camp we have set up as we have it here.

In regards to homes that are beyond repair, what we've done is we've given them a number of options of how we're going to move forward on that. And then the community members made that decision. It wasn't us as government saying this is what you have. We said, here's option A, here's the consequences if you pick this, option B, C, D, and then the community members made a decision.

I'd just like to share a quick story. I had one individual who was going to do it but decided that the home meant too much more so he -- they have actually gone back to building it, fixing it up themselves. So as in regards to the public, there's four units. My understanding they're in the process, if they're not already done. Housing has done the work on them, and we're moving forward on that. Yeah, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. I want to thank the Minister for that. Clearly, people in Jean Marie River, particularly the Elders, like to be close to the rivers. That brings some risk with more extreme events which will increase with the climate crisis.

Can the Minister tell us whether there have been any discussions or plans to relocate or move some or all of the community of Jean Marie River, and what support is our government giving. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we've been working with the residents. Some people want their homes to be raised. We're able to do that. Some of them have actually looked at potentially moving to another location. And with the homes that we are replacing, we're making sure that we can lift them up and move them should they wish to move to another location in the town.

Very much the community wants to stay close to the river. We have some locations that we're working with them. But we've also made a commitment to work with them to come up with a plan, a community plan, based on their needs and what they want. So, again, it's very much about working with them on this. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Oral questions. Member for Kam Lake. Oh, that's fine.

ORAL QUESTION 800-19(2):
OBSTETRICAL CARE COSTS

MS. CLEVELAND: Sorry about that, Mr. Speaker. I'm operating electronically today. Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Minister of Health and Social Services today, and I'd like to continue my conversation from yesterday.

My first question is will Health and Social Services waive the \$400 copayment fee being charged to families for travelling to Edmonton to deliver between December 10th and February 21st. Thank you.

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

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question. I'm unable to answer that specific question. What I understand is that the obstetrics team has started to reach out to the families who will be disrupted by the closure of the Stanton obstetrics unit and finding out what their needs are in order to understand whether we need

to do some systemic changes to accommodate families who will be going to Alberta to give birth. So at this point, I can't say specifically what measures we are going to offer beyond those that are already in place for everyone who travels for medical travel. Thank you.

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And thank you to the Minister. I can confirm that the people who I serve when I stand in this House would like to not have to pay out of pocket for essential health care and that would be to deliver a child and would like to not have to pay the \$400 copayment fee in order to access required health services.

My next question, Mr. Speaker, is will Health and Social Services increase the \$50 hotel benefit to a hundred dollars regardless of escort presence to ensure all parents travelling to deliver in Edmonton have access to equitable hotel benefits regardless of marital status to better cover the costs of hotels. Thank you.

HON. JULIE GREEN: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, medical travel benefits are available to these families who are being disrupted by the closure of the obstetrics unit at the same rates that are provided to everybody else who travels for medical travel. In the event that the family has access to employer benefits, noninsured health benefits, or extended health benefits, Metis health benefits, then they may be able to supplement those numbers. In the event that they are unable to supplement those numbers, they should certainly make the obstetrics team aware of that so that we can consider what else may be available to them. Thank you.

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that this is the norm for medical travel, but most medical travel patients aren't travelling for three plus weeks and expected to foot the unexpected bill of thousands of dollars in hotel costs.

What I will also say is that I do have residents in the constituency that I serve who have been reached out by the OBS team and it doesn't seem that the OBS team is able to make decisions on the phone, which I appreciate that this is an evolving situation and is a new situation for everybody. And so I would like Health and Social Services to please consider the length of stay expected of families and the large financial burden that that brings with it.

My next question, Mr. Speaker, is will Child and Family Services help keep families together by paying for the flight costs of children that cannot be left behind. Thank you.

HON. JULIE GREEN: Yes, thank you. All of these answers are about medical travel providing benefits to people who need to seek services in Alberta and in other jurisdictions. In fact, people who go for chemotherapy might also be away for weeks at a time.

The medical travel program is not a program that provides dollar for dollar costs replacement for going south. There is a financial cost to the individuals involved unless they are low income and in which case there are other possibilities. I cannot make a commitment that every family will have the costs of their children with them paid for.

I think that the Member needs to consider that with 540 births in the NWT a year, and with many of those occurring with people who do not live on the door step of Stanton Hospital, that we have to be very mindful of the precedent that we're creating here and the extra spending that we're committing ourselves to. We need to, as I said earlier, continue to gather information about what families need and then make a decision about what additional supports we can provide. Thank you.

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

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I see this as an opportunity to create a more equitable birth path in the Northwest Territories. I see this as a voice being lent to the right for people to deliver children in a safe space close to home, close to the community that they reside in, and I think that we need to be able to take this and focus on things like doula programs, like our midwifery program, like bettering the medical travel policies that do exist.

And so I am wondering if the Minister will then please commit to finding out from staff what she is hearing or what they are hearing, rather, from constituents of the Northwest Territories as to what they need and to be able to share that information with Members so that we can compare that with the information that we are also receiving from constituents. Thank you.

HON. JULIE GREEN: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm not going to make that commitment. I'm going to assure the Member that I think we all have the best interests of these families in mind. It's very unfortunate that the staffing situation is such that Stanton is not going to be available for births between December the 10th and February the 21st, and I recognize the disruption that's going to cause. But I'm not going to task the obstetrics team with writing reports for us. That, I do not think is a good use of their time.

The ultimate answer to this is to try and improve our staffing levels in the obstetrics unit. We staff now for three nurses, obstetric nurses 24/7. And as I think I said earlier, the birth rate in the NWT is actually going down and not up. Even with that, we are struggling with vacancies in the obstetrics unit. The ultimate answer is to improve services in the Northwest Territories rather than putting a lot of resources into this situation which I sincerely hope is one-off. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Colleagues, our time for oral questions has expired. Written questions. Returns to written questions. Replies to Commissioner's address. Petitions. Reports of committees under review of bills. Reports of standing and special committees. Tabling of documents. Minister responsible for Industry, Tourism and Investment.

Tabling of Documents

TABLED DOCUMENT 474-19(2):
REPORT OF THE PROCUREMENT REVIEW
PANEL - REVIEW OF THE GOVERNMENT OF
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES PROCUREMENT
POLICIES;

TABLED DOCUMENT 475-19(2):
THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES LIQUOR AND
CANNABIS COMMISSION 67TH ANNUAL
REPORT 2020-2021;

TABLED DOCUMENT 476-19(2):
THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES LIQUOR
LICENSING BOARD 67TH ANNUAL REPORT
2020-2021;

TABLED DOCUMENT 477-19(2):
INTER-ACTIVITY TRANSFERS EXCEEDING
\$250,000 (APRIL 1ST TO JUNE 30TH, 2021);

TABLED DOCUMENT 478-19(2):
THE NORTHERN EMPLOYEE BENEFITS
SERVICES (NEBS) PENSION PLAN ANNUAL
REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDED DECEMBER
31ST, 2020.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table the following five documents: Report of the Procurement Review Panel - Review of the Government of Northwest Territories Procurement Policies; The Northwest Territories Liquor and Cannabis Commission 67th Annual Report 2020-2021; The Northwest Territories Liquor Licensing Board 67th Annual Report 2020-2021; Inter-Activity Transfers Exceeding \$250,000 (April 1st to June 30th, 2021); and, The Northern Employee Benefits Services (NEBS) Pension Plan

Annual Report for the Year Ended December 31st, 2020. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

TABLED DOCUMENT 478-19(2):
A STRATEGY FOR RENEWAL OF THE
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES HOUSING
CORPORATION – PURPOSE, PEOPLE,
PROGRAMS, PARTNERSHIPS, NOVEMBER
2021.

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following document: A Strategy for Renewal of the Housing Corporation. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Tabling of documents. Minister responsible for Health and Social Services.

TABLED DOCUMENT 479-19(2):
DIRECTOR OF CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES
ANNUAL REPORT 2020-2021.

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to table the Child and Family Services Annual Report 2020-2021. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

TABLED DOCUMENT 480-19(2):
SPEAKING UP FOR FAIRNESS - 2020-2021
ANNUAL REPORT OF THE NORTHWEST
TERRITORIES OMBUD.

TABLED DOCUMENT 481-19(2):
20/21 OFFICE OF THE INFORMATION AND
PRIVACY COMMISSIONER OF THE
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES ANNUAL REPORT.

TABLED DOCUMENT 482-19(2):
OFFICE OF THE LANGUAGES COMMISSIONER
FOR THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES ANNUAL
REPORT 2020-2021.

TABLED DOCUMENT 483-19(2):
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES HUMAN RIGHTS
COMMISSION ANNUAL REPORT 2020-2021.

Colleagues, pursuant to section 43 of the Ombud Act, I hereby table Speaking Up for Fairness - 2020-2021 Annual Report of the Northwest Territories Ombud.

Pursuant to section 68 of the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act, I wish to table the

2020-2021 Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner of the Northwest Territories Annual Report.

Pursuant to section 23 of the Official Languages Act, I hereby table the Office of the Languages Commissioner for the Northwest Territories Annual Report 2020-2021.

Pursuant to section 21 of the Human Rights Act, I wish to table to the Northwest Territories Human Rights Commission Annual Report 2020-2021.

Thank you. Tabling of documents. Notices of motion. Member for Nunakput.

Notices of Motion

MOTION 43-19(2):
MOVE COMMITTEE REPORT 17-19(2), 18-19(2),
AND 19-19(2) INTO COMMITTEE OF THE
WHOLE

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, I give notice that on Friday, November 26th, 2021, I'll move the following motion:

I move, seconded by the Honourable Member from Thebacha, that Committee Report 17-19(2) Standing Committee on Government Operations Report on review of Bill 23, an Act to Amend the Public Utilities Act; Community Report 18-19(2) Standing Committee on Economic Development and Environment Report on Review of Bill 24, an Act to Amend the Revolving Funds Act; And the Committee Report 19-19(2) Standing Committee on the Economic Development and Environment Report on Bill 29, Resource Royalty Information Disclosure Statute Amendment Act be received by the Assembly and moved into Committee of the Whole for your consideration.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Nunakput. Notices of motion. Motions. Member for Frame Lake.

Motions

MOTION 39-19(2):
APPOINTMENT TO STANDING COMMITTEES
ON ACCOUNTABILITY AND OVERSIGHT,
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND
ENVIRONMENT AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT,
CARRIED

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President.

