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The Honourable Frederick Blake Jr, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

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Box 1320

Yellowknife, Northwest Territories

Tel: (867) 767-9010 Fax: (867) 920-4735 Toll-Free: 1-800-661-0784

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YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**Monday, March 7, 2022****Members Present**

Hon. Diane Archie, Hon. Frederick Blake Jr., Mr. Bonnetrouge, Hon. Paulie Chinna, Ms. Cleveland, Hon. Caroline Cochrane, Mr. Edjericon, Hon. Julie Green, 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 1:30 p.m.

Prayer

---Prayer

SPEAKER (Hon. Frederick Blake Jr.): Colleagues, The Arctic Inspiration Prize has just celebrated its 10th Anniversary. It recognizes northern innovation and excellence and encourages teamwork for the betterment of life in the Arctic. It inspires, enables, and celebrates the achievements of the North. I'd like to congratulate a few teams from the Western Arctic who just received awards showcasing their projects.

For the theme of environment and science, located in Tuktoyaktuk, the Community Climate Resiliency Project. Congratulations, Team.

For the theme of healing, health and wellness, Hope House, located in Inuvik. Congratulations.

For the theme of children and youth, Congratulations to Indigenous Youth River Guide Training, using two territories, the Yukon and Northwest Territories.

Continuing with the theme under children and youth, the winner goes to Treaty Talks from the Northwest Territories. Congratulations.

And finally, for the theme of food security, revitalization of language and Culture, the award goes to Fish Camp at Happy's Landing, located in Fort McPherson. The project will host a fish camp offering the people of the community, as well as visitors, a chance to practice and learn their traditional activities such as harvesting, preparing and drying fish.

Congratulations, everyone, job well done. It's through projects such as these that our communities will become healthier and learn ways to help each other. Thank you, members.

MR. SPEAKER: Ministers' statements. Honourable Premier.

Ministers' Statements

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 224-19(2):
FORT SMITH SITUATION

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Mr. Speaker, over the last three days, the community of Fort Smith and its residents have been faced with a difficult and scary situation that has shaken their sense of safety

to the core. As a result of a significant police operation in the community, residents were forced to lock themselves in their homes, businesses, or wherever they could seek safety, while the RCMP searched for an individual considered to be armed and dangerous. Thankfully the individual has been brought into custody.

Mr. Speaker, we have lost others to violent crimes in the NWT. We acknowledge that the impacts of crime on a person and a community have immediate and long-lasting impacts on those who had no choice in the matter.

On behalf of Cabinet and the Government of the Northwest Territories, I want to extend my sincerest and deepest condolences to the community of Fort Smith and the family and friends of the resident who has tragically lost their life in this incident. We will hold them in our hearts and honour their memory.

We all know just how close-knit communities in the North can be. When tragedy like this strikes, it tears at the very fabric of what it means to be a Northerner. Senseless violence that leads to the loss of life often leaves us with more questions than answers and immense pain and sadness. It is in moments like these that we must pull together and be there for those who have been impacted and support them the best we can. To the community of Fort Smith, our support for you, like the strength and resilience that you have shown during this difficult time and will continue to show, is unwavering.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the many members of law enforcement in the Northwest Territories who have gone above and beyond to ensure the safety and wellbeing of residents in Fort Smith during this difficult time. They put themselves in harms way on a regular basis and risk their lives to protect our homes and communities. I thank them, and all the first responders, for their unwavering dedication, professionalism, and service, and for always being there for us.

Mr. Speaker, I want to tell residents who may be struggling to make sense of what happened to reach out for support. There is no shame in asking for help. The Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority has established a dedicated community crisis line for Fort Smith to provide mental health and community wellness services to children, youth, adults, and families in the community. This is available 24/7 and can be accessed by calling 1-867-872-0890. There are several other services available to residents so please visit the health authority's website for more details.

We will continue to work with leadership in the community, including the MLA for Thebacha, to ensure that the Government of the Northwest Territories continues to support residents and the communities as best we can during this time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Honourable Premier. Our thoughts and prayers are with the community at this time. Ministers' statements. Honourable Premier.

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 225-19(2):
GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHWEST
TERRITORIES COVID-19 RESPONSE AND
COVID SECRETARIAT WIND DOWN

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Mr. Speaker, it has been two years since COVID-19 changed our lives here in the territory. When the outbreak started, we didn't know what to expect, how long it would last, when vaccines would be available, and how we would have to adapt. We also didn't fully understand the toll it would take on all of us, especially health care providers.

Our communities have been hard hit. We lost 19 residents, including elders and knowledge-keepers. Others have suffered from serious illness. Another reality is that we still don't know the long-term affects of COVID-19.

Mr. Speaker, it would be challenging to find a resident who is not tired of the pandemic and the restrictions that have been put into place. Early on, these restrictions were one of the few tools we had. That has changed. With vaccines and anti-viral medications now available, it is now time to give residents the responsibility to manage their own risk tolerance and make their own choices. We are ready to look past the pandemic and the public health emergency to our new normal.

Just as the Chief Public Health Officer followed an evidence-based approach to put measures into place, we will now follow the same evidence-based approach to end the public health emergency. This is the general framework provided in Emerging

Wisely, all the while adapting to the delta and omicron variants we have experienced since the fall.

Mr. Speaker, we are in a good position to shift our focus to preventing severe illness from COVID-19 resulting in hospitalizations, ICU admissions, and deaths. Better tools mean more options. It is important to note that this approach is not a new one. This is more in line with how we deal with influenza and many other seasonal viruses.

We all want to get back to normal and by now, we all understand it will be a new kind of normal. I can't stress this enough. The end of the territorial public health emergency is not the end of COVID-19, Mr. Speaker. Future scenarios and finalized advice regarding life with COVID-19 post-pandemic is still being discussed at the national level by chief medical officers of health across Canada.

COVID-19 is different than any virus we have had to deal with in most of our lifetimes, and we need to keep our guard up as we learn to normalize living with it. The shutdown of the COVID-19 Coordinating Secretariat will be timed to coincide with the end of the public health emergency. When this happens, there are several services provided by the secretariat currently that will no longer be required.

The existence of the secretariat was intended to be temporary, and its closure was always anticipated. At the same time, we must ensure that we have resources available to deal with COVID-19 as an endemic disease. That means looking at the resources necessary to respond to COVID-19 post-public health emergency.

Mr. Speaker, as we have experienced and learned, our approach needs to be flexible enough to adapt when needed. The territory will still experience community outbreaks for some time into the future. The continued evolution of variants of concern introduces significant uncertainty, and the GNWT must remain prepared to respond in the coming months.

Mr. Speaker, when the public health emergency ends, we will no longer need border security and self-isolation plans. We have already removed the requirement for isolating in a regional hub community. What will be maintained within multiple GNWT departments is the ability to respond to outbreaks and protect vulnerable populations. This also includes being prepared to support communities through readiness planning and outbreak response. We anticipate this readiness response system to be in place for one year but it will depend on the COVID-19 situation as it unfolds.

This means maintaining some level of capacity in client services such as the 811 phone line. It means ensuring we have good public health policy around

risk management measures while maintaining a level of compliance, community outreach, and education, and the capacity to effectively communicate.

We need to maintain effective testing and a public health early warning surveillance strategy. An example is our wastewater surveillance program that has garnered international recognition.

Lastly, Mr. Speaker, we need to recognize that this is now a community-based approach. We need to work with communities to support them with future outbreaks.

The Secretariat was established in September 2020 to bring together, within a single agency, the critical functions needed to respond to public health orders and recommendations related to the pandemic. It has always been an entity with an end date. Even so, I want to express my gratitude to the people who took up the challenge to work for the secretariat these past two years. Important work has been done to set us up for this moment and our future success.

Mr. Speaker, changes are coming in the next few weeks. I want to reassure all Northerners that the Government of the Northwest Territories remains committed to the goal of protecting their health and wellbeing. There may be a lingering sense of uncertainty, as there usually is when change happens. We have prepared for this day and will be moving forward with a plan for the future. We know we are asking residents to adapt again. We have gotten through the public health emergency together, and we will learn to adapt to our new normal together.
Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Honourable Premier. Ministers' statements. Members' statements. Member for Thebacha.

Members' Statements

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 996-19(2): MESSAGE TO FORT SMITH RESIDENTS

MS. MARTSELOS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the other day a very serious incident took place in my community of Fort Smith. A violent crime was committed, and it resulted in the death of someone in my community. The entire town was put on lockdown for at least 24 hours over the weekend, and a man hunt had ensued for the suspect who thankfully has now been apprehended as of yesterday afternoon.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the family of the deceased, the Webb family and the Tourangeau family, I want to thank all the residents of Fort Smith for the overwhelming amount of support that was given. The

level of unity and support for one another during this crisis was warming to see. The residents of Fort Smith had demonstrated great strength and courage throughout this difficult time.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to thank all the first responders, especially the RCMP, who kept our residents safe throughout this whole ordeal. I want to acknowledge Inspector Barry LaRocque who is the officer-in-charge of the NWT RCMP South District. He and his team worked all throughout the weekend to locate and apprehend the suspect.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to thank the Cabinet but particularly the Premier, the Minister of Justice and the Minister of Health, for their attentiveness and assistance during this situation.

Furthermore, I want to thank all the leadership as well in Fort Smith, including the mayor, the Chief of the Salt River First Nation, and the representatives from the Fort Smith Metis Council and Smith Landing First Nation.

In addition, I want to thank the response provided by the Department of Health and Social Services. There was additional staff and mental health resources provided to Fort Smith over the weekend and into this week to help people deal with the aftermath of this incident. The extra help was welcomed and needed.

Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

---Unanimous consent granted

Lastly, Mr. Speaker, I offer my sincerest condolences to the family of the deceased. This is a true loss for the town of Fort Smith. I am glad that the situation is now over, but I'm shocked and saddened for it taking place at all. My thoughts and prayers go out to my constituents but especially to the family of the deceased. I want to thank, once again, all the constituents of Thebacha for their vigilance and perseverance during this serious incident in our community. I know we are strong and an united community during times of crisis, and we always pull together to assist one another however we can. The coming days will be hard for the entire community, but I know we will come out of this stronger and more united than ever. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Thebacha. Our prayers continue with the family and community at this time. Members' statements. Member for Kam Lake.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 997-19(2): ELECTRICITY RATES

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, if I had to make a list of sentences I heard my dad say the most during my childhood "turn off the lights" would make top three. Now as a parent myself, I get it.

Northerners pay the highest electricity rates in Canada. According to Energy Hub, a social enterprise, the 2021 average cost of NWT electricity was 38.2 cents per kilowatt hour. That's more than twice the national average and even 2 percent higher than Nunavut.

High electricity rates put pressure on residents' cost of living and constituents tell me they can't keep up. Sky high power rates will bite us in the butt and hollow out our territory. One big challenge is its customer base. We are a small population spread out over a vast beautiful land, and our growth is stagnant.