WHEREAS Rule 89(2) requires that Members be appointed to the Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight;

AND WHEREAS Rule 89(2) requires that Members be appointed to the Standing Committee on Economic Development and Environment;

WHEREAS Rule 89(2) requires that Members be appointed to Standing Committee on Social Development,

NOW THEREFORE I MOVE, seconded by the Honourable Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes, that the following Member be appointed to the Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight, Ms. Jane-Weyallon-Armstrong, the Member from Monfwi.

And further, that the following Member be Appointed to Standing Committee on Economic Development and Environment, Ms. Jane Weyallon-Armstrong, the Member for Monfwi.

And further, that the following Member be appointed to the Standing Committee on Social Development, Ms. Jane Weyallon-Armstrong, the Member for Monfwi.

Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

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

---Carried.

MR. SPEAKER: Motions. Member for Yellowknife North.

MOTION 41-19(2):
APPOINTMENT OF CHIEF ELECTORAL
OFFICER,
CARRIED

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm debating whether to move an appointment for the chief electoral officer or make Mr. Dunbar work here another week. But, Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure that.

WHEREAS the Elections and Plebiscites Act provides for the appointment of a chief electoral officer, who has the responsibility to exercise general direction and supervision over the administrative conduct of an election and enforce, on the part of all election officers, fairness, impartiality, and compliance with the Elections and Plebiscites Act.

NOW THEREFORE I MOVE, seconded by the Honourable Member for Hay River North, that this Legislative Assembly, by virtue of Section 5 of the

Elections and Plebiscites Act recommends to the Commissioner the appointment of Mr. Steven Dunbar of Yellowknife as the chief electoral officer for the Northwest Territories for a term of four years commencing November 25th, 2021.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Mr. Speaker, many of us know here Mr. Dunbar is the director of research for the last three years, but he has served in various roles in this institution on both sides of the House.

He was an executive assistant to the Premier, a former Premier, a long-time special advisor to Minister of Health and Social Services. He has worked in this building inside and out.

Mr. Dunbar also has one of the few published academic documents on consensus government. He is an expert. He is a long-time volunteer with the Yellowknife Ski Club, and I think we all know the vast importance in the role of the chief electoral officer, and we know that Mr. Dunbar is up to this role and he has to get to work right away. So I'm happy to move this motion, Mr. Speaker.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

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

---Carried

MR. SPEAKER: Motions. Notices of motion for the first reading of bills. First reading of bills. Minister responsible for Justice.

First Reading of Bills

BILL 36:
AN ACT TO AMEND THE TERRITORIAL COURT
ACT

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Member for Inuvik Boot Lake, that Bill 36, an Act to Amend the Territorial Court Act, be read for the first time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. Motion is in order. And it's non-debatable. All those in favor. All those opposed. Any abstentions. Motion is carried. Bill 36 has had first reading.

---Carried

MR. SPEAKER: First reading of bills. Minister responsible for Justice.

BILL 37:
AN ACT TO AMEND THE ACCESS TO
INFORMATION AND PROTECTION OF PRIVACY
ACT

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move, seconded by the Honourable Member for Inuvik Boot Lake, that Bill 37, an Act to Amend the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act, be read for the first time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Motion is in order and is non-debatable. All those in favor. All those opposed. Any abstentions. The motion is carried. Bill 37 has had first reading.

---Carried.

MR. SPEAKER: First reading of bills. Minister responsible for Justice.

BILL 38:
MISCELLANEOUS STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT
ACT 2021

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Member for Inuvik Boot Lake, that Bill 38, Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act 2021, be read for the first time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Motion is in order and is non-debatable. All those in favor. All those opposed. Any abstentions. Motion is carried. Bill 38 has had first reading.

---Carried

MR. SPEAKER: First reading of bills. Minister responsible for Education, Culture and Employment.

BILL 39
AN ACT TO AMEND THE POST-SECONDARY
EDUCATION ACT

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Member for Inuvik Boot Lake, that Bill 39, an Act to Amend the Post-Secondary Education Act, be read for the first time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Motion is in order and is non-debatable. All those in favor. All those opposed. Any abstentions. The motion is carried. Bill 39 has had first reading.

---Carried

MR. SPEAKER: First reading of bills. Second reading of bills. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters.

Bill 23, Bill 24, Bill 29, Bill 30, 31, 32, and 33. Tabled Document 137-19(2), Tabled Document 138-19(2), Tabled Document 439-19(2), Tabled Document 466-19(2) with Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes in the chair.

**Consideration in Committee of the Whole
of Bills and Other Matters**

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): I now call Committee of the Whole to order. What is the wish of committee? Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. Committee would like to consider Tabled Document 437-19(2): Capital Estimates 2022-2023. General comments Finance, Industry, Tourism and Investment, and Infrastructure. Thanks, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

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

---Recess.

I'll now call Committee of the Whole back to order.

Committee, we've agreed to consider Tabled Document 437-19(2) Capital Estimates 2022-2023, and we have the Minister's opening remarks yesterday. We've agreed to begin with general comments on the capital estimates, and I will go to Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. I do have some technical questions. So I'm wondering if the Minister may want to have her colleagues with her, or how would you like to do that?

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Minister?

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Madam Chair, I do have witnesses available so I'd be happy to have them in the room and ready to go.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Did you want -- what we can do is -- if they want to sit through general comments, we can have them come in if you need them.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Yes, I propose to bring in two of them for the general comments, which I expect might be more technical on the one side and then switch them out as need be when we get to the

Department of Finance, please. Minister and Terence Courtoreille, please.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Sergeant-at-arms, please escort the witnesses to the Chamber.

Welcome. Minister, will you please introduce your witnesses for the record and so we know who is who.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Madam Chair, on your right, Bill MacKay is deputy minister of Department of Finance, and on the left Terence Courtoreille is deputy secretary to the Financial Management Board.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. All right. I will go back to Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. Yeah, I appreciate the Minister getting her witnesses here.

So this is the largest ever capital budget for this government, and I'm just wondering how much of it is actually unspent projects, unspent capital works from the previous year. So, you know, are there carryovers, or there's this new term that the department seems to be using, "future cash flow." How much of it is unspent funds from last year or previous years beyond that. Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, there always are certain amount of carryovers that do accrue but I'd suggest in the hopes of having an exact number, if available, that we direct that to the department, to Mr. Bill MacKay and perhaps thereafter Mr. Courtoreille. Thanks.

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

MR. MACKAY: Thank you, Madam Chair. I will refer that question to Mr. Courtoreille. Thank you.

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

MR. COURTOREILLE: Thank you, Madam Chair. For the 2022-2023 proposed capital estimates, there are no capital carryovers included in that number. Those carryovers would be included -- or considered next June.

However, in the capital estimates, the Member will see an amount for 2021-2022 revised relative to 2021-2022 originally approved capital estimates. The difference between those two columns is the capital carryovers that were approved earlier this past June for 2021-2022.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Okay, thanks. So it looks like it would be in the neighborhood of \$90 million, is that correct?

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: [Audio]

MR. O'REILLY: Okay. Thanks, Madam Chair. I'm just trying to reconcile that against -- I know we've got a supplementary appropriation, which I'm not supposed to be talking about, where there's actually a negative adjustment of \$126 million. So how does that relate to the \$90 million I guess carryover that seems to be on page 3 of the document. Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, and, yes, we are making efforts to do, frankly, a better job through the year of adjusting budgeting on projects so that there doesn't have to be a significant of an adjustment or a significant appropriation later in the budgeting cycle. And so the idea being that as the year progresses and as this particular capital plan progresses, we will be keeping an eye on it so that when projects do see changes, as any large scale projects will, that we can bring that to the attention of the House earlier, and it -- that's been foreshadowing that there is one of those coming later this session. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. That's great. I'm not sure I actually got reconciliation of the 90 versus the 126, but I'm just very mindful of how little time I've got left on the clock.

So is this capital budget going to be in compliance with the fiscal responsibility policy? Thank you.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, it is certainly my anticipation that it will be, and we'll have actuals ready in the fall to know exactly what numbers we have available to spend on capital at that time. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks. Just a comment, I guess it would be really helpful if there was a page in the capital estimates that demonstrated how this is going to be in compliance with the fiscal responsibility policy. But I'll leave that for the Minister and her officials to take up with the next capital estimates.

Can someone tell me how much do we actually spend on housing? How much do we anticipate spending on housing in 2022-2023 in terms of capital? We've got about a \$10.6 million, you know, budget here for the Housing Corp, which is only for information, but of course a lot of their stuff happens on the O and M side. But can anybody tell me how much is actually going to be spent on capital projects related to housing in 2022-2023. Thanks.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. The Member's already identified the fact that the capital estimates allocated to Housing Corporation are \$10.6 million.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Okay, thanks. Well, I've I look at the last couple years on the O and M side for Housing Corp, and it seems to be about \$77 million. Some of that -- a lot of that I guess is staff, but some of it actually goes into care and maintenance of homes as well, as I seem to understand, or funding of LHOs or whatever. So do we actually know how much we spend on housing -- or how much we anticipate spending on the capital side for housing next year?

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I'm not sure if I am realizing what is different about the numbers I have versus not. Let me see if I can direct that to the deputy minister and see if perhaps I just misunderstood the question.

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

MR. MACKAY: Thank you, Madam Chair. So as the Minister mentioned, the budget is 10.6. The Member is correct, we did provide a number for what IS actually spent last year. I don't have that number in front me but I believe it was in correspondence with the committee. But I'll turn it over to Mr. Courtoreille to give any further information he might have. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Mr. Courtoreille.

MR. COURTOREILLE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I don't really have anything further to add other than I believe there was additional information provided to standing committee on this front, and I think there was some ongoing correspondence to try to firm up future capital estimate budgets for the Housing Corporation to better reflect that number. Thank you, madam Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks. I've got other questions but I need to move on to my comments, thanks.

Madam Chair, I voted against the last capital budget and I intend to do so again on this one. I think we are spending too much money on capital. We're going into debt at a greater rate than any other -- any time that I've ever seen in my six years in past governments as well.

\$150 million, this is what the Minister said yesterday, \$150 million in this budget alone is for roads, and this budget shows us spending \$10.6 million on housing, when housing is a priority for this Assembly, and certainly for myself, many of the Regular MLAs, this is completely out of balance.

You know, so we're spending 30 percent of our total capital budget on roads alone. That's what the Minister said yesterday. We're going into debt faster than ever. I listened carefully to the Minister's fiscal update on September 15th. We're not just on the precipice of a fiscal cliff, Madam Chair; we're going over the cliff right now.

You know, you look at the slides from the Minister's presentation on September 15th, capital expenses are outpacing total revenues. GNWT deficit is permanent when the federal capital is removed. Growth and debt is outpacing everything. 17.2 percent per annum over a period of years, no intent to actually raise any more revenues. We gave away \$21 million in a significant discovery licence that could have been potential revenues. We've cut small business tax. We're going over the cliff. We're starting going over the cliff, and I don't sense that this government is doing anything to stop that. And the money that we do have, we're not even spending on the right priorities, Madam Chair.

I'm going to be voting against this, and I'm very frustrated that I don't have any time left on the clock. Thanks.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm looking here at a \$500 million capital budget, and I

think the question we all need to ask ourselves is how are we going to pay for this?

We know our fiscal responsibility policy allows us to pay for 50 percent of this with debt and based on all of the previous public accounts, it's quite likely that 50 percent of this will be paid for by debt.

It's worth noting that about \$200 million of this is federal dollars. I think that fact is important because it shows that we are still largely driven by federal priorities. But also the allure of 75-cent dollars is largely a myth. We're actually operating at 40-cent dollars from the federal government when we look at what is being funded. I don't think the hard work has been put in to the capital budget to make those tough decisions and to prioritize maximum spending.

We also know that this is a capital budget that, in many ways, is still the last Assembly's capital budget and is still driving the last Assembly's priorities, and that's just the reality of some of these long-term infrastructure projects. They will be on the books for many many Assemblies to come.

A bit to the kind of procedural aspects, I don't believe we actually have any sense of what this capital budget will cost us. And I mean that in a number of ways.

There is \$47 million largely for long-term care facilities in this but we know that long-term care beds, each bed costs over a hundred thousand dollars a year to operate. We also know our health authority is running a massive deficit. I don't know how we are building those beds without having proper costing to be provided in the operations budget for the health department already running a deficit.

We know that there's \$84 million in here largely for roads, and we know that roads cost a lot of money to maintain, and our current roads are not being maintained properly. We know our deferred maintenance budget for all of our capital is just millions and millions of dollars in debt. Our infrastructure is crumbling, and here we are building more.

I don't believe hard decisions have been made. I don't believe there's a connection between capital and operations that this government has taken seriously. Every time we add capital, that means a cut to an operation's budget. That is the way to look at it. It could mean debt, which is just a cut for a later time. But when we spend money here and then when we don't include the money to actually maintain that infrastructure, we are just setting ourselves up for disaster.

There's a couple of projects that are continuing on for the Power Corp, over \$200 million worth of Power

Corp infrastructure for the complete cost of projects, here - the Fort Providence transmission line, and Inuvik wind, most importantly. But we know our Power Corp's infrastructure is billions of dollars in debt. We know that when we build infrastructure for the Power Corp, it's not revenue generating. Ratepayers are -- it's cost passed on to ratepayers in increases in rates.

Building a line to Fort Providence may be a good idea, but the people of Fort Providence are not paying for that line. It is not anything that actually makes us money. We all know there is a massive infrastructure deficit. We know the state of our infrastructure is in terrible state. We know our fiscal cliff is approaching, and it is an unsustainable path. However, when I look at the disconnect between our government's priorities, the operating budget and this capital budget, I just can't help but think that proper thought and strategic direction was not put in it. I think that is no more apparent than the two percent of this budget that is going towards housing.

Housing is a priority of this Assembly. It is a priority of every single Member in here. And only two percent of this is to build new houses. I cannot reconcile that fact with the political priorities of this House, Madam Chair.

And for some reason, we treat housing completely different. If we -- you know, we are spending \$21.7 million for schools in this budget, and then we go and ask the school boards or the department to find the O and M to run those schools. For housing, we don't do that. We are so concerned about 2038 and the O and M for operating housing, and we do the math every time we build a housing unit, whether we have the funding to maintain it.

And yet here we are with 500 other million dollars where we've done none of the math. We've not done the math on what it costs to make sure that we're not having a differed maintenance backlog. We have not done the math to make sure that our highways and bridges are properly maintained. There is an obsession that we can just build capital and it doesn't -- and it maintains itself.

We need to make sure that every time we build something, the O and M is there, the care and maintenance of there -- is there, and that's not being done. The only place it seems to be even considered is in housing, and that's why we won't build any more housing.

So Madam Chair, I am frustrated that once again I see \$10.6 million as a somewhat made up number for housing, and I can't seem to get the Housing Corp to actually build more housing.

I would gladly cut two percent of this budget to double the Housing Corp's two percent. But I guess I will start with a question. Thank you for indulging me.

Can the Minister of Finance give me a sense of what the O and M cost is of this capital budget is. If we build this \$500 million worth of infrastructure across a variety of departments, how much money should we reasonably expect to see increased in the operating budget. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, that question is not as simple as it sounds on first blush. There is a variety of different types of infrastructure in this budget. There are deferred maintenance budgets that are sitting in, for example, the Department of Infrastructure as there are also budgets available in some of the other departments for provision of health care services or education. Some of the infrastructure that we need to deliver on is so that those projects, the programs and services can continue to function.

So certainly, there will be some projects where there are obvious connections and obvious costs that can be accounted for. And I've previously committed, and I'm happy to commit here, that we do want to start including an O and M schedule in the future infrastructure budget to the best of the ability that we can. But it's not simply saying, you know, dollar for dollar, it's going to be X amount. Depending on what the infrastructure item is at play will determine what the costs of the O and M are and sometimes you simply have to make the investments in the infrastructure, or you can't deliver the program or the service. So I appreciate the frustration, and I hear it. But it's not going to be as simple as all that.

Again, with that said, we're going to try -- not try -- we will be including an O and M schedule. Hopefully it starts to get some of the answers that the Member's seeking. Thank you.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. The rest of my comments and the points that I made in my opening remarks, I will illustrate through each department that each of these projects comes with long-term commitments of O and M, which is simply not room we have fiscally. So no more further questions. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. First, I just want to say I do agree with me colleague about looking ahead and being proactive on operations costs when we are making our infrastructure and capital plans.

I want to say that I'm actually pleased to see a large infrastructure investment going forward. One thing when economies are bad, that governments do, is they build infrastructure. It's a way that we can keep people in the Northwest Territories employed over the next while as COVID really does make our future quite uncertain, particularly our economic future going forward.

Another piece that keeps striking me is that the cost of building houses is only going to escalate and is escalating currently due to the lack of supplies, etcetera. Not having roads only creates more expense for our territory to build houses. So if we have the roads to move the materials around easier, it will be easier for us to build houses in the long run. So I think I don't have a lot of optimism sitting here two years in where we're at with our housing and whether or not we are going to achieve that priority. Therefore, second to that, I would say invest in the roads. We have a lot of construction companies in the North. We have a lot of labourers and skilled labourers that work on road and apprentices. To me, this is the way we can make it through the COVID economic downturn.

And having just come back from the climate change conference, I don't have a lot of -- having been an ice engineer on the ice road, I don't have a lot of faith that we're going to be building ice roads going forward. So to me, investing in roads right now is smart.

We often just heard it yesterday, or the other day, the time to have built the ice road -- or sorry, the road to the diamond mines was 20 years ago. So do we want to be sitting in 20 more years with no ice roads saying where we should have built roads 20 years ago.

So more of a comment than a question, Madam Chair. But I would like to say that I think this is the only way we can move forward in the next while. Thank you.

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

MS. MARTSELOS: I just want to reiterate some of the -- what is said by my colleague from Great Slave. The economic recovery from this pandemic is extremely important. New infrastructure is important. Economic growth is important. And I do not necessarily agree with a couple of other comments that were made by my other colleagues because I

feel that, you know, this pandemic had a great effect on the Northwest Territories, especially with the -- economically, and the only way we're going to recover is making sure that people have something to look forward to, and infrastructure is part of that, apprenticeships. The whole getting people back to work. New infrastructure means new things for Indigenous governments and private industry. And this is the way to go. And I totally agree with the comments that were made by the Member from Great Slave. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. Myself as well, I encourage spending on highways and more specifically the Mackenzie Valley Highway. That project has been going on since I was -- I worked on part of it when I was 16 or 15 years old for crying out loud so you know how long ago that is. A hundred years ago. But, you know, we -- if we want to move ahead, we got to -- we need -- you know, we have to do something major.

You know, having a highway and opening it up is going to, you know, encourage investment in the North and encourage, you know, more development. It's also going to allow, you know, those stranded communities that don't have highway access with the ability to, you know, participate in -- you know, in what we have on the main highways system.

When we talk about -- you know, there was comments about made about housing as well. And I agree that, you know, we need housing. But, you know, to get that housing, you know, it can't just be a government project. It has to be solved by the private sector, by Indigenous governments, and through employment of Northerners through infrastructure expenditure.

And what I'm hoping and expecting that, you know, those sitting across from me are, you know, talking with their counterparts with the federal government, going to them with some sound proposals to ensure that we find the money to pay for this. Like, we are a creature of the federal government. That's what we are.

So I don't mind -- I don't mind spending the money. You know, all areas needs some support. But if we don't push some type of development and push infrastructure, we're just going to be a social state. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member from Hay River South. General comments. Thank you, Members.

Seeing that there are no further comments, we will proceed to the detail of the tabled document beginning with the Department of Finance.

The committee has agreed to forego general comments on each department so does the committee agree that we will proceed to the detail contained in the document?

Committee, the Department of Finance begins on page 26, and we will defer the department's totals and review the estimates by activity summary beginning on page 27 with information items on page 28. Are there any questions, comments? Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. On page 28, the mineral administration and registry system, can someone tell me what the total cost of that is going to be, or ballpark figure. Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, if I might suggest if we could stop the clock briefly. I was hoping to switch my witnesses out, and I don't want to take time away from the Member to do that.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Which?

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Chief information officer Rick Wind will be joining us, please.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Okay. Sergeant-at-arms, would you please change the witnesses.

All right, thank you. Minister, just introduce your witness again for the record.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, this is chief information officer Rick Wind.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Welcome. Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks. Do I need to ask the question again? All right. Can someone tell me what the ballpark figure of this mineral administration or registry system is and where we're at with its development? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: I'm not -- I don't have the number in front of me right now, Madam Chair, but that is being transferred to the Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment, which is where the Mineral Resources Act Regulatory System is

residing. And as I understand, there were some delays back in COVID but it is on track now, and it is moving forward. But I'll just defer to Mr. Wind to see if he has a number as to the estimated total. Thank you.

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

MR. WIND: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I do have the cash flow for the MARS project. It is anticipated approximately \$3.7 million over the four years. \$1.2 million funded this fiscal year -- pardon me, \$1 million is in the 2022-2023 capital estimates before us today. And there's a further \$1.5 million over the next two fiscal years, forecast.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. Yeah, I'm not going to deal with where this is going. I'll deal with that when it comes to a sup.