The bureau of statistics projects that our population will remain basically flat through the 2030s and without a plan to change that, they are probably right. As a result, paired with limited new industrial activity, power sales have declined by about half a percent per year over the last ten years. And while demand tapers off, costs rise.

Mr. Speaker, when you look at NTPC's annual reports, total expenses grew from \$70 million in 2011 to \$112 million in 2021. This is equivalent to a 5 percent increase every year. Except for some federal dollars, these cost increases ultimately fall on Northerners through higher bills and tax dollars. And this trend isn't being mitigated as NTPC infrastructure continues to age and continues to drive costs.

Many of the NTPC's generating facilities were built in the 1970s and 1980s. Some assets like NTPC's hydro plants were built even earlier, Mr. Speaker. Before 2018, NTPC's capital expenditures were generally in the \$20 million range. Now, NTPC's latest five-year capital plan budgets capital spending of about \$60 million per year. Federal dollars only off set about 27 percent of this spending, Mr. Speaker. On top of all this, NTPC needs to make significant investments to get off diesel without compromising the entire system.

Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

---Unanimous consent granted

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this is why it's so important for NTPC to have a financially sustainable long-term plan. The plan needs to include dedicated staff to source 100 percent federal dollars, and the plan also needs proper oversight. The board needs more than DMs and MLAs need oversight. Coming out of a pandemic, facing

increased cost of living, people need hope and people need power, and the government needs a plan to provide both. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 998-19(2): AFFIRMATIVE ACTION POLICY

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, prior to 1989, this government recognized an inequity with respect to Indigenous representation in the GNWT public sector. In an attempt to address that inequity, the government of the day drafted the Affirmative Action Policy. It was a spirited attempt to place Indigenous people into the public sector workforce.

Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity to discuss that intent with one of the original drafters. He explained to me that the intent was to increase Indigenous representation, period. Through vetting and additional drafting revisions, the objective lessened. For what reason, one can only assume.

Mr. Speaker, the reason Indigenous people are a minority in the public sector may be that Indigenous people acknowledge this government is colonial and want nothing to do with it; or possibly, that the intent of the policy has been forgotten and no longer relevant. It may be that we have too many categories. It could be that we are confusing the term "Indigenous" by using terms like Indigenous non-aboriginal. It may be that hiring is done by southerners and biased, or for that matter Indigenous and biased. Whatever the reason, Indigenous people are not being provided an equal opportunity.

Mr. Speaker, 30 plus years later we are still talking affirmative action as Indigenous persons continue to be unrepresented while attempts have been made to correct that underrepresentation.

In 2014, the Regional Recruitment Program was developed to target Indigenous employees by creating on-the-job training opportunities in their region. In October 2018, the Indigenous Career Gateway Program was created to target external Indigenous candidates for entry-level positions within the GNWT. In June 21st, the Building Capacity and Indigenous Governments Program was launched. And now we have an Indigenous Recruitment and Retention Framework and action plan looking to set new targets.

Mr. Speaker, no matter the number of policy revisions, no matter the number of committees, no matter the number of reviews, without explicit direction and holding bureaucracy accountable, the targets will remain unattainable. If we expect

increase in Indigenous participation in the public sector, we need an effective policy and that policy must be clear, concise, and unambiguous unlike the one we have today. With profound change, then maybe, just maybe, we will get traction and buy-in from bureaucracy to reach equality for Indigenous people in the public sector. Mr. Speaker, I will have questions for the Minister responsible for human resources. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 999-19(2):
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES FUR ECONOMY

MR. BONNETROUGE: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the trapping season is coming to a close. This is a good time to look back on the season as to lessons learned and look forward to setting a new direction to stimulate the NWT fur economy. I can imagine, due to COVID, fur sales more than likely not as financially lucrative as other years. I can imagine the number of fur-bearing animals being caught is getting less every year. I can only surmise the dwindling number of trappers going out every year as many will age out.

If it's not the age, then problems with the mode of transportation - the snowmobile, as repairs are getting expensive and buying new machines may not be an option due to fur prices. The options to trappers are not many considering the ever-increasing price of gas, oil, and parts for the snow machine.

Mr. Speaker, if one doesn't have a full-time job to own and maintain a snow machine, then trapping is out of the question for many who would like the option to trap.

Trapping can provide a means of income and, most of all, self esteem. Many of my people, the Dene, tell us stories of their exploits hunting and trapping with just dog teams. In fact, it was a widely-known mode of transportation back then.

What this signifies is the ability of our people to provide for themselves, their family, and their community. The Dene back then were proud people when doing things for themselves. Today, we are weakened by a society that is reliant on government handouts; a society that is slowly killing our people, whether it be sickness from alcohol and drugs, or other illnesses. It is time for this government to chart a trapline forward to revitalize an industry that can and will do a lot for many residents of the Northwest Territories. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Good statement. Thank you, Member for Deh Cho. Members' statements. Member for Great Slave.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1000-19(2):
RED CROSS MOVEMENT

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I want to recognize the outstanding work of the Canadian Red Cross during these challenging and unpredictable times, in the Northwest Territories, across Canada, and around the world.

The Canadian Red Cross is part of the largest disaster relief and humanitarian organization in the world. Together with the International Committee of the Red Cross, the International Federation of Red Cross/Red Crescent, and 192 national societies, the Red Cross movement works to help people and communities in times of need and support them in strengthening their resilience through increased preparedness and readiness. Something, Mr. Speaker, that speaks to my proactive engineer's heart.

Recently, a leading source of research on trust in Canada – the Proof Strategies CanTrust Index – found that Canadians trust the Red Cross to "operate competently, effectively, and to do the right thing." The Red Cross has been voted the most trusted organization in Canada for 2022.

Over the last two years, the Red Cross has been instrumental in helping the NWT continue to function, from supporting isolation services and implementing epidemic prevention and control measures, to providing clinical surge support, the Red Cross continues to help our family, friends, and neighbours weather our rapidly changing northern climate and deal with the waves of COVID-19.

With the same caring spirit they bring to all their work, the Red Cross immediately activated to support those impacted by the crisis in Ukraine, providing lifesaving humanitarian assistance. The Canadian Red Cross has been working closely with International Red Cross movement partners to coordinate essential supplies like food, water, medicine, and shelter to help those displaced both inside the country as well as those around it. The Red Cross wishes to thank the Government of the Northwest Territories for its generous offer to match NWT donations of up to \$50,000 to aid in this humanitarian response. It's also worth noting, Mr. Speaker, that the federal government is also matching Canadian donations to the Red Cross to the tune of \$10 million. As of March 5th, the Canadian Red Cross had raised \$46.2 million for the Ukraine humanitarian crisis appeal.

As we look to the future and the rising challenges we face due to climate change, our strong relationship with the Canadian Red Cross will be more important than ever. Climate-driven disasters and emergencies are only expected to increase so

ensuring we are prepared to respond rapidly, effectively, and in coordination will be crucial for our people and their communities. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1001-19(2):
MAINTENANCE ENFORCEMENT

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. Today I will speak about the complex legal issues involving parental payments following separation between spouses and their dependent children.

Our Children's Law Act provides the legal framework for this support under Child Support Guidelines which also specify how maintenance payments will be calculated. Typically, a court order is issued specifying the amount of child support owed and establishing an annual process for evaluating and resetting the amount of support to be paid. These court orders usually say that parties will exchange financial information annually to accommodate changes in the cost of living. However - and here's the problem - the law and the guidelines provide no means to require the payment of any changed maintenance support resulting from this annual review.

When I asked about this situation on behalf of a constituent, I was told that the maintenance enforcement program "does not currently do recalculations and that in order for the maintenance enforcement program to change the child support amount, the spouse receiving support would need to:

1. Take the matter back to court and obtain a new court order with a new amount; or
2. Provide maintenance enforcement with a signed and notarized agreement between the estranged parents specifying the new amount.

So despite a process for support calculation having been established by court order, the justice department will not act to implement the changes unless the support recipient goes back to court every year or can convince the former spouse to enter into an agreement, which could only be concluded if both parents are cooperative.

In the worst case, this could require a parent to go back to court every year as many as 18 years to reset the amount. In all the provinces, adjustments are automatic. It should also be noted that for persons on limited income, legal aid from family lawyers is very difficult to obtain owing to a lack of family law practitioners in the NWT.

When I took this matter to the Minister of Justice, he said that his department intends to launch a child support recalculation service by January 1, 2022. To my knowledge, this has not happened. I'll be asking for an update on the current status so parents can hopefully receive adequate child support without having to repeatedly go back to court. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1002-19(2):
YOUNG INDIGENOUS MEN IN THE JUSTICE SYSTEM

MS. WEYALLON-ARMSTRONG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm doing my Member's statement on young men in the justice systems.

Mr. Speaker, I am concerned about Indigenous young men and adults within our correctional facilities and in the justice system. Mr. Speaker, we know people are not born convicted criminals. They become this way. Before colonizations, Indigenous people organized themselves equally. Everyone shared. People took care of one another. No one was viewed better than others. This is what I am concerned about for behind bars. How are they being taken care of?

Mr. Speaker, Indigenous people have been experiencing racism, trauma, and abuse for hundreds of years. According to the NWT Native Women's Association Journey to Healing says, quote, "Many of our elders were taught to hold their pain inside. We recognize this pain needs to come out so people can learn to carry their trauma in a healthy way."

We know that people need to learn to heal. This is something we need to teach each other.

Mr. Speaker, I recognize our inmate population are low and while that is positive, I am concerned that locking up our young Indigenous boys, our future generations, is not going to help them heal their problems.

I am concerned about the programming and case management in place within the correctional facilities. Has the department seen success from their rehabilitation programs? I am concerned, Mr. Speaker, that when Indigenous young men or adults are locked up in our correction facilities that they are not being provided enough healing support to make meaningful change in their life.

I am also concerned, Mr. Speaker, that there is a lack of trauma-informed outreach services. What is the expectation for a probation officer? Do probation officer and court workers have the training,

resources, and capacity to provide trauma-informed service delivery?

Mr. Speaker, in the news, we see that the population of the jails has reduced, which is positive, but I am concerned if people are filling up other programs, like probation services, without the right support in place to help them learn to heal. I will have questions for the Minister of Justice. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1003-19(2):
HOUSING

MR. EDJERICON: Member statement's addressing core need for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh riding.

Mr. Speaker, today I want to talk about housing in my region. I know this is a priority for this government and also a priority for myself. There are many issues with housing in the Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh but today I will focus on improving core need.

Mr. Speaker, if a house is not suitable, adequate, or affordable, it's considered in core need. Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, in the NWT, our statistics on core need are heading in the wrong direction. In 2014, almost 20 percent of the homes in the NWT were in core need and the latest survey from 2019 shows housing core needs across NWT have grown to almost 24 percent. Almost one in every four houses in the NWT are in core need compared to one in every eight for the national average. But, Mr. Speaker, unfortunately the situation is much worse in the Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh riding. For the people in the Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh riding, we have known that over half of the homes are in core need - 55 percent. We're looking at about 297 homes. So housing is certainly in a state of crisis for the residents of Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh riding, and there are many issues with housing we need to tackle and we need to do this together.