What are we getting here for this? The reason why I'm raising this is in the last Assembly, we dealt with a lot of devolution legislation that we inherited. There was a lot of public registries set up. I know I've been critical of Department of Environment and Natural Resources in the past for their protected areas registry, the lack of information, the lack of rigor to it. But here we are spending \$3.7 million on something for mining. And the other departments don't seem to get any money or do anything with their public registry. So what is this going to allow us do. Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. So Madam Chair, the MARS project for -- one of the more significant aspects of it certainly is to bring online staking to the Northwest Territories, which really brings us up to par on something that we are rather painfully behind on, that allows for a much more efficient system and a much more efficient process for those that are actually out doing the staking and for prospectors will hopefully, as I said, bring us into the modern age but also encourage those who are out to be doing -- to be out and doing the prospecting. It allows for more efficient management of the system from within. And, you know -- yeah, it's going to allow the Mineral Resources Act to, again, be part of the modern system that we are hoping that it will be by, you know -- right now, it's all on paper. So there's boxes and boxes of paper of what's out there. That's not a good way to maintain your systems. It's not a good way to ensure efficiency. It's a huge amount of information. We're a huge territory. There's lots of

data and information out there. This is a modernization of the system that arguably could have happened a long time ago, but it also has to take its place in line just like everything else. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. Yeah, I think actually quite a bit actually is available online right now. But is there going to be some sort of policy discussion around how fees are set for online staking? I don't think we want to be in the situation where, like, with significant discovery licenses where companies get to tie up huge swaths of land and do nothing, and that's what online staking can allow. So is there going to be a place and a time for the public, others to weigh in, about how this is actually going to operate and the appropriate fee structures and so on? Is that going to happen in -- because I've -- I'm not aware of any discussion of this. I raised it in the last Assembly when we were talking about the Mineral Resources Act. Nobody else wanted to talk about it, especially the Minister. But when are we going to have that policy debate and discussion around online staking and appropriate fees and so on.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. I wasn't here in the last Assembly but I'm more than happy to talk to the Member about the fees. There's ongoing work happening right now in terms of developing the Mineral Resources Act and the regulatory system that is required to bring that into force and to have it implemented. So that project is underway. The engagement processes for it are underway. It's a huge project. It's a huge piece of legislation, and the regulatory aspects of it have many branches, including this one.

So I will go back to the Department of ITI and find out what the schedule is for engagement on the various different elements of that act and -- or, rather, of the regulations. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. Thanks for that commitment because I've been asking for that since the start of this Assembly, and I was raising it as an issue in the last Assembly about the need for some kind of a roadmap for how all of this was going to work. I haven't seen anything. And I pay pretty close attention to this, as the Minister well knows. There has been no discussion of claim staking so far during the life of this Assembly in any venue that I've

ever been engaged in or involved in. So I really do encourage that to start to take place in parallel with the development of this system.

I don't think I have any further questions on this item. Thanks, Madam Chair. But if the Minister wishes to respond, I'd be delighted to hear it. Thank you.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. So I think really more of the Minister of ITI and not really so much as the Minister of Finance.

I am very committed to the Mineral Resources Act regulatory development. I've been pushing hard to see that it's on track and to see that it involves a lot of engagement. It's going to be improved with the more stakeholders and the more people are involved in terms of discussing it. I'm -- I do think the Member will hopefully agree that we've had a lot of outreach on a lot of aspects on the Mineral Resources Act thus far, and I'm happy to continue to do that. Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I think online map staking is long overdue. Can I just get an estimated idea of when we expect that to exist in the Northwest Territories. Thank you.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I have the wrong binder open to answer all these detailed questions. But I can say that the project is on track to have its completion of the regulations that will allow the act to come into force this Assembly, which means that it's really within the next couple of years, and if we'll all bear with me, I think the folks from ITI are waiting patiently upstairs. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member for Yellowknife North. No? No further questions. Member for Great Slave.

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. Well, I might as well stay on this vein because it did spur a question in me.

It's my understanding with the MARS program, which, yes, we're way behind and I know that industry and explorers have been crying for it for a while, and it does deter investment in our territory.

My question is, there is an economic spinoff for this as well, is there not, and maybe with her Finance hat on, the Minister can answer. It's my understanding that there will have to be a large amount of actual on-the-ground surveying done in order for this work to be implemented. Is that correct, or am I mixing that up with -- or perhaps I'm mixing that up with the land claims. But would that be something that could all be rolled in together then, perhaps, Madam Chair. Thank you.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. I thought I was going to get a question that would allow me to talk about the estimated overall economic impacts of the overall capital plan, but I realize that the question was actually a bit more narrow.

I don't have that in front of me right now, Madam Chair. I know that the Minister for Industry, Tourism and Investment is upstairs listening. So if I might, I think that might be an opportunity for me to answer that question when she's here. Thanks.

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

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. Well, then I'll ask that question. What is the economic spinoff? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, there's -- and actually I -- there's -- I mean, there's a variety of different economic spinoffs that come. There's economic impacts for capital spending that come in the form of anticipated GDP impacts of almost \$200 million. There's also labor income that comes over of a hundred million dollars. And then the taxation income that the government gets on people who -- not on people, but on the taxes people are paying when they are employed. So there's quite a high number of -- also 944 jobs are anticipated from this kind of a capital spend.

You know, and those -- of course, these are all estimates because, you know, certainly it depends -- there's timing of different projects, and some projects do proceed at different paces. But there is a significant impact that comes from the spending on infrastructure.

That's not to say that we don't need to balance the type of spend on infrastructure that we have, that we need to ensure that we're spending on infrastructure that is meaningful and that's going to benefit all of the

priorities that we have for this government, which are, you know, complex. But just to say that it's not only the 400 million, several million dollars that we're spending directly if there's hundreds of millions of dollars that impact thereafter. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Minister. Are there any further questions, comments to the -- what section -- information shared services? I'm seeing none. I'll call the page.

Finance, information system shared service, infrastructure investments, \$2,199,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, committee. Please turn to page 29 for Management Board Secretariat with information item on page 30. Questions. Member for Yellowknife North.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. How much of the \$6 million is federal money through investing in Canada infrastructure fund. Thank you.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Madam Chair, I would suggest that go to the deputy minister, please.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Deputy minister MacKay.

MR. MACKAY: Thank you, Madam Chair. So the overall project is \$19,736,000. \$14,804,000 of that is paid for by the fund. So it's about 75 percent of the total project. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm happy to see we're extending fibre along the highway to Tuk. I think as has been stated previously, I think every time we build a road it's good to extend the fibre line as well along with it.

Can I just get clarification. Who will own this fibre line at the end? Will this be wrapped into the entire Mackenzie Valley P3, or is this to be owned by Northwestel? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, this is right now what's on -- what's on paper here is the anticipated extension to the Mackenzie Valley fibre line, and so

indeed if that proceeds, it would just be an extension of that. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. Can I just have the Minister speak to whether we anticipate to run into the kind of last mile problem when we get fibre to Tuk? I know we have fibre running up the valley, but it actually doesn't exist in many communities because any internet service provider has not then taken it, built the hub, and ran it to peoples' homes. That's often cost prohibitive for even Northwestel to do with millions of subsidies.

Is there someone on the other end of Tuk or expecting to become the ISP to actually make sure we complete the last mile of this. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, the Mackenzie Valley fibre line all the way through up to and including -- if it comes to include Tuktoyaktuk, it is never meant to be a final in-the-home service. But what has happened in the last year or two years is that Northwestel, by virtue of the agreements they have with CRTC, because they are very directly regulated by CRTC compared to other providers in other parts of the country, are under an agreement right now to provide the availability of fibre to the home. That last mile connection is now meant to be available through them under agreement with the CRTC. So this is not a GNWT project. It's not a GNWT "thing" per se. We're certainly being kept aware of the pace of their work and being kept aware of what's going on. So in fact, they're anticipating work in Tuk for the next two years, if I recall their timeline correctly, that actually has nothing necessarily to do. Like, the services in Tuk will improve without necessarily there being any changes to the Mackenzie Valley fibre line. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. So when we built the Mackenzie Valley fibre line, I remember speaking to one of the internet service providers in Inuvik. And he said once that was built and he wasn't having to purchase broadband off of Northwestel telephone infrastructure, his costs went down about 99 percent. And I just think that is one of the success stories of the GNWT actually owning the backbone to telecoms infrastructure is we can allow competition and we can, you know, create a

competitive internet environment that ultimately reduces costs.

I'm just curious when we extend it to Tuk, do we expect to change our current wholesale rate at all, and in fact just lower it is really my ask. I don't really believe we need to run this P3 at any sort of profit, and we should be selling the broadband as cheaply as possible. But are there any anticipated changes for the purchaser at the end of the Tuk line for the wholesale price they pay us under this. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I don't have the information of that being under consideration right now. Perhaps I just check in with Mr. Wind and see if he has any comments on that question. Thanks.

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

MR. WIND: Thank you, Madam Chair. At this point, no, we are not anticipating any changes to the wholesale model. We think the wholesale model is quite aggressive right now. Thank you.

Maybe just a further comment. Once the Mackenzie Valley fibre link is established there, it will open the opportunity for third party service providers if they choose to make their own investments in the last mile alongside Northwestel, such as what we do see in Inuvik. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. JOHNSON: No further questions, Madam Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. I think I heard the Minister say that this is going to be just an extension of the Mackenzie Valley fibre link in terms of its ownership operation. Maybe I misheard that. But why would we be spending \$19 million on something we would then give over to a third party to operate and maintain or whatever? If we're spending the money, why don't we own the fibre? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Sorry, maybe I'm misunderstanding but the Mackenzie Valley fibre link is an asset of the

GNWT. So, maybe I'm misunderstanding, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Member.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks. Maybe it's my total ignorance, then, about the Mackenzie Valley fibre link. I'd understood that there's some kind of P3 arrangement where Northwestel owns it and we're somehow -- or whether they were contracted to just build it, but I'd understood that we're somehow working with those guys to actually lease it out somehow or pay some sort of -- some sort of an arrangement, but we don't actually own the thing until 30 or 35 years or something down the road.

If we're paying \$19 million for this 140 kilometer fibre link, why don't we own it outright and operate it ourselves rather than give it to Northwestel to operate. Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, this is a P3 arrangement. The Mackenzie Valley fibre line is a P3 arrangement right now. So similar to others where determining the kind of risk that is at play, that the best way to mitigate the risk and maximize the availability of the spend that we have for an asset, was done through a P3 arrangement. So it's a GNWT asset, as I've said. It's reflected on our GNWT, you know, books, if you will. But for us to necessarily be the singular party involved would have involved a cost, an upfront cost that is difficult for the government to manage. That's why we get into P3s a lot of the time, is either in order to mitigate the risk or because it's difficult to finance. And this is in the same category, Madam Chair. Thank you.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. So how much money is Northwestel putting up for this? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Madam Chair, I'm checking my books, and I'm going to see if perhaps Rick Wind has that at the tip of his fingers, please. I'll suggest it go to him.