To start, we need a plan to fix up the homes we do have. We need an assessment on these assets with a budget and a work plan to roll out repairs. We need repairs to happen in a way that empowers local tradespeople and builds pride in one's home. We need a strategic approach to address this issues because the current housing system is not working for the residents of Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh residents. We need to leverage the strength of the Indigenous governments to make this happen. Together, we can resolve this crisis. I will have questions for the Minister of Housing later today. Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh. Members' statements. Member for Yellowknife North.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1004-19(2):
SHINGLES VACCINE

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just a reminder to everyone to get vaccinated and don't just get vaccinated against COVID. If your kids are in school, get them vaccinated against chicken pox. And if you're over 50, you should be vaccinated against the shingles virus.

The shingles virus, sometimes called adult chicken pox, is when the virus reemerges years later. And, Mr. Speaker, shingles is not just a bad rash. In up to 18 percent of people, it attacks the nervous system and can cause strong shooting nerve pain for months if not years after getting shingles. And it's currently recommended that everyone over 50 get the shingles virus [sic], Mr. Speaker.

Unfortunately, unlike our chicken pox vaccine for youth, the shingles vaccine is not covered for everyone. There's a small select group who can get reimbursed between the ages of 65 and 70 but we have yet to make it a publicly funded vaccine. And that is what I would like to see, Mr. Speaker - is that everyone who wants to go and get vaccinated against shingles can do so. It is especially susceptible in our seniors and those with compromised immune systems.

And sadly, Mr. Speaker, shingles, despite, you know, progress of eliminating chicken pox in younger generations, is actually on the rise during the pandemic. And we have the tools to fight this. So I'll have questions for the Minister of Health and Social Services about what we can do to get everyone vaccinated against shingles and prevent what is a very preventable disease. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1005-19(2):
CURLING

MS. SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, over the past couple of years we've had COVID and a lot of our kids have not been able to play the sports that they are used to playing on an annual basis. Curling is a big sport up in the Beaufort Delta, as you may know, but last week curling was alive and well here in Yellowknife, especially for our youth. Teams looking to represent Team NWT at the 2023 Canada Games. There were teams from Inuvik, and I'd just like to recognize the teams from Inuvik, Team Wainman, Team Gillis, and Team McNeil, with Team Wainman winning that spot representing the girls at the 2023 Canada Games.

And then swiftly after that, they turned in for the 2023 UA teens. So the team Wainman and Team Gillis,

both from Inuvik, tried in that tournament with Team Gillis and Team Skauge fighting for the position, and Team Skauge was the winner of that and they will be representing Northwest Territories at the UA teens in 2023, and I'd just like to say that I'm glad to see that our kids are back out being able to participate and take up these competitions throughout Canada. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1006-19(2):
ABORIGINAL SPORTS CIRCLE COACHES
AWARD WINNERS DARWIN NORWEGIAN AND
MALERIE HARDISTY-NORWEGIAN

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am proud to announce that Darwin Norwegian and Malerie Hardisty Norwegian of Fort Simpson are the award-winning recipients of the 2021 Aboriginal Sport Circle of the Northwest Territories Coaches Award. Darwin and Malerie were nominated by Lauren O'Keefe out of Fort Simpson.

Aboriginal Sport Circle Northwest Territories traveled to Fort Simpson on March 5th, 2022, to present the 2021 Aboriginal Sport Circle Coach Award to Darwin and Malerie. Because of COVID, they hosted a small family dinner to acknowledge all the accomplishments that Malerie and Darwin have had in the community. I have seen the award, which they will receive, and they are amazing-looking carvings.

Taking the following quote from Lauren's nomination, Darwin and Malerie have benefitted Fort Simpson, the community of their residence, by creating a fun and inspirational environment for youth and adults to explore the slowpitch softball. Darwin's coaches players on rules and regulations and techniques. Darwin provides endless encouragement for new players who join by posting online often.

Malerie and Darwin, in effort with the local recreation director, are also responsible for organizing teams from outside the community to come to softball tournaments in Fort Simpson. These tournaments provide the opportunity to build new friendships and learn new skills from other athletes.

Mr. Speaker, I have witnessed first-hand their commitment to the sport and the community of Fort Simpson. As well, I have witnessed them develop a team that travels outside the community to participate in other community tournaments. To them, it's about having fun regardless of the results on the field.

In speaking with Aboriginal Sport Circle of the Northwest Territories, they enjoyed hosting the

dinner in Fort Simpson and presenting the award to both of them.

Mr. Speaker, I truly agree that they are truly well deserving and it is an honour to say thank you to Darwin and Malerie for their commitment to the community. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Nahendeh. Members' statements. Member for Yellowknife South.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1007-19(2):
EULOGY FOR HAROLD JOHNSON

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to provide a personal tribute to Harold R. Johnson, who died last month. Mr. Johnson was Cree from Montreal Lake First Nation in northern Saskatchewan. He straddled two worlds - as a logger, trapper and miner but also as a Harvard-educated lawyer and writer. Above all he was a storyteller.

I met Mr. Johnson in May 2019 when I read his book, *Firewater: How Alcohol is Killing my People and Yours*.

He reflected on decades he spent as a Crown prosecutor witnessing the damage caused by alcohol abuse - death, life-transforming injuries, families disrupted, lives enslaved by addiction. He believed that alcohol touched every part of our lives whether we drink or not.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Johnson didn't believe in what he called the victim model of dealing with alcohol. He said it didn't offer solutions. It offered excuses to continue alcohol abuse and perpetuate the trauma of colonization and residential schools. He said, "Alcohol doesn't dissolve stress. It dissolves the rules and the feeling of responsibility that creates stress.... We can never fix the problem if the problem is not ours."

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Johnson didn't believe in law enforcement as the answer either because it wasn't holistic enough and nor did he believe in residential treatment because of low long-term success rates. Nor did he think banning alcohol worked because bootleggers control the supply and both Indigenous governments and police efforts to curb are unsuccessful.

I found his analysis and ideas compelling because they offer hope people can gain control over their relationship with alcohol.

Mr. Johnson wanted to inspire people to change the story they tell themselves about alcohol. Mr. Speaker, he promoted local solutions where sober leaders turned their communities into treatment centres where the whole community is involved in

finding healthy alternatives. Changing the story means having sober people in our communities tell the story of their sobriety.

Harold and his wife Joan developed a pilot project in northern Saskatchewan to put these ideas into action. They shared their extensive knowledge with community leaders in the NWT last June and they have helped to inform the development of our alcohol strategy.

Mr. Speaker, Harold Johnson left us too soon at age 68 but his legacy of bringing the problem of alcohol abuse to light, along with ideas for solutions, will live on for years to come. Most of all, he inspired us and me to learn and tell a new story. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Yellowknife South. Our thoughts and prayers are with the family at this time. Members' statements. Returns to oral questions. Recognition of visitors in the gallery.

Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery

MR. SPEAKER: Colleagues, I'd like to welcome Mr. Anthony W.J. Whitford aka Tony, former Member, Minister, Speaker, Sergeant-at-Arms, Commissioner, and honorary Clerk of this House. Welcome.

Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member for Thebacha.

MS. MARTSELOS: I too would like to recognize Tony, my friend, born and raised in Fort Smith. And we welcome you back any time that you want to come home.

And I'd also like to recognize another member, Mr. Speaker, and that is Jason Lepine. Jason Lepine was my official agent in my first election for MLA, and is a prominent member of the Metis Nation. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Thebacha. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Acknowledgements. Oral questions. Member for Hay River South.

Oral Questions

QUESTION 991-19(2): AFFIRMATIVE ACTION POLICY

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The questions will be for the Minister responsible for human resources, and they'll be short and sweet.

Mr. Speaker, in recognition that the Affirmative Action Policy has evolved since inception, what does this government see as the barriers to reaching

Indigenous employment targets under this policy? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the barriers are multifold, and that's a part of the reason why we have launched the Indigenous Recruitment and Retention Framework. It's one that looks not only to recruitment, which is certainly one of the barriers, but also to retention. And Mr. Speaker, the barriers, as I've stated, they're manyfold, meaning that they're not only structural within the Affirmative Action Policy or other tools or techniques or a lack thereof, they go into the very fact of people's -- you know, the need to understand who we are as a territory, living well together, and other aspects of that, understanding who we are as a territory, and all of the work that happens over at ECE to ensure that the residents of the territory have the best possible education so they are able to apply to all the jobs that are available to them. So multifold, Mr. Speaker, but that's, again, a big part of why there is now our framework to respond to them. Thank you.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And now 30 years later, will the Minister commit to finding workable solutions to overcome those barriers? Thank you.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Yes, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, again, I don't want to be belabour the Indigenous Recruitment and Retention Framework, but if one spends time on both the framework and on the action plan that goes with it, it is now an effort to look at each department's needs, each department's barriers. There are different barriers in different departments because of the nature of the work in those departments, because of the nature of the jobs in those departments, and that's exactly the point of having this, is that there's now going to be that individual look but within a framework, with measurable targets, and with those targets tied to the performance measures of the senior people within those departments. So yes, absolutely, that's exactly the point. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Will the Minister commit to a complete review of all current positions within the government with a focus to staff those that are vacant or about to become vacant with Indigenous persons through direct competition for Indigenous persons only or direct appointments or transfers? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So Mr. Speaker, I can't make that commitment. Every department does have its own area of responsibility for their hiring and for their positions and vacancies. But again, one of the points

here for each department is that once they have targets that they have to meet, they're going to have to use all the tools and tricks available to them, whether that's the various policy items that I know the Member's already spoken of, the Indigenous Recruitment, retention -- or sorry, the Indigenous Gateway Program, internal management training, education plans, all of that needs to be used so that each department's meeting their targets.

It's not enough to simply put people into roles that they -- for the sake of the numbers. That's not what we want. We want to have a public service where people are being brought in and then trained up within and moved into positions that are appropriate to their training and being given the training to achieve them. So that requires a plan and it requires some thoughtfulness. Mr. Speaker, I do think we are now on that path. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we need to be bold if we want to see change. So I ask the Minister, will the Minister commit to a temporary suspension of the Affirmative Action Policy and departmental targets and replace it with a one-year moratorium on non-Indigenous hires and transfers throughout this government in favour of a focus on Indigenous recruitment? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that we're trying to find solutions but if we simply -- we are already going to do a review of the Affirmative Action Policy. We are certainly looking at the Public Service Act. We're doing the recruitment and retention framework, and we now are looking at having a GNWT action plan. The framework and the action plan are new. We didn't have that overarching look at what's going on across the entire GNWT before. And again, I don't want to minimize how important that is. So if I'm to suddenly turn around and say well, we're just going to up end all of the way in which we hire right now, the work that it will take to do that is going to stop the work that we're doing on the Affirmative Action Policy. It's going to stop the work to roll out the framework. And Mr. Speaker, those are both things that are looking at the real structure and the barriers that we have and the systemic barriers that we have. That work has to get done. I want it to get done. And I want it to get done in this Assembly, Mr. Speaker. And so that's where I want to focus our attention. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 992-19(2):
FUR INDUSTRY

MR. BONNETROUGE: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I spoke at length of the need to assist many of our residents who don't know where to turn for income. The school students have the Take a Kid Trapping program, but many of our young adults, or the young men, who don't excel in school and didn't leave the community don't have the luxury of such a program. Can the Minister of ENR commit to tailoring a trapper training program for our young adults? Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Deh Cho. Minister responsible for Environment and Natural Resources.