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

MR. WIND: Thank you, Madam Chair. Unfortunately, no, I don't have that at my fingertips. Perhaps this is something we can bring back.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Okay, thanks. So I'm trying to figure this out. So the feds are putting \$5 million -- \$14 million into this; we're putting five or maybe six at least it seems to show here. Northwestel is putting an unknown amount in, and we don't know -- have what the total cost of the project is. I'm just trying to reconcile all this. Does anybody know what the total cost of this project is. Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Total project cost is \$19.7 million, Madam Chair. Thank you.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Okay. So what we're being asked to approve here is \$6 million for next year. Are there further costs beyond this anticipated in future years for GNWT in terms of construction? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. So Madam Chair, just the breakdown as it stands right now, there's been about a million dollars invested thus far just in terms of preparing and doing the necessary level of studies I would anticipate to plan for this. 2022-2023, it was \$6 million. And 2023-2024, the remainder of \$12.7 million. So, you know, Madam Chair, I think this is an important project to discuss. This would bring fibre to Tuktoyaktuk by 2024. And as I have alluded to, this -- Northwestel is already under obligation to CRTC to bring in -- to upgrade the fibre -- or sorry, the broadband availability and broadband services across the territories to all communities, including Tuktoyaktuk, regardless of fibre expansion.

So, you know, is fibre better? Arguably, one would say yes but is it necessary? There are other projects underway. Just they're not ours. It is not the GNWT's project to be doing that. That is Northwestel. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. Yeah, I guess I remain rather confused about all this. If there was a way to get further information about the ownership and operation of the Inuvik to Tuk fibre, how much we're paying, how much the feds are paying, how much Northwestel's paying, that would

be really helpful. So is the Minister prepared to provide that information. Thanks.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm happy to provide the breakdown, certainly.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks. And thanks for that commitment. I too, like my colleague from Yellowknife North, I'm concerned about building fibre to a community and then nobody's really going to help people get hooked up to it. So is that going to be just Northwestel's responsibility? What role do we play? Do we expect other third parties to suddenly show up in Tuk and start connecting fibre to people's homes? How is that going to work? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yeah, Madam Chair, the Government of the Northwest Territories is not an internet service provider. We are obviously the owner of the Mackenzie Valley fibre line which gives that backbone through which other companies can then, as was described out of Inuvik, provide internet services directly. We are obviously a customer, and we can certainly be an advocate and a supporter, as we have been, and I would suggest that that's been successful given that what the obligations that CRTC has imposed on to Northwestel to provide additional services.

But the government is not the service provider here. I wasn't here in the last Assembly to know what led to such level of confusion. But that is not the role of the government. So the role of the government here is to do what we can to help enable this industry, to help support the industry, to make funds available through the federal government, to advocate for that, but we are not the internet service provider that is going to come with, you know, our screwdrivers and our drills and drill a hole in someone's wall to put their fibre in. I'm sorry, Madam Chair. That's just not what we do.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Member.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. Well, it may not be what we "do" but why are we building -- contributing towards the cost of a line that goes from Inuvik to Tuk and then just leaving the people in the community without the service? We've already seen that happen with Mackenzie Valley

fibre link where it goes right by communities. There's no last mile into them. They get no benefits, nothing out of it. And I think this is a good project. But if we can't help make sure that people can get connected to it, we're failing. Thanks. And I'm a just going to leave it at that because I just don't think that our government's doing enough to make internet affordable and accessible to everyone in the Northwest Territories. Thanks, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member. Any further questions, comments? Member for Nunakput.

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yeah, I just want to make sure that this stays on the books for my community of Tuk, and any time it's for small communities, they're ready to get cut. And I really think that we should be taking a real good serious look at everything else that's paid everywhere else in the bigger communities, bigger centres and that, as soon as it starts to come to the communities, we're the first thing they're looking at cutting. So if they want to start cutting, go start cutting. So it's really upsetting, I guess, to make sure that we're bringing projects forward for the communities, for all 33 communities in the Northwest Territories, and let's share the wealth a little bit. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member. Since there's no question in there, did you have any other questions or comments?

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. No, just make sure this project goes forward. Thank you. Just a comment.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member for Nunakput. Any further questions or comments on Management Board Secretariat? Seeing none, we'll call that.

Finance, Management Board Secretariat, infrastructure investment, \$6 million. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Committee, please turn to page 31 for office of the Comptroller General with information on page 32. Questions. Member for Yellowknife North.

MR. JOHNSON: I guess can we just start by getting an explanation of the \$70 million we see here for asset retirement obligations. I have a general sense that this is under the new P3 accounting standards. So I guess I'd like to get a sense of whether this is a one-time figure we will now just carry on our books as a debt, or whether this is a thing we will kind of expect to see in future capital budgets and how

exactly that works financially. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yeah, this one, I'll be frank, is not my favorite one to have to explain. It does go directly to the public accounts and to the public accounting standards, and there's been a now change within the public accounting standards that requires that asset retirement obligations be booked in a way that they weren't before.

So there does need to be as a result of that what is a one-time adjustment to the capital estimates. That's the \$70 million that you're seeing. And what that does is it's providing a way of reporting on the - to the public in the books what is anticipated to be a future liability. So it's not an anticipated spend that we didn't already have.

When we have an asset -- so, for example, if there's asbestos over at the museum, when the life of the building -- whatever building it might be -- comes to its end, we already know there would be a cost associated with decommissioning a building or cleaning up a building or removing that asset from once its useful life has come to a conclusion. But previously, that wasn't necessarily reflected. Now the requirement is that we in fact have to reflect that.

So the cost that you're seeing here is the estimate of all of the GNWT assets and what the value is. So that's been added here.

There is an ongoing forward adjustment, \$8.5 million to the main estimates to reflect as part of this as well. But, again, it's a measure of what is expected to be paid on an ending asset. It's not new money, and the cost won't be incurred until the assets are actually at the end of life. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I guess, importantly, the last time I looked at our debt ceiling and the debt projections were getting pretty close. Does this \$70 million count towards the debt ceiling.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: No, Madam Chair. Thank you.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I also heard that there was \$8.5 million in the operating budget. Can I just clarify that we are now required to have \$8.5 million every single year going forward, or was it a one-time \$8.5 million. Thank you.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I do believe that that is going forward, and I was just looking for the explanation thereof. It's one of those -- and my other favorite word is amortization of the assets. So because we have that value now added in, we do amortize assets in the budget and so that is what you're seeing there.

And so that is going to be ongoing. Again, the actual outflow of any expenditures wouldn't be until the expense has actually occurred at the end of the life of the asset. Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I guess I'll start by saying I actually -- this is -- I do like this line as opposed to -- I understand why the Minister of Finance does not, but I think this goes to a public accounting standards I've asked governments to do because there was just billions of dollars of liabilities around this country in old asbestos buildings and hazardous materials. Traditionally in our territory, they've ended up in landfills where they probably shouldn't. There's been a long history of not making sure buildings and capital projects are properly disposed of, and I think the more accurate our public accounts can be to what is a cost we will inevitably incur one day, the better. So I'm happy to see this. I think it gets back to that conversation that every time we build something, there is just lots and lots of costs which are not currently reflected.

I wanted to get a sense of -- this \$70 million, I understand is essentially, we asked our accountants to go and look at every single piece of capital we own and then do some sort of calculation of disposing of it, so this is a reflection of everything we presently own.

Do we have an estimate of the \$500 million we are projected to spend on infrastructure that we are bringing online, what that would cost in regards to increasing this liability. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I don't think that this is going to be actually as significant. The numbers that

are reflected in the 70 million are because of assets that have things -- like the asbestos example being a particularly good one, because the costs of dealing with that are so high. But going forward, it does go on when the asset is coming online. So you'll see it in more real time, if you will. But, again, it's not expected to be nearly as costly as some of the older liabilities that we have. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I guess, can the Minister assist me in a bit of how we reached this \$70 million. I'll just -- you know, I'm thinking of some of our more remote communities that inevitably have assets that have hazardous materials, and then they have landfills that actually are not set up to dispose of hazardous materials.

Was there some consideration given when calculating this figure to the reality that we just don't have the tools to dispose of many of the current assets?

So were we actually doing costing, like if a building is in Ulukhaktok, what it costs to get it to Alberta. Was there specific costing to the North, or was this a generalized Canadian-wide accounting principle. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. And Madam Chair, so the change to the accounting standards is Canada-wide. The estimate was done by our own teams. And I appreciate the example that was given, because there is a fairly detailed breakdown that's been provided. And I keep relying on asbestos as my example but the Member's quite right. Fuel tanks are actually a significant asset that does have a significant cost associated, as do solid waste landfills coming under MACA, sewage lagoons. So those are all fairly significant items that actually incur significant costs. So the GNWT buildings themselves is just under the \$97,000, but you have -- you have fuel tanks, solid waste facilities, and sewage lagoons really making up the bulk of the rest of that. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm happy to hear that breakdown.

I guess, you know -- I often think if you actually want to get government to do something, getting the accountants to change some standards is some of the most effective ways do that. But I'm curious to

the extent that which now tracking this liability, does it actually put any obligation to us to follow it.

You gave the example of sewage lagoons. I know that most of our communities' sewage lagoons are not in compliance with their water licenses. Most of them are run by community governments and not at all in any condition to be maintained. Does this actually change any of the reality on the ground that we have to now deal with such things. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. So Madam Chair, I agree with the comments earlier. This isn't actually a really positive and important transparency to all.

What triggers the obligation to book an asset under the asset retirement obligations is the fact that there's a legal obligation to do something with that asset. So it, you know, really doesn't change -- it doesn't change the legal obligation. It doesn't create the legal obligation. But there is now a number that an MLA who wishes to hold the government to account can point to and say, hey, you've got this asset booked and there's a certain estimate there; what's going to happen when it comes due in a few years.

So the more specific details as to what is happening and on what -- you know on what time scale, I would have to go to one of my colleagues from the departments that hold those assets. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you. I know this is a lot of questions, but it is \$70 million.

One last question: I don't quite fully understand what having something on your books means and, you know, putting it in the operations budget, it kind of in this -- \$8.5 million for every year doesn't mean that we're, like, putting it in the bank and then when the fuel tanks need to be moved, we have that money. It's just kind of taking up space, is my understanding.

Can I just get the Minister to explain how having something like this on our books actually makes sure we have the money on hand when it comes time to retire the asset. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. It's -- I mean we're having the money

on hand, yeah, it -- it's amortization again, and amortization is something that's always reflected in the budget.