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I thank the Member for that question. The Department of Environment and Natural Resources has a number of existing programs that support trapping. ENR provides ongoing trapping training in the communities across the NWT for trappers to ensure they can get top quality for pelts sold at auctions. We have new actions that can help support young and middle-aged adults, as well as women. ENR has been working with the Indigenous governments to develop a pilot program for trapper mentorship. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. BONNETROUGE: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, income assistance payments are on the rise. Our healthcare system is stretched due to injuries stemming from excessive alcohol and drug use. We require this government to come up with initiatives to getting our residents back to work and curbing the excessive use of alcohol and drugs. This is affecting many of our young adults in our communities. Will the Minister commit to providing funding and developing an action plan to revitalize the trapping industry for our communities? Mahsi.

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, ENR and ITI are working closely together to explore additional opportunities to support domestic markets for our fur marketing within the NWT, the North, and across Canada. This includes a proposed fur industry forum in 2022 to develop a roadmap for a future of the NWT fur industry and opportunities for innovation. ENR is currently evaluating the existing Genuine Mackenzie Valley Fur Program to determine what is working and where changes will maybe needed to enhance that program. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. BONNETROUGE: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker, and mahsi to the Minister. Mr. Speaker, no one is doing anything with furs in the Northwest Territories. The Fort McPherson Tent and Canvass is not using the furs in their products. The Dene Fur Cloud Shop in Fort Providence is using rabbit pelts imported from out of territory. I see potential industries for our territory in the creation of mitts, gloves, vests, coats,

hats, and the list is not exhaustive. All this with the use of furs caught in the NWT.

Will the Minister take a closer look into this possibility and develop plans to making this initiative a reality? Mahsi.

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, ENR and ITI continue to look for ways to enhance trapping in the traditional economy. The proposal for -- proposed fur industry forum planned for 2022 is intended to help develop a plan for the future of the NWT fur industry. This forum will bring together key players in the NWT fur industry and will address the issue that the Member is raising. And I thank the Member for bringing forth this concern. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. BONNETROUGE: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. And I thank the Minister for that. I'd like to suggest the Minister work with other departments to advance this initiative, and it could be more than just two departments. Even during tough times, we have to be seen as being optimistic for the future, including the fur economy.

Will the Minister commit to open dialogue with First Nation leaders to discuss the government's plans to revitalize not only the fur economy but to actively putting our residents, including the young adults, back into the working environment? Mahsi.

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, ENR undertook a very broad engagement when developing the sustainable livelihood action plan, which included 18 community open houses. This included engagement with the communities, Indigenous governments, Indigenous organizations, renewable resource boards, and councils, hunters and trappers committee. All actions in the plan reflect key community concerns related to harvesting, trapping, and food security. ENR remains committed to continue ongoing engagement in collaboration with our co-management partners and the trappers themselves for input on the proposed fur forum and trapping in general. And Mr. Speaker, I can guarantee you our Indigenous governments are very much a key stakeholder and partners as we move forward. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 993-19(2):
CANADIAN RED CROSS

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs.

As we apply the learnings from the pandemic and the flooding events that occurred in 2021, could the Minister comment on how lessons learned from the past will affect our future collaboration with the Canadian Red Cross in the Northwest Territories? How will the Red Cross work with this team during our next emergencies? Thank you.

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

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I thank the Member for the question. Red Cross has -- we've had conversations with them, myself and the Minister of Health and Social Services. We've had conversations on that. Communities have reached out to Red Cross as well. So we are working with them presently. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So the collaboration is a collaboration; I appreciate that answer. So next my question is in complex and protracted events, it is essential to collaborate with organizations that bring learnings and expertise from across Canada that we may not have here in the territory; as well, we're all responsible for community preparedness and readiness.

So how will the GNWT and the Red Cross collaborate and share expertise on important initiatives such as volunteer capacity building, advanced preparation and disaster planning, and community education and awareness? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we have reached -- Red Cross has reached out to us; we've reached out to them. We're having these conversations. We are building our capacity within the territories. We're working on our flood management programs, our flood-related issues. ENR is working with them with fires as well. So we are working on these things. We are building the capacity in the communities. And if the communities are saying we need certain things that we don't have to offer, we're looking elsewhere. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'll try again; I'm actually looking for details on that collaboration in training programs, schedules, you know, meeting appointments, anything that could be provided to the Regular Members as to actually what is going on in that conversation with the Red Cross.

Can the Minister explain why at the beginning of the flooding disaster last year, it took so long for the

GNWT to draw on the resources of the Red Cross? It's my understanding that it took Indigenous leadership in the region to start that ball rolling. What is the Minister doing to ensure that if we do need help in the future that we're going to request that help at the first moment possible? Thank you.

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you. The Member has about three or four questions in there so I'll try to focus on a couple of them.

We are working on a plan to move forward. If that involves Red Cross, we will add that into it. We are working with the communities to make sure they're prepared for it. We had learning opportunities from the last flood, and so we're working on those. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister did not explain or answer my question as to why it took time for the Red Cross to be pulled in and why we left it up to Indigenous governments in order to do so. Thank you.

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For that detail, I'll have to get back to the Member. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 994-19(2):
SHINGLES VACCINE

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I spoke about in my statement, right now the shingles vaccine is both available and recommended for those over 50; however, it's only covered under both Blue Cross health extended benefits and NHIB for those ages 65 to 70. I was hoping the Minister of Health can explain this, especially the cap. It seems odd to me that if you are 71 and you go to get the vaccine, you're too late. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Yellowknife North. Minister responsible for Health and Social Services.

HON. JULIE GREEN: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I recognize that shingles is a very painful condition for those who contract it and it can lead to significant health outcomes, as the Member said in his statement.

The rationale here is that the numbers of people in the NWT who require the shingles vaccine is relatively small compared to other vaccines that we would like to fund and don't have the money to fund at this point. In order to bring the vaccine to the whole 50 to 64-year-old group, and then the EHB would

cover it after that, we'd be looking for an investment of \$2 million which is something, of course, the Regular Members could request during the budget process. Thank you.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yeah, I -- and I know that the department and -- whenever we're looking to bring a vaccine into public funded, there's a bit of a debate, you know, about most vaccines that save us money in healthcare costs in the long term if they prevent hospitalizations we save money in the long term. And with shingles, in this case we would save people a lot of pain. I'm just wondering if the department has any evidence that -- or has done any of the research about whether extending this vaccine to everyone would actually save the health system money? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. JULIE GREEN: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, a full analysis has not been done but there are some estimates. So cost due to hospitalizations due to shingles for NWT residents aged 50 plus, for 2009 to 2018, was \$1.3 million. The cost for the vaccine product to immunize the entire NWT population for 50 plus is \$1.91 million. And there's also a need for boosters with shingles, and the annual cost of that would be \$165,000.

So as things stand now, it would cost us more to vaccinate than it would cost for hospitalizations. But that is a very mathematical answer. People who have shingles -- and I'm aware of people in my own acquaintance who have had shingles -- it's a very painful condition. So if people have employer plans that would cover the shingles vaccine and would be able to get it prior to age 65, I would certainly recommend that. Thank you.

MR. JOHNSON: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think I'm going to have to revisit those numbers because if there's annual ongoing hospitalization costs and we can just do a one time, get everyone out there vaccinated and, you know, largely at some point the chicken pox vaccine will catch up and the number of shingles cases will really decline in the population. But I'm hoping I -- you know, as public health moves into, you know, having a little bit more time on their hand, we could get some information out there telling people to get vaccinated for shingles and how exactly and when they can get reimbursed. I know it's different whether you have NHIB or it's different if you have Blue Cross, and I know some people have went and paid for it not even knowing they were eligible for any sort of reimbursement. So if the Minister could commit to getting some information out there for our seniors to get vaccinated against shingles? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. JULIE GREEN: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, yes, the department is interested in targeting the most high risk population, which is that

65 to 70-year-old group. Also, people who are receiving active cancer treatment who are immune compromised. And the NHIB program offers an exception to the 65 to 70 age group. People can apply for coverage if they feel they can make a case for that with NHIB.

Having said all of that, I think that the Member's suggestion is a good one, that we provide a more targeted campaign to encourage uptake on the vaccine for the 65 to 70 group and for those who have benefits, as I say, who might be able to get it sooner, to go ahead and do that rather than deal with the pain and potential long-term consequences of shingles. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 995-19(2):
MAINTENANCE ENFORCEMENT

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. My questions are for the Minister of Justice responsible for the maintenance enforcement program.

My statement outlined the complexities of adjusting the amount of maintenance enforcement payments and the difficulties of enacting these changes. The Minister told me that an automatic adjustment regime would be coming into place at the beginning of the year. Can the Minister tell me the status of this improvement? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And like many things over the past two years, it's a story of delays. We were initially waiting for the federal government to make changes to one of their acts, the Divorce Act, which they did, then there was a federal election which meant that our discussions with the federal government on using a recalculation service under the Divorce Act were delayed. But we've restarted those and we've made significant progress, and so while we didn't hit the January 1st deadline, we're hoping by April 1st to have the draft regulations posted for public comment, and I expect that we'll get some good feedback on that. And as soon as we review those comments and see if there's any adjustments needed, we hope to be able to put these into force. However, we do need to still work with the federal government and ensure that there's an MOU in place so that we can use this for situations under the Divorce Act. Thank you.

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. I want to thank the Minister for that. The sooner the better. Of course, it's one thing for the changes to be made and another for those affected to be informed. So what activities does the department plan to carry out,

first, to identify those maintenance orders affected by the change; and secondly, to inform child support payment recipients that a new regime of annual payment recalculation is being introduced? Sorry, Mr. Speaker. Those are questions for the Minister. Mahsi.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. So those wishing to use the service will have to apply. It won't -- not everyone will be able to use the service. There are parameters. There are certain criteria that people will have to meet. But we will have a broad information campaign through social media through all -- we will update all of our family law publications, the website. The information will be distributed by legal aid lawyers through -- we'll distribute it to the Law Society so that all lawyers have that information, can distribute it to their clients. So every way we can get the information out, we are going to get the information out. Thank you.

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. I want to thank the Minister for that and, of course, we're starting to get the word out right now.

Obviously, delays in receiving child support payments can have serious consequences for well-being of children. I've dealt with my instances of money paid to -- or some of these cases myself for my constituents where constituents have not been paid promptly.