I'm going to turn this one over to the deputy minister and see if he wants to speak to that intersection between the planning and the reflection of what's in the budget, please.

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

MR. MACKAY: Thank you, Madam Chair. So as the Member noted, and the Minister noted, this is -- it's -- what we're reflecting is the amortization of the capital asset. So amortization's always an expense in the O and M. What this is doing is increasing the amortization because we've increased in time, we've gone back in time and increased the acquisition cost of certain assets. So the value of those assets in whatever time that we've had them to -- so an the example we gave you was April 1st, 2010, the value of that asset has gone up because of this liability -- or the, sorry -- the expense to the government has gone up because of the liability, and then over time, that's amortized as an expense.

And so amortization isn't new as an expense; it's just amortizing this liability is new. So that's why there's an extra \$8 million on the O and M budget. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. I want to thank my colleague from Yellowknife North, asked a bunch of a questions that I was going to start into.

But I think if we don't start to calculate this amount, we just pawn this off on future generations, and that's not a good way of doing business, let alone running a government.

Yeah, when I saw the amount, I was, quite frankly, astounded at how low it is. You know, the diamond mines each - the big ones, they have hundreds of millions of dollars set aside in financial security to deal with their closure obligations. And all of our assets to properly dispose, take them down, whatever, only comes to \$70 million? I just find that a very -- seems to me to be intuitively very, very low when you think about all of the landfills, sewage lagoons, fuel tanks, the buildings that we own, this seems to be extremely low. As I said, the diamond mines, they've got hundreds of millions of dollars set aside as financial security to deal with this.

So is there something different about the way that those guys have to set aside financial security and the way that this asset retirement obligation is

calculated that I'm not aware of? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thanks, Madam Chair. So -- I mean, in short, yes, there's, I think, fairly significantly different processes that are undergone when a major industrial project by a private actor is trying to get various licenses versus an accounting exercise to go in and determine what the value of an asset is that reflects potential costs.

So, you know, I can't speak to every sewage lagoon or the size of it or every fuel tank. I can't say that the intention here is not the same as an obligation to return an entire mine site to a natural state. This is an accounting exercise to understand, you know, what would you need to do to have no asbestos in a building when you're done with it. So I can certainly ensure that the folks that were on the working group, or task force, whatever it was called, that put these together, can be available. If there's some detailed questions, to understand how they went about their work, and that may be the best way to provide a more detailed response. Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. Yeah, thanks to the Minister for that. Yeah, I'm interested in having that meeting or discussion at some point, because the mines, they have water licenses. That's where the closure obligations are set out. They have a closure plan, standards are developed. I've seen, you know, reclamation calculations using spreadsheets. ENR actually maintains that spreadsheet.

I don't know why our system should be much different. In fact, some of our assets probably have water licenses, or should have water licenses. The sewage lagoons and so on. And they're going to have get closed at some point. We're going to have to deal with the closure of those and make sure we have the money to do it. So, yeah, I'm interested in that conversation.

So like my colleague, though, how do we actually fund this? I know that we have contaminated sites, big backlog of contaminated sites that we actually have an environment fund to basically put some money aside to deal with those contaminated sites, at least the ones that seem to be causing some kind of risk. So there's money that is going into that fund to help with remediation.

We're not going to have set up some kind of a fund to take care of these asset retirement obligations? It

just gets rolled into our O and M at an annual rate of \$8.5 million a year; is that how this is going to work? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, it's -- I think, really, these are perhaps questions almost for the Department of Infrastructure and/or ENR and, with respect to the sewage lagoons, possibly MACA, because what is happening here is the accounting standards are reflecting the value of the asset, and the value of the asset now has to reflect the fact that there's costs associated.

We're not in a position yet where we have incurred an expense or where we are even anticipating an expense, you know, say, next -- this year, next year. Some of these assets certainly will have their end of life before others. And if there does need to be some sort of remediation, then that'll have to then get accounted for and planned for. But the big \$70 million is really to bring every single asset in to reflect the value of that asset knowing that there's now this additional item to account for. But it's not, in and of itself, the method by which the government would necessarily be planning for any kind of environmental damage or environmental remediation.

So like this isn't us saying this is the total amount the government will ever pay to remediate any and all assets, sewage lagoons, fuel tanks, etcetera. It's saying that there's assets that have other costs associated, and we need to reflect that in that asset.

So I know that's maybe not the most satisfying answer, but it's just that it's not the right place to dig into how we're going to pay for that. Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Madam Chair, well, if it's not the right place to dig into it, where -- when do we start that?

We've got \$70 million that's being booked here, that we're supposed to approve, and there's at least a couple of Regular MLAs on this side that can't figure out how we're actually going to pay for this over time. Yeah, I think there's a problem here.

But, look, maybe the meeting is probably -- or briefing or something is the best way to try to figure this out. But as I said, I just find it really hard to understand how \$70 million is really going to cut it for all of our assets that are out there right now, especially the sewage lagoons, fuel tanks.

You have to take big fuel tanks down in Ulukhaktok or Sachs Harbour or sea lifting the stuff out, power washing it, properly disposing of asbestos from those communities is going to get sea lifted out. You got to take it to an engineered landfill. If it's hazardous stuff, you might even have to take it to Swan Hills. I'm just not sure that \$70 million is really going to cover all that.

Any ways, happy to get the briefing from the Minister on this and really understand how this was calculated, whether it's really going to cover all of the obligations we have in terms of our assets, and how we're going to pay for this over time. Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Yeah, thank you, Madam Chair. Yeah, we're happy to do that, I mean - but, again, it's -- the accountants of the Finance can come in and explain how this was done to comply with the accounting standards. But I'm going to be speaking to my colleagues about the departments that are actually responsible when the time comes to incur the costs, because this is reflective of an asset -- the asset's value as it's -- considers the fact of having to have it retired at some point. Yeah, there's a different conversation to be had that's Infrastructure, and I say, again, I suspect ENR.

I certainly wasn't expecting this to be the direction of the accounting standards discussion. So I'll have to talk to my colleagues about what their department's role in terms of, you know, remediation and remediation liabilities, which is not necessarily the same thing as an account - as meeting an accounting standard. But we'll arrange the briefing, and we'll see who all we can bring together for that purpose. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Minister. Member for Frame Lake. No more questions. Member for Great Slave.

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. And I apologize to the Minister, but I am going to ask a little bit further along this but just because I think I have an understanding, but I want to make sure I do. And if we can't answer it here, I'd welcome the briefing and maybe it'll direct some of that, how that briefing going.

So in the past, we've seen amortization of assets that have been accounted for. And now from what I can gather, you're saying is this amount is the extra amount, like technically sort of the amortization if we knew that we were going to have to pay for the

removal of asbestos, etcetera when we first set the amounts.

So to me, I'm curious if this is right, that this is the adjustment for what we now see in the scientific world as liabilities that we didn't know 20 years ago were going to be liabilities so that, you know, municipalities and governments cannot get behind so far that they don't have the money there, or they're not already preparing.

So this to me, seems to just be a proactive accounting number in order to say, governments, you need to start thinking about these extra liabilities that are already being somewhat accounted for in amortization but not fully. Thank you.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Madam Chair, that sounds pretty good. I'm going to go with 'yes', thanks.

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

MS. NOKLEBY: I'm going to look at Hansard so even I can remember what I just said.

So I guess my question is around -- and I get that this might be department by department, but around the derivative of this number.

So to me, there are already projects and certain assets that we have that are already being handled by different accounting areas of our budget. So this is just all the incidental extras that were not maybe accounted for. So, for example, contaminated sites were brought up. Well, a lot of those would be accounted for under federal funding, under other pots, Infrastructure, ENR is dealing with them in different ways.

So is it fair to say that this \$70 million is all those additional small items that the government has not, in the past, accounted for, that they're perhaps, with respect to my colleagues' questions, they may have already been in the budget areas that we're accounting for the liabilities with our other assets, in the past. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Minister.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I wish I could just go "yeah," again. Not quite.

Contaminated sites, for example, are accounted for differently. I think other -- it's just that -- yeah, and maybe that actually does go to the -- it does go to some of the questions that the MLA for Frame Lake

was asking, is that there are different standards that attach to different sites depending on the nature of the site. But here what we have is just, you know, assets that didn't previously have accounted for the fact that there's a legal liability at some point to, you know, retire the asset.

So this is now meant to capture that and just the value that is reflected in the budget for the fact that the government has an asset that has a different actual value associated to it given the cost associated when it's -- comes to its end of life.

So accounting adjustment, yeah, but not -- it's not that it's only to certain types, if I was understanding that correctly. Thanks.

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

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you. I actually do think I understand what this is. So I do really appreciate that.

I guess my next question, then, and again it could be something for the briefing or in the detailed dive with the departments but is -- how much validity or certainty is there around this number?

So, for example, using your own example of asbestos, oftentimes when the government is dealing with the decommissioning of a building, they don't know what they have until there's a time that they come into that building and start assessing it. And as any consultant in the environmental world will tell you, and that's why we love to caveat our reports, is that there are unknown conditions and therefore they -- those types of projects can really spiral.

So I guess I'm just curious to know -- and I don't need to know today, but what is the certainty of this number, really, when we look at the uncertainty in assessing environmental issues and liabilities. Thank you.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. I don't have sort of a percentage of accuracy in my information in front of me. I think this is probably best answered by having the folks in the room doing a briefing. But if I can just turn it over to the deputy minister, maybe he has a sense from the team as to their level of certainty or comfort with this number. Thanks.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Deputy minister MacKay.

MR. MACKAY: Thank you, Madam Chair. So this was calculated in coordination with departments.

And the way it was calculated was we determined if there was a legal liability that arose during the lifespan of the asset that would require expenses, then that would be added to the expense that was recorded at that time for the acquisition of the capital asset.

So just as an example that we used in the letter to committee was an asbestos. So if at a certain point, an existing building like the Laing Building or whatever was -- it was determined that (a) there was asbestos in it and then (b) a regulation had been implemented not allowing asbestos to be used and for it to be cleaned up in a certain manner, well, we know how much it costs to clean up asbestos so the cost of that liability, as it would have been in -- at the time that the liability was incurred, would be recorded retroactively and then brought forward to today's date. So that's how we -- and we -- we did an example like that in the letter to standing committee. So that's how it was calculated.

In as far as other environmental liabilities, like a contaminated site or something like that, we do have accounting standards for that but that's not dealing with this. This is the retirement of assets and how they're calculated so we're changing how the retirement of asset retirement obligations are calculated basically.