Can the Minister say what provisions are in place to treat instances such as emergencies and takes swift action to recover and disburse payments for child support? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So most payments, once they're in the system, are swift. 95 percent of the maintenance enforcement clients receive their funds through direct deposit. There's sometimes situations where one of the parties might be outside of the territory and in those instances, we have legislation, and other jurisdictions have complementary legislation, whereby we cooperate. And all jurisdictions in Canada, except for Quebec, also use direct deposit. So there may be delays in some situations, particularly when one of the individuals is living in Quebec. But for the most part, funds are processed within a day. Thank you.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. I got so excited, I jumped ahead one question. So I know that the Minister -- I'll just have to surprise him right now.

But I'm just wondering if there's any kind of annual reporting or tracking of how long it takes for these cross-jurisdictional payments to be made for child support? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't have that information. But I will -- I can get back to the Member. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 996-19(2):
HOUSING

MR. EDJERICON: Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Minister of Housing.

In order to address core housing needs in the communities, there needs to be an assessment done on every asset. This is critical piece in building the plan to improve core housing. Can the Minister of Housing provide a total estimate budget to address housing core needs for the Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh riding? Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh. Minister responsible for Northwest Territories Housing Corporation.

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Currently right now we have the local housing authorities and we also have the district office that is run out of Yellowknife. I don't have those numbers in front of me to look at specific budgets for each of the regions. But as of today, just looking at my housing delivery, for Fort Resolution there will be a delivery of six units. N'dilo, there will be a delivery of two. Lutselk'e, there will be a delivery of four. And Dettah, there will be two units delivered. And the final construction for these units would be 2022-2023. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Can the Minister of Housing provide me the detailed housing assessment to bring homes out of core need for all homes in the Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh riding? Mahsi.

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't have that information in front of me, but I can tell the Member that we have been working with the community of Fort Resolution -- I mean, the community of Lutselk'e that has started on a draft community housing plan. And Dettah and N'dilo are in progress, and Fort Resolution has not get begun.

With these housing plans, they start to identify the housing needs right from the ground level. The importance of these housing plans to go forward is to start that communication with the Indigenous groups and with the Housing Corporation to further look ahead and what are they wanting to plan and what it is that they want delivered in their communities. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you to the Minister for your answers, and that helps. I just had a couple quick questions here.

I recognize that the NWT Housing Corporation will provide a plan to address core housing needs in the NWT to this Assembly before the end of the session, and this is a very positive one. However, Mr. Speaker, I'm looking for a detail assessment data for every home in my riding, every home by community. Can the Minister provide that level of detail to me? Mahsi.

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't have a detailed plan for all of the housing ownership in each of the communities. We don't own all of the assets at the ground level. I just have some numbers here for the Member.

So in Dettah, we have an operation of 43 units. In N'dilo, we have 34 units. And in Fort Resolution, we have 94 units. Lutselk'e, we have 63. I also have the population ranging from 548 to 335 in each of these communities. And once again, Mr. Speaker, I want to just -- the Housing Corporation does not own every single house and every single asset on the ground level. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Final supplementary, Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Minister. Can the Minister of Housing explain how the Housing Corporation is engaging with Indigenous governments in my riding to address the housing crisis? Mahsi.

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just at this time I really want to highlight the Council of Leaders Housing Working Group that is open to all Indigenous groups throughout the Northwest Territories, and this is where our renewal strategy and our policy review, the whole pretty much revamp of the Housing Corporation, is the main topic of discussion of that table. And it also helps us to work with the federal government. If housing money is not going to flow through from the federal government to the GNWT to Housing Corporation, I'm advocating that the Indigenous groups are able to acquire funding that has been announced by Canada.

Looking at our partnerships that we do have, right now we have a partnership with Deninu Kue right now who is looking at constructing two of our units as well too. And I just really want to emphasize on that partnership as well, and that's not the only one, but with these housing deliveries that we do have coming within the lifetime of this government, I've sent out letters in April of last year acknowledging each of the Indigenous groups whether they would want to participate or whether they felt that they wanted to construct these units.

The other thing that I've put in as the Minister is that each of these contracts going out, they have to have

an apprentice. So it's built right into those negotiated contracts. To date, we have 33.

And then for the Member's riding, I just -- sorry for taking so long, but we have one certified boiler mechanic for the local housing authority. I don't have the name of the authority. I don't know which community it is in. I had it right in front of me, but I misplaced it. I'll follow up with the Member. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 997-19(2):
CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

MS. WEYALLON-ARMSTRONG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Can the Minister provide to me at a later time the statistics on population of jails in the NWT over the last five years? Can this information include Indigenous male and female, and the ages. Thank you.

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

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is really -- should be presented as a written question, but I will work on that. Thank you.

MS. WEYALLON-ARMSTRONG: Thank you. Well, some of this is going to be written questions tomorrow.

Okay, so the Hay River correctional centre was to transition to the therapeutic community model in the spring of 2021. This is a very positive step in providing rehab programming. Can the Minister explain how the results of this program will be evaluated and what are their plans to expand this to other correctional facilities?

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So I think this really is one of the bright spots in corrections in the territory, what is going on at the South Mackenzie Correctional Centre. I had the opportunity to tour the facility, and the program had really just been in operation for a number of weeks, but I could tell that it was -- you know, it was going to make a difference, really, in the lives of the people who are there. So, really, the proof will be in the pudding. And, you know, we are the -- the residents are, you know, part of the program and so there's constant feedback from them about how things are working. It really is a community model and so everyone is involved; everyone is reporting on the progress. And for -- perhaps for some specifics, I can follow up with the Member about, you know, how we are really tracking progress. But the idea is to ensure we know how to run this program appropriately and then see how it can be expanded. It won't be -- we

won't be able to just transfer it to NSCC. It's a different type of population. There's a number of differences. But I think we're learning valuable lessons there that we want to be able to share with the rest of the territory. Thank you.

MS. WEYALLON-ARMSTRONG: Thank you. Okay, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am concerned, Mr. Speaker, that if the population of jails has decreased, does that mean that we are seeing people overfill or bottleneck in other parts of the justice system? Can the Minister provide me at a later time the statistics on the number of people -- people under probation by ethnicity, age, and gender in the NWT over the last five years?

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, this should be a written question and so in the future, it would be nice if these were presented in accordance with the rules. But we can work on putting something together. Thank you.

MS. WEYALLON-ARMSTRONG: Thank you. Can the Minister describe what kind of trauma-informed support services are available to people under probation? Thank you.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have been doing a lot of work over the last number of years on ensuring that -- first of all, beginning with frontline staff, that there has been trauma-informed training. So in the past number of years since 2016, 375 Justice frontline workers have received trauma-informed approach training, as well as participated in the Living Well Together Program that's required for all GNWT employees. And that includes the probation officers. And I have to say that, you know, some of the probation officers in the territory really have been leading the charge on integrated service delivery long before it was, you know, the "in thing". So many of them are from the communities. You know, we have some positions in the territory where people are brought in but a lot of our probation officers really understand the communities, and they work with the clients in ways that are really above and beyond what they -- you know, what you would expect them to be doing. So the services available to those on probation really vary depending on what community they're in.

If you're in Yellowknife, you have -- obviously, you have access to more services than if you are in a small community with very few services. So it's not -- I can't give you the -- I can't say that, you know, we have these services available to everyone because everyone's situation is different based on where they are and what their needs are. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 998-19(2):
FORT SMITH

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Minister of Lands.

The NWT rumor mill was flying this weekend as the alarming events in Fort Smith unfolded, and my thoughts are with everyone there as they continue to cope with this tragedy. Can the Minister explain how, according to this rumor mill, guns from the Department of Lands ended up in the hands of the young perpetrator? Thank you.

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

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: First of all, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to offer my sincere condolences to the family and friends of the individual in Fort Smith who lost their life on Friday. Incidents like this shake a small community to its core, and it's a very -- has an impact on all of us across the Northwest Territories as we know most people there. It's more important now to remember that -- ever that we show kindness and compassion to our neighbours at this time.

In regards to the questions for the Member, all equipment on site in Fort Smith was securely and safely stored in adherence with the policies and legislation of this government. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Since he's raised policies and procedures, about a few years ago there was a similar break-in at the Department of ENR in Fort Smith in which guns were taken. What lessons were learned from that incident, and were any updated safety measures or protocols provided to the Fort Smith lands office to prevent a similar occurrence there? Thank you.

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For that detail, I'll have to get back to the Member. Thank you.

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's concerning to me that that wasn't the first question asked by this Minister when this incident occurred. So does the Minister then confirm that those were the guns that were used in the incident in weekend? Thank you.

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, I'm not going to talk about what's going on right now with the investigation but I can make a commitment once we have been advised from the RCMP that we're able to provide information, we will provide that information. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I just find this to be extremely concerning as well as the lack of information from any of Cabinet over the weekend about what was happening in Fort Smith.

Can the Minister please commit that the next time as anything is occurring that he actually notifies other Members that things are going on in this territory? Thank you.

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I reached out to the Member from Thebacha right away as soon as we found out what was going on. The Premier has reached out to the Member from Thebacha, the justice minister and the health Minister. So it was in her riding. We were understood of the situation. We worked with her. And I have to applaud the Member from Thebacha for the work that she did, the leadership in that community, including the RCMP. They took their roles and responsibilities sincerely. And we worked with the affected Member moving forward. We don't want to get out there spreading rumors until we have facts. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 99-19(2):
ELECTRICITY RATES

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions today are for the Minister responsible for the NTPC.

My first question, Mr. Speaker, is NTPC's most recent rate application was authorized for three years starting in May of 2019. That means the current rate schedule has almost expired and the PUB needs to approve a new one. And so I'm wondering if the Minister can update the House on when the public can expect to know the proposed changes to rates over the next three years? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Quanani. The Northwest Territories Power Corporation will file the general rate application, or the GRA, with the Public Utilities Board on March the 25th. So, you know, in order to be able to meet the requirements to file by March 31st. Quanani.

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm wondering if the Minister can indicate what ratepayers can expect to pay for power as a result of the general rate application and

how they can get involved in the process? Thank you.

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Quanani. The general rate application by NTPC will be posted on the Public Utilities Board soon after it's received. Quanani.

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, NTPC's capital plan has budgeted over \$300 million in spending over the next five years. The plan shows that the federal government will provide only 27 cents on the dollar. A lot of our other infrastructure projects here in the Northwest Territories received 75-cent dollars. And so I'm wondering if the Minister can speak to why that is and whether this government intends to pursue 75-cent dollars for NTPC. Thank you.

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Quanani. The GNWT continues to work with Canada to look for flexibility in our previously approved projects under the federal funding agreements. Many jurisdictions are facing this challenge with COVID and other inflationary pressures that affect capital projects. It is also, too, important to note that any contributions from the GNWT for capital projects will not impact the general rates. Quanani.

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

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I know the Minister wants to minimize rates as much as possible across the Northwest Territories, and a big help for that would be increasing third party funding. So I'm wondering if the Minister can confirm whether NTPC has its own dedicated team to source federal funding or if a dedicated position to source innovation and partnership dollars can be implemented within NTPC staff? Thank you.

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Quanani. The Northwest Territories Power Corporation does not have designated resource within its staff that deals with assessing federal or third party funding. I would note that the federal government does not enter into funding arrangements with provincial or territorial Crown corporations but will enter into funding arrangements for Crown corporations with provinces and territories. The necessary expertise to seek this federal and third party funding already exists within the Department of Infrastructure, and Finance as well. If we were to create a designated person, personnel in NTPC to seek funding from the federal government, that cost would have to be passed on to the ratepayers through increased electricity, and I'm not prepared to do that. Quanani.

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

QUESTION 1000-19(2):
CANADIAN RED CROSS

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Minister of MACA as the Minister responsible for the Emergency Management Office. Under the emergency management office, can the Minister please explain how the communications tree or matrix works during an emergency? Thank you.

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

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, I'm going to provide a little clarity here.

During an emergency event, all levels of government in individual departments have roles to deliver. In this situation here, it was the RCMP who are responsible law enforcement. They were the lead agency on the tragedy -- tragic events that were happening, and they were the ones in charge of this situation. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I did ask about a general communications matrix, not about this specific incident. It doesn't seem that the Minister can explain that to me so maybe he can explain why residents went for 12 hours between Friday and Saturday with no update. The RCMP are busy doing their job. Why couldn't the government put out communications to reassure residents that things were still ongoing and they couldn't leave their homes? Thank you.

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I said at the very beginning, the RCMP were in charge of this. We, as the Government of the Northwest Territories, do not want to give misinformation out there. We work with the town. We had conversations with the town. We had conversations with the RCMP. They are in charge of communications. They were getting that out there. For the 12 hours delay, I'm not sure why it happened, it was 12 hours. But I can guarantee you that we were in contact with the department -- with -- sorry, with the town and the RCMP on this matter. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think the Minister is missing my point. While the Minister and his colleagues were updated on everything that was going on, the residents of Fort Smith did not feel that they were and people were alarmed and they were afraid.

Can the Minister tell me when the decision was made that the community of Fort Smith, the town, would take the lead on communications? Was it a good 24 hours after everything started? Thank you.

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I said, the RCMP were in charge. They had an EMO meeting on Saturday. They had a conversation. And the town decided that they would take charge of the communications, which is the local emergency. They are local. They're the ones in charge. So they took the lead on it. Basically, all they were doing was providing the information they received from the RCMP. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That's exactly my point. I don't understand why this government, if they are being notified by the RCMP, cannot turn around and utilize social media and other methods in order to inform residents. This is not a silo. This is a multi-departmental and multiagency function. And for this government to yet wash its hands yet again or the disadvantage of our citizens is not acceptable. I would like to ask that the Minister do a lessons learned here and improve the communications around emergencies, whether they be environmental disasters or whether they be social ones. He cannot wash his hands of this. It's an emergency measures office. Emergencies span everything. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, emergency process is local, regional, territory. We as Government of the Northwest Territories do not interfere and get out the communications for the communities. We work with the community. We follow their path, their direction. And if they ask us for the region we then go out there. We do not also interfere with the RCMP. They have a communication strategy and a plan. But on my understanding there will be a lessons learned with this. We will be working with Justice and Health and the community and the RCMP on this. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Oral questions. Written questions. Returns to written questions. Replies to the Commissioner's address. Petitions. Reports of committees on the review of bills. Reports of standing and special committees. Tabling of documents. Notices of motion. Motions. Notices of motion for the first reading of bills. First reading of the bills. Second reading of bills. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters: Bill 23, 29, and 38; Minister's Statement 202-19(2); Tabled Document 561, 567, 578, 579-19(2), with Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes in the chair.

---SHORT RECESS

Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): What is the wish of committee? Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Madam la Presidente. Committee wishes to consider Tabled Document 561-19(2): Main Estimates 2022-2023, with Municipal and Community Affairs and Executive and Indigenous Affairs. Mahsi, Madam Chair.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

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

---SHORT RECESS.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): I now call Committee of the Whole back to order. Committee, we've agreed to consider Tabled Document 561-19(2): Main Estimates 2022-2023. And we are going to continue with the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs.

Does the Minister wish to bring in witnesses?

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Yes, Madam Chair.

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

Minister, will you please introduce your witness.

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. With me here is deputy minister Gareau. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, and welcome. Committee, we are going to continue on where we left off, and we were in the directorate. And I think I had Member of Monfwi first on my list but if she's not ready, is there any other Members for the Municipal and Community Affairs directorate?

All right, seeing none. Please turn to page 343, Municipal and Community Affairs, directorate, operations expenditure summary, 2022-2023 Main Estimates, \$3,953,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, committee. Please now turn to the Municipal and Community Affairs, public safety, at page 347 with information items on 348 and 349. Questions from Members on the Department of public safety? Member for Yellowknife North.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. As I've spoken about many times, we are the only place in Canada that doesn't employ building inspectors. We take one small part of the building code, and we give it to the Office of the Fire Marshal. But, you know, compared to Yukon and Nunavut or anywhere else, we don't actually apply the whole National Building Code and we don't really develop that expertise. And I know the Fire Prevention Act is scheduled. I heard the Minister speak during corporate services about all the work they are doing to find policy staff.

I'm just -- I'm still slightly unsure about what the first phase of the Fire Prevention Act that we are hopefully going to see in the life of this Assembly will look like and whether it will, you know, do something like create building inspectors or building inspection office? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. For that detail, I'll go to the deputy minister. Thank you.

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

MS. GAREAU: Thank you. MACA's currently chairing a working group with several departments on it, and we're in the process of developing a discussion paper to go out to public engagement.

The purpose of the public engagement is to get feedback on what the scope of the legislative project should be, whether or not it should include building inspection provisions or whether or not we're just looking at updating the current Fire Prevention Act.

As the Member did note, NWT is the only jurisdiction in Canada without building inspection legislation and the informal feedback we have heard to date is that there is support for building inspection legislation. But we do want to go through the process and have formal comments and hear the formal feedback to inform the legislative proposal. Thank you.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Yeah, thank you, Madam Chair. I -- probably a larger conversation here about I know departments have their processes and have to go through them but, you know, we have 18 months left in this Assembly, and I -- at some point, we just need to stop talking to anyone and stop talking to the communities and get the Building Inspection Act considering we're the only place in Canada without one, would be my opinion. But I'll leave it to the department to do their processes.

My question is there's -- I know the Office of the Fire Marshal only has a \$500,000 budget. It's a pretty small office with quite a lot of responsibility. Not only does it have to, you know, supervise every single GNWT Infrastructure project, it has to supervise all the private ones as well through a series of inspections from the design phase right to the permitting.

I believe sometimes the office contracts the plan review function to private individuals who are professionals in this area. I note when Nunavut created the building inspectors they kind of just decided that they weren't ever going to build that capacity and it's easier to contract out the plan review function. The turnaround times are amazing, I'm told, by the professionals in that area.

I'm just wondering how much of -- whether we are doing that and how much of this budget is spent on contract services for that function, and do we have that information? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you. For that detail, I'll turn to the deputy minister. Thank you.

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

MS. GAREAU: Thank you. In 2021-2022, there has not been use of contractors to assist the OFM. However, going forward we are in the process of developing an RFP to engage contractors on an as-and-when basis. There is quite a bit of volume going through the office and a small complement so we do want to have that additional capacity going forward. Thank you.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yeah, I am very happy to hear that, and I know that there will be a number of contractors who are familiar with those -- the likely people who will bid on that RFP and have worked with them across the North in different territories, and I think we ease the workload of those people at the Office of the Fire Marshal by doing that. So I look forward to seeing that RFP.

I wanted to talk about the contract services line item here of \$30 million. I'm going -- I'm quite confident that this is the flood money. Can I just get an update on when we expect to have completed our reimbursement to the federal government under the disaster assistance policy and when we expect to submit that for the flooding? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Yeah, so he's correct, it is flood. But for that detail of when it's going to be completed, I'll turn to the deputy minister. Thank you.

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

MS. GAREAU: Thank you. We expect to have the majority of work done by March 31st, the end of the fiscal year. We expect that we will still have potentially invoices and bills rolling in past that date. But our intent is to -- well, we have already started building the claim and working with Public Safety Canada to ensure we're compiling the claim correctly. We don't have a date yet for when we will be submitting but it will be as soon as possible once we've -- once we have all of our expenses known and our paperwork in line. Thank you.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Yeah, thank you, Madam Chair. I would like the Minister to speak to any work that's being done to increase our emergency management ability. I'll note that we budget \$330,000, which is two or three staff to -- you know, if you look at the actuals, I mean obviously last year was a bad year, but I don't even know if three staff can administer \$35 million and then the year before that, they had to administer a few million more, you know, just to track that amount of money requires more than three staff, let alone actually be on the ground responding to emergencies. And I think given the climate change realities, we are likely to see many more of these, unfortunately, in a variety of aspects.

So if the Minister could speak to, you know, the fact that emergency management is only \$330,000 budgeted, whether that is sufficient and what we can do to staff up that and make sure we are prepared? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. So we are looking at allocating five more positions from the regional level. We're in the process of that. We are also in the process of working with the COVID Secretariat, and there's potential of three positions coming to us as that. So we are building the team, regional and headquarters. Previously, we are looking at where positions are best suited and right now, we feel comfortable with our allotment of these eight positions where we have them located going forward right now. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Are there any further questions under public safety from Members? Member for Thebacha.

MS. MARTSELOS: Thank you, Madam Chair. The Office of the Fire Marshal, you know, it's been -- this is, we're in our third year, Madam Chair, and we have asked for briefings at the government operations committee and at various times, and we still never got that briefing and then we're in our third year as elected Members.

First of all, I also want to know how many people work in that office. And, you know, it has a lot to do with the relationship also, Madam Chair, with the business community and there are times when there's -- there has to be a really good balance between what that office does and communications with the business community. So I'm just wondering about that. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you. Yeah, the Member is correct about the meeting. We are working with the chair of the committee to find a time that we'll meet there. And we apologize, it hasn't been done in the timely manner.

In regards to positions, I know that we have assistant fire marshals in each of the regions. And then out of the headquarters office, I would have to get -- with your permission, get the deputy minister to provide more clarity on that. Thank you.

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

MS. GAREAU: Thank you. In headquarters, there are three positions. And as Minister Thompson mentioned, we have five regional assistant fire marshal positions, one in each region. Thank you.

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

MS. MARTSELOS: Thank you, Madam Chair. The emergency management with the flooding, you know, the amounts that were allocated, how much of that money -- of that -- that was used, the \$35,823,000, how much of that was -- do you have the breakdown of that allocations, Madam Chair, for monies that stayed in the North and the monies that have gone somewhere else? Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Member for -- I'm sorry, Minister of MACA.

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Yes, thank you. Yes, so we do provide committee with the breakdown. As for the communities where -- if the money stayed in the

North and that, I'll turn to the deputy minister to provide further detail. Thank you.

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

MS. GAREAU: Thank you, Madam Chair. As the Minister noted, we do provide monthly reports to standing committee, and I don't have the exact breakdown with me but the majority of the money we have spent has been with northern contractors. I was going to quote a number but I'm sorry, I don't have that detail with me. It is the majority of the funding for contractors. Thank you.