So overall that's about a \$70 million retroactive expense for the government, and then as the Minister mentioned, \$8 million expense going forward.

So that's not exactly money we will be spending, but it will be recorded as an expense. So in a way, it will limit what the government can spend but it -- it's not money we have to find, so to speak. So hopefully that explains that. Thank you.

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

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, yeah, that does explain it. So I appreciate that.

I guess, then, my question is when do we recalculate that \$8 million a year? Is that expected to be a changing number, or is that literally just to keep us on track with where we're going? And then as we add more assets, yes, will that number change. Thank you.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Madam Chair, let's send that one over to the deputy minister, please.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Deputy minister Mackay.

MR. MACKAY: Thank you, Madam Chair. So the expense will remain, what was calculated, using a percentage of the accretion and amortization of the asset as it goes through its lifespan. So that will change somewhat over time.

But so if you look at the example of the building with the asbestos that we gave you, the ongoing expense is calculated as at \$51,000 for that asset as going forward as an expense that will be calculated. And then if you add up all the assets together, that's \$8 million. Thank you.

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

MS. MARTSELOS: Thank you, Madam Chair. So our November 12th briefing, I was the one who asked the question and we got an answer on November the 22nd that was addressed to my colleague here, the chair of the Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight. And I had asked the question to do it by community, and you've done that on attachment 3.

And it shows the number of assets and the amounts by community. And usually what happens in the public accounts is that a standard formula is usually used by an accountant to -- overall, and in order to balance the public accounts for -- to meet these public account standards.

I mean it's -- it's a very simple -- we're going to so much here comparing apples to oranges when you're going into environmental sites and stuff like that when it's -- this is not -- has nothing to do with it.

I don't know why -- if you just read this document, it's very clear to me exactly what it is. And making sure that we don't account to the public that we're doing -- this is the way it has to be done, legally. And we're not talking about environmental sites and we're not talking about all these other things that are under federal jurisdiction. And in order to balance the public accounts, this is one of the standards they're asking for now and that's what we're doing. And it's very clear to me now, because I was the one who asked that question on November the 12th, and I was satisfied with the answer. That's why I wasn't going to ask -- I'm not asking any questions on it. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member for Thebacha. There are no questions in there. So we'll move on.

Any other further comments/questions under this section? Seeing none, we're going to call page.

Finance, office of the Comptroller General, \$71,650,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, committee. Please turn now to the departmental summary found on page 26.

Finance, 2022-2023 Capital Estimates, \$79,849,000. Does committee agree? Does committee agree that consideration of Department of Finance is now complete?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Ministers. Sergeant-at-arms, you may escort the witnesses out of the Chamber.

Committee, we'll take a five minute break so that the Minister of ITI can get her witnesses.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): I will now call Committee of Whole back to order.

Committee have agreed to review the Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment next. Does the Minister wish to bring witnesses into the Chamber?

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: [Audio] Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Sergeant-at-arms, please escort the witnesses into the Chamber.

Will the Minister please introduce her witnesses.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, on your right is Pamela Strand, deputy minister for Industry, Tourism and Investment. And on your left is Nina Salvador who is the director of finance and administration.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): The committee has agreed to forego general comments. Is committee agreed to the proceed to the detailed contained in the tabled document?

Committee, the Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment begins on page 40. We will defer the departmental totals and review the estimates by activity summary beginning on page 41 with economic diversification and business support with information on page 42. Questions. Member for Hay River South.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. First of all, I'm pleased to see that the construction for the fish plant has started, and I expect, I guess, it will be done next year. I guess what I would like to know is the initial cost of the plant -- I can't remember exactly what it was. But will there be any overruns in that? Are we looking at additional costs above what the contractor initially provided? Thank you.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I'm not aware that there's been any additional costs at this point. Let me just turn quickly to Ms. Salvador and see if there's anything that's late breaking that I'm not aware of, please.

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

MS. SALVADOR: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Yes, there is a shortfall that was indicated by Department of Infrastructure to our department, and it's \$1.325 million that is a shortfall based on the supply constraints from COVID and some winter construction costs that should be added to the original budget which is \$17 million.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yeah, I guess it's surprising that we have an additional cost of that amount. You know, considering that my understanding was the contract was let and agreed to based on the fact that it would probably go during the winter, and I think we had COVID already in place.

So I'm not sure what was missed there. And I would, I guess, ask where that extra money will come from to cover those additional costs. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, yes, I did forget that there were cost changes as a result of partly COVID-19, partly supply chain, one impacting the other. And of course those are estimates. They may well turn out not to be as high as anticipated.

I know that there has been funding identified thus far from projects that aren't advancing -- are not advancing as quickly as anticipated. I don't have the specifics on that at -- handy, but on those specific projects, I think, again, Ms. Salvador, I suspect will know exactly which projects that are seeing the transfer of funds to meet that additional cost.

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

MS. SALVADOR: Thank you, Madam chair. So we have gone through our 2021-2022 capital projects, and we have reallocated some projects, some from our Deh Cho parks projects, some from South Slave, and a couple from the Inuvik area. And we have sent

the letters to the corresponding MLAs to let them know about our intention of reallocating the funds from these parks projects to the fish plant project in order to cover the escalation costs. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. So I guess I would ask is that those projects that -- are they being deferred, or are they not going to happen at all? Are we looking at putting that money back in, because I think there was a building there for Hay River that I'm concerned about and knowing the state of the existing one. Thank you.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. So, you know, always coming with the caveat that circumstances can change at this point, certainly the letters that I've seen come across to date have spoken to deferrals of projects, delays of projects. And in some cases, those projects weren't necessarily at an advanced stage where they were proceeding. And there's other occasions -- that's right, there's some of the projects also had surpluses on them and so we were able to take the surplus from a project to put it towards this.

So, I mean, I don't want it to sound like we're cobbling the money together but in some ways we sort of are, but it's a good news story in that, you know, the amount that was needed, the extra amount that was needed to cover the unanticipated higher supply costs is right now able to be covered through, again, either the surpluses or through projects that were not at the same stage of readiness to advance. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. And, you know, knowing the original costs and the additional cost, I would like to know is in terms of when the plant is up and running, are costs for this project -- does it include the initial start-up and some management costs for employees and that. Thank you.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, this is in the operations budget that -- for ITI initially and then ultimately, again, the vision here is that it's going to be taken over in due course. So the money that's being seen

here is part of the capital plan is just that, it's to build it. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. And I guess with the additional cost, was there any design changes in the building associated with that extra cost. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, there were initial design changes, I think in fact still before my time in this role. There's not been further design changes in the interim. But might I just turn that over to deputy minister Strand to speak to briefly.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Deputy minister Strand.

MS. STRAND: Thank you, Madam Chair. So, yeah, the building is a design build. So there's been a series of negotiations between Infrastructure and ITI and the contractor. I think -- I wouldn't be able to comment in the particulars but it's pretty much keeping within the original design and just making choices as to options within that original design. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yeah, you know, I guess just a more of a comment now is that, you know, I'm pleased to see that it is moving ahead and that, you know, I'm not too pleased to see that it's cost another \$1.2 million.

I'm hoping at the end of the day that it will be a big benefit to the -- to the fishery on Great Slave Lake and a benefit to the fishers as well. You know, I think we got a lot of work to do to make that plant work, but I think we've just got to be positive and hope for the best and make sure that, you know, that we keep our eye on the ball on this one. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member for Hay River South. Are there any further questions, comments? Member for Great Slave.

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I'm just going to take this opportunity to ask the Minister if this includes at all the collection points around the lake and maybe if she could provide me with a quick update on where the one is in Great Slave. Thank you.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. So this money doesn't include the collection stations. I can give a little bit of an update. There's been a fair bit happening on this. I'm only just starting to assimilate the information myself.

But the collection stations, certainly we are required to work with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, so the federal government is going to be critical in terms of the collection stations work that's going on.

There is money in the budget ultimately to support this work, but the first thing that we need is to identify a site.

So under Fisheries and Oceans, small craft harbours is the division that's responsible. They did come to Yellowknife, I think over the summer and into the fall, to look at a couple of sites that we had anticipated they would be interested in.

We don't, at this point, have our final or full report confirming whether either of the sites that they looked at would in fact meet requirements to create a collection station. And then even once they do, then there's still additional processes that would have to be undertaken, certainly environmental site assessments, in particular if some of the sites had prior uses, and at that point, of course, certainly further consultation with the public, with Indigenous governments in the regions.

But again, the work at least is now moving along. This is another one that certainly saw some delays during the earlier days of COVID when there was less travel by federal department officials. So we were very pleased that they did come up here and that this is now moving forward. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to the Minister for the update. Perhaps once the MLA for Hay River's fish plant is built, he can give us some of the money back and we could get a park in Great Slave at that location.

Could the Minister maybe speak a little bit to how she's working with industry, and I guess this is a little bit off topic, but on the -- on that location. I did notice that this at the end of the fall there, there was a deployment by Terra-X, I'm not sure if that's their updated name, of their equipment out of their mine site using that location. It was the first time there had been a barge there, I guess, in a long time.

It seemed like a missed opportunity to perhaps not ask Terra-X to maybe start up one of their loaders while they were sitting there with four of them and perhaps work together to fix up the access down to the road -- or to the lake.

I anticipate they will be looking do more work in that region as they have purchased Con Mine. I think it's the same outfit, please forgive me if I'm wrong. So maybe the Minister could speak to whether or not there's an opportunity there in the next years' demobe to have some of that work done, because it does sound like it's quite a ways out for the federal government to be doing anything with that site. Thank you.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yeah, so it was Nechalacho that had come and used the site for their demobilization work, if I'm thinking correctly of the right event. And, yeah, and there are interests or options now by one of the existing gold mine operations, Gold Terra, looking at the Con Mine site. So there is a lot happening in that very specific geographical spot.

And I think what I can do at this point is simply to say that, you know, obviously we do maintain, as ITI contact, with all of those different entities and partners and can let them know that there's this potential for them to have that conversation on the private sector side and be able to enable our support that as it may be.

It would depend obviously on the specifications of the fishers and of the mining companies themselves, but I would think if there's a good news story to be had for all that they would want to be part of it. Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. I think I have to hand in my industry card for mixing everybody up there in who was doing what work in the region, but definitely been a long week already.

I do just encourage the Minister to be very proactive in those conversations. We're talking about legacy projects in Norman Wells for, you know, Imperial Oil, etcetera, so there's no reason that that kind of conversation can't happen now and we couldn't have a park named -- I can't say it named -- Nechalacho in Great Slave. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member. Are there any further questions in regards to this section? Member for Monfwi.