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

MS. MARTSELOS: I don't have any other questions. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm just curious in looking at the 911 program, I notice that there is an increase here this year by about \$500,000. It's my understanding that in the coming years we will no longer be able -- or the levy cap will be finished. Is the department's intention to raise the levy for 911 users? I guess in other words, pass that cost along to the people of the territory? Thank you.

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

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Yes, thank you. The Member's correct, we've looked at this. This is something that we're looking at moving forward because we had a cap on it for three years. Now as we move forward, we are going to be looking at the levy, user pay sort of approach to it. Thank you.

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

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, does the Minister commit to coming back to committee before a decision is made whether to increase that levy? Thank you.

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

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Yes.

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

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just also want to reiterate some of the concerns I hear around the Office of the Fire Marshal and its inability to keep up with its workload.

I guess I don't want to reiterate everything my colleague from Yellowknife North said, but I do want to see a commitment there for a real in-depth look at what's happening there and how it is impacting us. As our supply chains and timeframes get a lot tighter for projects in the North, it's going to become more critical that the Office of the Fire Marshal moves plans through faster or does their inspections faster. So if I could have the Minister speak to that? Thank you.

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

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you. Yes, so we are looking at a contract services right now to address this challenge that we have presently facing. Thank you.

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

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. I guess my next question is around emergency management such and given that everything that's happened this weekend, is it that the RCMP does all search and rescue operations in the Northwest Territories or does some of this fall under the purview of the department? Thank you.

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

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: I don't want to give the wrong answers so I'm going to turn to the deputy minister. I think I know what the answer is, and I think it starts with Y, but I'm going to turn to the deputy minister for clarity on that. Thank you.

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

MS. GAREAU: Thank you. Yes, the Minister is correct. It is the RCMP that have the lead currently for search and rescue, with partners, community governments, and the GNWT assisting when and where required. Thank you.

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

MS. NOKLEBY: So can the Minister or the deputy minister explain how that would differ then from the work that Justice is doing with the RCMP, including the work of the coroner? Thank you.

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

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: I apologize, we'll have to get back to the Member on that. That there, I'm -- don't know. I don't have the answer, sorry.

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

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yeah, that's fine. I sometimes do better when I'm getting something I can read instead of listening, especially at this point in session.

I guess my next question is just I've been looking around in the MACA website, and I don't actually see any definition of what the public safety division's role is in the Northwest Territories. So perhaps that may be why it's a little bit hard to clarify their role and what they're doing with other departments.

So can the Minister or the deputy minister speak to what is the philosophy there and what is the public safety division's guiding principles? Thank you.

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

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: For that detail, I'll turn to the deputy minister. Thank you.

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

MS. GAREAU: Thank you. The public safety division is the lead agency in the GNWT to administer the Emergency Management Act as well as coordinate the emergency management organization.

It also provides other public safety functions around consumer affairs, real estate, the Office of the Fire Marshal, and the 9-1-1 program operated by the NWT.

Yeah, the main function is to assist community governments in those public safety functions that fall within the community government area as well as the lead GNWT department on public safety -- other public safety matters. Thanks.

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

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. I guess then my next question is what role does this department, then, play in arctic defence and up in the North, how do they liaise with the department of natural -- I can't talk -- national defence and the federal government. Thank you.

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

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: For that detail, I'll turn to the deputy minister. Thank you.

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

MS. GAREAU: Thank you. There's a working relationship at the staff level between the public safety staff and the federal defence staff located in the Northwest Territories. They participate on active live exercises. Members may be familiar with things like Operation Nanook, those types of exercises.

There's ongoing training offered between the two organizations, frequent collaboration on Arctic security matters, recognizing that it is the federal government that has the lead for that function. But there's a strong working relationship at the staff level around those matters. Thank you.

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

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. And I'm glad to hear that there is some sort of a collaboration or conversation happening there. I think this is a good time to maybe put forth, again, the idea of a public safety department versus having it piecemeal across several different departments given that we are now living in a new world, as everyone likes to say, our new normal of continuing pandemics, greater climate change emergencies, etcetera. We have heard other colleagues speak to the mystery of why Lands and MACA are two different departments and such and so perhaps maybe an evolution of one of those departments could be a public safety department. Could the Minister speak of whether or not this is being considered? Thank you.

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

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: So a public safety department, no, not right yet. We are having conversations on how to better utilize our departments moving forward for the residents of the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Minister -- I'm sorry, Member for Great Slave.

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. That seems to contrast directly with what I was told in question period today that, you know, it was the RCMP's responsibility to take care of things. So it gets a little bit frustrating at times when the government wants to speak about breaking down silos when it works for them and at other times when it's not, and they want to wash their hands or not take responsibility for something, all of a sudden it's not theirs. So I guess more of a comment, but I would encourage this department and this deputy minister to put that aside and actually look at what's best for our people. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Minister of MACA, anything? Any other comments/questions under public safety? Member for Hay River South.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The territories, we've been without a -- I don't think we have -- I'm not sure if we ever had a building code. But, you know, we've kind of been running off, I guess, the National Building Code, you know, and adopting parts of it. We've also been, you know, look -- run other -- or used other things as well as best building practices in the North and that type of thing.

So have we looked at any -- or has the department looked at any legislation? Like, I know Nunavut had adopted the NBC, which included, you know, parts of it, or in some -- yeah, parts of it, guess. Is there -- is this something the department is looking at? Because I think that when people are up here doing work -- and I've seen it over the years I guess. And, you know, talking -- you know, I hear about the Office of the Fire Marshal all the time. I've heard it more so in probably in its last four or five years than I heard it prior to that. We didn't seem to have this type of issue and these type of problems. And it seems like we need to consolidate what we're doing and, you know, maybe creating some legislation, adopting the NBC. And, you know, we've got -- the other thing is we've got electrical; we've got gas I think under -- in one department. We've got fire in another. And people just don't know where to go. I know I deal with companies down south and they come up here, and they just have no idea what's going on. They just think we follow Alberta and things like that. So what's the department, I guess, doing going forward looking at maybe a creation of its own legislation? Thank you.

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

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: For that detail, I'll turn to the deputy minister. Thank you.

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

MS. GAREAU: Thank you. So the Fire Prevention Act is currently in place and we are doing a legislative project to review it, including looking at whether or not the GNWT should adopt building inspection. GNWT does adopt the National Building Code of Canada and the National Fire Code of Canada, and that's done through the national -- or sorry, through the fire prevention regulations. So it does ensure compliance with the NBC and the NFC by owners and contractors during the construction phase.

We do have quite a bit of information on the MACA website around industry guidelines and the plan review process and rules and responsibilities. And, you know, we do have assistant fire marshals in all of our regions. Unfortunately, we've got a couple vacancies right now but those staff, as well as the

staff in headquarters, are available to meet with private sector individuals, government individuals, on any questions they may have about the application of the National Building Code. Thank you.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I guess that's where the confusion lies, is that, you know, we put the onus on the Office of the Fire Marshal and legislation there. And so, you know, when I look at what the fire marshal does, I thought it was kind of just related to, you know, anything that to do with fire aspect of it. But it goes on -- it goes on to -- into getting into the structural design and all that as well, which people are -- which I know which -- which companies are kind of having a problem with because what's happening is that, you know, architects, structural engineers who are doing designs, you know, they -- you know, they've got the -- the liability is on them. And then it comes to the Office of the Fire Marshal, and then the fire marshal is -- it's my understanding is scrutinizing that and whether the fire marshal is an architect or a -- you know, a structural engineer, I don't know. And that's where the problem seems to be right now. And, yeah, so I guess, you know, how are we going to get around that? And the only way I see getting around it is through our own legislation that -- that makes sure that we -- you know, that we -- we have the electrical; we have the gas; we have structural; we have fire. You know, we don't even have a plumbing code here in the Northwest Territories. We do follow -- you know, people do follow the -- I think some respect, the National Building Code, but, you know, you go to places and nobody really follows up on it. I think maybe the City of Yellowknife maybe has somebody that does inspections but if you go outside Yellowknife, you're on your own and you can kind of do what you want. So -- yeah, so I guess what are you going to do about that type of confusion? Thank you.

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

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: For that detail, I'll turn to the deputy minister. Thank you.

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

MS. GAREAU: Thank you. Yes, the Member is correct. You know, there is some confusion out there and we recognize that, and we're -- you know, we are working to, you know, make sure that our assistant fire marshals and our headquarters officials, you know, have the information they need to be able to reach out to contractors and work with them. It is part of our legislative project to ensure

roles and responsibilities are clear and that everybody's -- all the functions are laid out, and it's also clear who is responsible for doing what in the new legislation. Thank you.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yeah, you know, I see that, you know, the good building practices, you know, we have that. It looks like government follows that. Is that applicable as well to -- for private infrastructure? Thank you.

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

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: We'll have to get back to the Member for that. Thank you.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. Well, I'm glad that, you know, that something's happening and, you know, one area that we could probably, you know, do something with -- and I think this has been alluded to -- is that the Office of the Fire Marshal, when you look at, you know, how much money we put into it, well, we know it's probably understaffed and that -- you know, and I know it takes a while to -- you know, to review documents. So we either got to put more money into it or, you know, farm some of that out, which it sounds like we might be doing because our -- or building seasons are short. The price of material is going up like crazy, waiting time. It's -- you know, we don't have time to slow, you know, building down in the Northwest Territories.

I just want to move over to ground ambulance, and I just want to know -- I see the number's kind of been the same there for a while in the budget. And what discussion, if any, I guess, is taking place with the communities, I guess, on the major highway systems, like the Town of Hay River -- I don't know who else? I guess City of Yellowknife and, you know, Providence, how it fits our communities that can provide that type of service? Thank you.

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

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you. For that detail about community engagement, I'll turn to the deputy minister. Thank you.

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

MS. GAREAU: Thank you. Unfortunately, for the last year or so, there has not been a lot of discussion,

just given the circumstances and inability to meet in person.

There is a ground ambulance highway rescue committee of government representatives that do meet with community -- or did meet in the past, hope to again in the future, with communities to try to find some solutions to the current situation.

Right now there's five communities that are receiving funding out of the funding in the main estimates, and those are the five community governments who currently deliver services outside of municipal boundaries, have an ambulance service outside municipal boundaries. But we do hope to start discussions with them again to look at how we can improve the system that we do have in place. Thank you.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. You know, one of the big issues I guess when you look at the, say, highway -- Highway 1 and then where it connects with Highway 3 coming into Yellowknife is that there's a lot of traffic on that highway and, you know, there's accidents that occur. I know there's been, you know, fuel trucks that have went over here in the last -- that last little while and, you know -- you know, there's been other accidents as well.

One of the things that would really help, I guess, in -- you know, and provide for a quicker service is cell service along that route. Is there any indication when that might happen, or is there any talk with other departments when we could see cell service, you know, all the way from -- when you enter the Northwest Territories right to Yellowknife? Thank you.