MS. WEYALLON-ARMSTRONG: Thank you. I just want to ask about the Behchoko. It says North Arm Park. You did send me a memo but you didn't explain. So I -- the same thing, like -- what's that?

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Okay. Yellowknife North.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I want to thank my colleague from Great Slave for perhaps pushing the parameters of questions on this area.

Most recently, the Department of Lands in remediating Giant Mine kicked all of the commercial fishermen who store their boats there off. A few of them were forced to make a late run to Hay River, which allows people to store boats. A few got creative and put them on barges, a couple have illegally put them on government dock in Yellowknife.

I just think it's one of those things we try to support local fishermen and spending \$15 million on a plant while at the same time kicking them off where they've conventionally beached their boats for years, and I know Con Mine could be in that conversation although obviously it's someone else's -- there's a lot going in that geographical location.

If we're building a staging plant, I think consideration of boat storage has now become an issue for everyone on this side of the lake.

Can I get a commitment out of the Minister that her department will look into some sort of solution in this area. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member. And this is about as far off course as we're going to go. But I'll let this go to the Minister and...

---Laughter

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. It's fortunate we actually don't have a whole lot of capital projects so maybe we have extra time to talk about some of the other operational things we're doing.

This wasn't something where the fishers came to us, as far as I'm aware. So it is unfortunate that -- that it came -- it didn't -- it didn't come to ITI. We weren't in a position to engage in any advocacy or any creative work with any of my colleagues here. So certainly going to take that away and see what we can do to work with our colleagues over in Lands, whether it's to identify a site or otherwise.

I mean, it's hard to react to something when it's already happening, but, you know, this is going to happen again next year. So let us look into what the situation was, where they were, what they were doing there, and what sort of situation they need, and

see where we're at next year. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Minister. Any more questions related to the capital estimates? No? All right.

Industry, Tourism and Investment, economic diversification, business support infrastructure investment, \$1,459,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agree.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Committee, please turn to page 43 tourism and parks, with information items on page 44 and 45. Questions. Member for Monfwi.

MS. WEYALLON-ARMSTRONG: Sorry, I was ahead of myself here. Well, yeah, it's the North Arm Park. It's Behchoko in both places. But you did send me a memo saying that, you know, \$200,000 will be reallocated. So I just want to know where is that \$200,000 going. Thank you.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. So this is one of those examples where when there's changes being proposed and it's actually changes that are being proposed under the last capital plan, the departments are expected to notify MLAs of those changes and yet the Member for Monfwi did mention earlier to me this week that we should go through this letter, and I'm still happy to do that in more detail.

But just briefly, it's a situation where there's a surplus from one project, specifically a security fence around the North Arm Park, and so looking to take that. There's money that was allocated to an outhouse, and all of which now is going to move over to the North Arm campground that's expected to have more outhouses, probably doesn't need, I know, more outhouses -- what is it with me and outhouses, and to just take the money that's not being used there and to be able to put it to a shortfall on the -- an otherwise shortfall in the North Arm Park. So it's taking some money that's from within the same riding to a different project also within the riding.

But, again, I can certainly spend some time with the Minister -- or from -- or with the Member and kind of walk through the different projects and why we're hoping to essentially keep everything afloat.

Nothing's -- now, projects aren't being cancelled, nothing's being taken away. It's a matter of moving the money from where either there's a surplus or where it doesn't seem to be needed to where there's a shortfall. Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

MS. WEYALLON-ARMSTRONG: Community access. So I just want to know if the Minister is working with, like, community leaders, like the Chief, or ignore Tlicho government in -- on this project.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Minister.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, yes, I'm quite pleased to say this is one of the projects that, well, for one, was, I think, fell under the Tlicho Investment -- and now I'm -- can't say it right. The agreement that we have with the Tlicho government with respect to procurement and project development, the infrastructure agreement. And so that certainly does fall under that, which I think, hopefully, is good news in terms of the way in which it's proceeding, which does bring about quite a bit of direct involvement from the Tlicho government and has included within it there's requirements that the Tlicho government, who are involved as the lead, would be, you know, providing training, would be providing a certain number of jobs to local residents, various other procurement related tools. So, yes, sort answer is yes, but that's the longer explanation. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MS. WEYALLON-ARMSTRONG: Yes, thank you. I guess I want to know if the Minister is working with other community Chiefs to promote -- to promote the tourism industry in the communities and other businesses as well within the Tlicho region.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Again, Madam Chair, the short answer is yes, and this is one where, I think, I'm fairly familiar with the extent of involvement in Whati because I know with the road going in, there was a real desire to make sure that there was a lot of work done with the community of Whati to the extent that they wanted it.

But what I would like to perhaps commit to doing is - is offering to have the Member from Monfwi sit down with the folks at our North Slave office, who are the leads from ITI, who have been working directly with Tlicho, and we can walk through what we are doing and if there's gaps that she can identify, that would be helpful to us as well. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MS. WEYALLON-ARMSTRONG: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Okay. Okay. Just noting the time. How many more want to speak? So we're probably not going to get -- okay. I'll continue on, then. Great Slave.

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I just wanted to ask -- or maybe, again, more of a comment to in the small capital projects last year, we had a significant increase in money, and a lot of that was -- it was a great idea by the department to get money into small communities for small contractors and businesses locally to do work around the parks, etcetera. I'm really in support of that.

Can the Minister speak to whether or not the \$2.9 million is enough, or would there actually be extra projects that are -- that we could be funding to have more of that work continue this 'COVID winter', for lack of a better word. Thank you.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Yeah, thank you, Madam Chair. I mean, I can think myself that there's probably projects in Madam Chair's riding that, you know, within -- in terms of parks that could use some supports.

Right now, the budgets that we have, from what I am understanding, is that there's already a maxing out on the staff capacity that we have within tourism, within the managing of tourism and within the managing of all these projects. So I'm not sure that ITI's going to be in a position to take on management of much more.

I mean, there's always the funding projects and the funding pools that we have over in operation's side, you know, community tourism for instance. So there's perhaps still opportunities for communities to be accessing those funds and would certainly encourage them to be doing that while these ones under the capital side for ITI may well be pretty well what we're able to deliver upon. Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. Firstly, I appreciate all of the work that ITI does up the Ingraham Trail, and I think that there's kind of an insatiable demand for recreational infrastructure on the trail, and I don't see that stopping anytime soon.

I'll note that in the Infrastructure's budget there's a few million dollars for planning that highway to eventually go to Lockhart Lake, and I expect that the

recreational demand will just never stop as that highway progresses further and further to more and more lakes.

But specifically, I would like to raise a concern many of my constituents has brought forward. When you reach the end of the Ingraham Trail right now, you hit Tibbitt and then you just kind of hit the ice road there and it's an area that has increasingly filled up with garbage, and I think there's more and more people, both living out there and fishing out there, and I think it's long overdue for some sort of wayside park or sign or anything that kind of says you've reached the end of the trail and this is a nice place.

I don't know how to get that into the capital plan or into the needs assessment or get that considered by the department, but I'd like to ask the Minister if that's at all possible, something they could look into.

You know, perhaps even when we put out the contract that I assume will be hundreds of millions of dollars to build a road right past there, we could work in some sort of park area at Tibbitt Lake. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, there's been a number of inquiries I think probably led by MLA from Yellowknife North on exactly this issue and from constituents on that riding. I am also frequently on that road. I am well familiar with it.

There is signage in the works right now, Madam Chair. But that doesn't mean a whole heck of a lot of money fortunately. So that one's in the works.

As far as creating parking, new parks, new facilities, that -- it requires land, and that is more complicated than just taking over the land that is obviously there. So ITI is working with ENR, with Infrastructure, with Lands.

You know, and I appreciate the comment that there's a lot of folks that are out that way. A lot of new cabins have gone in in the last few years, and those new leases didn't necessarily come with the fact that there were needed to be, then, more parking available. So we are racing to catch up, and we are going to do our best. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Minister. All right. Seeing there's no further questions or comments. Industry, Tourism and Investment, tourism and parks, infrastructure investment, \$2,978,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agree.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Members. Please now turn to departmental summary found on page 40, Industry, Tourism and Investment, 2022-2023 Capital Estimates, \$4,437,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agree.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Does committee agree that consideration of Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment is now complete?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agree.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, committee, and thank you, Minister. Sergeant-at-arms, please escort the witnesses from the Chamber. And Member for Frame Lake.

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

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): There's a motion on the floor to report progress. The motion is in order. Non-debatable. All the those in favor. Opposed. Motion is carried. I will now rise and report progress.

---Carried

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

Report of Committee of The Whole

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Mr. Speaker, your committee has been considering Tabled Document 437-19(2) and would like to report progress. And Mr. Speaker, I move that the report of Committee of the Whole be concurred with. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes. Motion in order. Do we have a seconder? Member for Yellowknife North. All those in favor. All those opposed. Any abstentions. The motion is carried.

---Carried

MR. SPEAKER: Third reading of bills. Mr. Clerk, orders of the day.

Orders of the Day

DEPUTY CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Ball): Orders of the day for Thursday, November 25th, 2021, 1:30 p.m.:

1. Prayer
2. Ministers' statements

3. Members' statements
4. Returns to Oral Questions
5. Recognition of visitors in the gallery
6. Acknowledgements
7. Oral questions
8. Written questions
9. Returns to Written Questions
10. Replies to the Commissioner's Address
11. Petitions
12. Reports of Committees on the review of bills
13. Reports of Standing and Special Committees
14. Tabling of Documents
15. Notices of motion
16. Motions
17. Notices of Motion for the First reading of Bills
18. First Reading of Bills
 - Bill 40, an Act to Amend the Medical Profession Act
19. Second Reading of Bills
 - Bill 36, an Act to Amend the Territorial Court Act
 - Bill 37, an Act to Amend the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act
 - Bill 38, Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2021
 - Bill 39, an Act to Amend the Post-secondary Education Act
20. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and other matters
 - Bill 23, an Act to Amend the Public Utilities Act
 - Bill 24, an Act to Amend the Revolving Funds Act
 - Bill 29, Resource Royalty Information Disclosure Statute Amendment Act
 - Bill 30, an Act to Amend the Aurora College Act
 - Bill 31, an Act to Amend the Pharmacy Act
 - Bill 32, an Act to Amend the Northern Employees Benefits Services Pension Plan Act
 - Bill 33, National Indigenous Peoples Day Act

- Tabled Document 437-19(2), Capital Estimates 2022-2023
- Tabled Document 438-19(2), Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 2, 2021-2022
- Tabled Document 439-19(2), Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 2, 2021-2022
- Tabled Document 466-19(2), Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures and Borrowing Authorization), No. 4, 2020-2021.

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, November 25th, 2021, at 1:30 p.m.

--ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 5:27 p.m.