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

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you. I think the Member should be asking that question to Finance about cell service and that. It's not something that Municipal and Community Affairs looks after. So I know the Member is trying to do ground ambulance and cell service, but I mean that's the Department of Finance. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Are there any further questions under public safety? Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. So on the 9-1-1 program, what is the extra \$540,000 actually for in 2022-2023? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: For that, I'll turn to the deputy minister. Thank you.

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

MS. GAREAU: Thank you. That funding is for relief positions as well as costs related to things like standby, shift premiums, overtime, for the existing 9-1-1 staff as well as the additional relief staff positions. Thank you.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. So I guess I don't see it anywhere in here, unless I missed it somewhere, but what are the annual -- like, how much do we take in on an annual basis with 9-1-1 from the fees that are collected? Say over the last couple of years, what's the ballpark figure? That's, Madam Chair.

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

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: For that detail, I'll turn to the deputy minister. Thank you.

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

MS. GAREAU: Thank you. The fees are approximately \$900,000. It might be \$930,000 annually for the 9-1-1 levy. Thank you.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. Wow, we can't continue to run this at a deficit. I don't have the tell the Minister that. But, you know, the way that this was set up -- and I was in the last Assembly so was the Minister -- was that we would run this for a few years, put a cap on the fees, but now is the time to look at this and, you know, I think we're going to need to increase the fees. That was always the objective of this. The taxpayers should not be covering the cost of 9-1-1. It was to be a user pay system. And so when is that going to happen? And thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you. I'll start, and then I'll turn to the deputy minister. Yeah, I agree with the Member. We have to find the money. Basically, it's a million within that takes away from our other program areas and that there. But when we will be coming back to committee with a proposal on that, I'll turn that to the deputy minister. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Deputy minister Gareau.

MS. GAREAU: Thank you. Work is underway right now to look at different options to increase the levy. The levy is in place until November 2022. But work is underway looking at different options as well as better understanding some of the cost drivers of the program, and our intent would be to develop a proposal for review during the business planning process. Thank you.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Okay, thanks, Madam Chair. So does a fee increase require CRTC approval? Thanks.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Member for -- or Minister of MACA.

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: We'll have to get back to the Member with that answer. Thank you.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks for that. Yeah, I appreciate that the Minister's going to talk to committee but I think it has to be a bigger conversation. The public needs to know what's going on as well and have an opportunity to have a say in this. So is there going to be some kind of public options or evaluation report, or how is the public going to be engaged in this as well? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Yeah, I agree with the Member, and this is something that we have talked about. But for the detail, I'll turn to the deputy minister. Thank you.

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

MS. GAREAU: Thank you. Yes, the intent would be to do some public engagement so that the public can understand what the project is and what the options are and have an opportunity to provide their feedback. I don't have the exact timing on that but it would be likely within the next couple months. Thank you.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Yeah okay, no, thanks for that; I appreciate that. As part of that process, are we going to be looking at, you know, response times, use of various languages, and effectiveness/efficiency

measures of the system as well? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Yeah, that's part of our evaluation process. Thank you.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Okay yeah, thanks; I look forward to getting more information about that.

I just want to turn over the page now to ground ambulance and highway rescue and, you know, in a former life, I was a Yellowknife city councillor, and, you know, I'm not sure if this funding has actually changed from when I was a city councillor. You know, that was back in 2006 if I remember correctly. And then, you know, the city said that they weren't going to provide emergency services on the Ingraham Trail anymore because of I guess the inability to make much progress on this. I hear that COVID has caused some delays here. But when are we finally going to come to grips with ground ambulance, highway rescue, and how this should be properly funded and that, you know, we look after public safety properly? Is there a plan to actually deal with this? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: For that detail, I'll turn to the deputy minister. Thank you.

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

MS. GAREAU: Thank you. Prior to the COVID pandemic -- onset of the COVID pandemic, there was an interdepartmental committee made up of Justice, Infrastructure, Workers' Safety, Health, and MACA to look at how we can better build capacity around the ground ambulance and have emergency services function.

As part of that, the GNWT did commission a study. This was I believe in 2018-2019 to look at the operating environment and look at an acceptable delivery model; what would that look like. That study did look at communities, those providing emergent services, so the five communities that are currently involved in the function. And, you know, the priorities included looking at options for governance and, you know, what's a suitable funding level between the GNWT and community governments recognizing that the communities that are currently delivering this service do have the ability to raise own source funds.

A high-level action plan was presented to communities. This was in late 2009 based on that report. And unfortunately, that work was -- has been put aside as MACA and public safety division was dealing with the COVID response. However, we are reengaging on that work but we don't expect to have anything for probably -- you know, probably not for another four to six months until we can -- all the departments involved in it can reengage on that. Thank you.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Yeah, thanks, Madam Chair. I know our government seems to be pretty good at building highways. You know, Inuvik to Tuk but there's still no road that doesn't quite go into Whati. And we just keep building these roads and we don't really do very good planning around them, including public safety. So I just want to urge the Minister and the department to get on with this important work. Thanks, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Are there any further questions? Member for Tu Nedhe-Willideh.

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you, Madam Chair. A couple quick questions. The Office of the Fire Marshal, I just wanted to just to add my comments on that. There's a budget of \$512,000 there for -- to helping that office. But my experience working construction in the Northwest Territories and Nunavut, and also working with the Housing Corporation and working with the local housing authorities in the communities, the thing is that when I think about the municipality or even the city of Yellowknife, the property lines in this area here, most properties around the city of Yellowknife are about 50 by a hundred. And between the building and the property line, you could probably get away with 1.5 meters from the building to the fence and then the next one over, the same thing. So you would have probably about the 3 meters between building to building. And that's acceptable in a place like Yellowknife because they got a fire department down the road; you got fire hydrants, etcetera.

But my experience in the communities, they don't have fire hydrants. You know, they don't have that in some of the communities I've seen, anyway. And they wouldn't have a fire department that's probably just down the road, and that's volunteer.

So two things that comes to mind is that I know communities are talking about doing residential and commercial block development. I just want to make sure that from my experience, when I was working in the communities of N'dilo and Dettah, we were told by the fire marshal's office that you had to be from 40 feet from the building to building. And, but yet our

residential lots are -- in our communities are given out by Chief and councillor are 50 by a hundred. So that doesn't work. So I just want to make sure that is MACA prepared to work with communities that don't have, you know, the fire hydrants and 24-hour manned fire stations? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Yes.

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

MR. EDJERICON: Okay, thank you again; good to hear that, really good answer.

Now that I know your answer, also I think it's important, you know, that we have a department here in the Northwest Territories that could take the lead on -- outside larger cities of Yellowknife that could really enforce the, you know, National Building Code, fire code, all the codes that are out there. The thing is that also what I notice is that the GNWT, whenever they undertake a project, they -- through Infrastructure, it's laid out very clear right from when the -- you know, the geotech, the architectural engineers, contractors, construction warranty, and the whole thing, and it's really good because it's laid out closely and they work closely with the fire department. However, prior to -- you know, going back to 1991, it was never like that, and especially in residential homes in the communities where houses are built really close and that kind of thing. So I think that we need to continue to build on the fire marshal office in areas of inspections so that, you know, we don't have any fires down the road where buildings are very close. So I'm happy to see that we got some money in there but I don't know, is that enough? Or are we going to be building on your staff to continue to enforce the -- all the codes out there? Mahsi, Madam Chair.

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

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you. Yeah, so presently, the office you're looking at is out of Yellowknife but we do have assistant fire marshals in the communities and are in the regions and they work on that as well. As the deputy minister said, there's a couple of vacant positions but we utilize other regions there. So we feel comfortable presently that this budget is adequate for what we need to do. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you, Madam Chair. One final question is that I know the Minister said yesterday about the work of the communities. I just

want to make sure that when they work with the communities that it's either we're going to follow the -- the fire code from building to building, which is 40 feet, and that is considered in their design when -- like, for example, the community N'dilo and Dettah, we have a community plan but right now the lots are 50 by a hundred. In actual fact, if we were to follow the fire marshal's office, it should actually be 70 feet by a hundred feet, 17 by a hundred feet and so on. So I just want to make sure that that's considered when you guys are working with the First Nation governments. Thank you.

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

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Yeah, so I'm not going to get into specifics because I don't know the specifics, but I can guarantee you that our staff will be working with the Indigenous and non-Indigenous governments to help them address these concerns. And we will make sure that the fire marshal's office and the regional offices are aware of this concern. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Are there any further questions under public safety from Members?

Seeing none, Municipal and Community Affairs, public safety, operations expenditure summary, 2022-2023 Main Estimates, \$3,372,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, committee. We will now turn to Municipal and Community Affairs, regional operations, on 351 with information items on 352, 353, and 354. Questions? Don't all jump at once. Member for Yellowknife North.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'll have a couple of questions on community municipal infrastructure gap.

I see there's about a \$1.3 million increase here. Can I just -- well, can I just clarify firstly. Are we going to meet our goal of closing the municipal funding gap by \$5 million, and can the Minister speak to how that works with the formula that actually factors in a number of cost increases over time into the gap? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: I'll open and then I'll turn to the deputy minister. So we allocated -- or Cabinet and -- based on what our priorities was was to find \$5 million. We're at 4.1 or \$4.2 million right

now. And we will be able to get the \$5 million for the next -- we'll hit the \$5 million mark at the next one.

But as for the other questions, with your permission, I'll turn to the deputy minister. Thank you.

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

MS. GAREAU: Thank you. MACA uses the forced growth process available to departments through the annual business planning process to look at inflationary increases for the formulas that we use to allocate communities with their funding.

The focus in the life of this Assembly has been finding that \$5 million to reduce the municipal funding gap. And we continue to work with community governments on better understanding their inflationary pressures and helping them find ways to mitigate costs and to raise own source revenue. Thank you.

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

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Yeah, and just recently we had the opportunity to have a conversation with the President from NWTAC, and we've come up with some conversations and some ideas that they would like us to process or try to address moving forward. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Yeah, thank you, Madam Chair. Well, as the Minister knows, and I talked to him about, I submitted a written question setting out the funding gap by each community. Because if you go and look, the last public information you can find is from the 2014 review. But I'm hoping the Minister could speak to the willingness of the department to find a way to publish this going forward by, you know, each of the three categories for each of the communities and perhaps even, you know, just a bit of an explanation of how those numbers were calculated or how we got there. I'll note finding real time figures and data for the deficit is very, very hard. Is there any work being done to make sure we publish this information going forward? Thank you.

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

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you. No, there isn't anything right now. Thank you.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I sure hope the Minister answers my written question then.

I guess, you know, there is no secret that all municipalities across Canada are experiencing very tough pressures on their infrastructure, and it's no secret that we as a government are also doing that. I'll note there's a number of relatively -- well, no, there's a number of massive kind of federal programmings funding community infrastructure right now. Some have different expiration dates, and quite a few of them flow through GNWT.

Can the Minister speak to any kind of lobbying efforts or work we're doing with NWTAC and the communities as federal counterparts to make sure that, you know, that the systemic issue of municipal infrastructure being underfunded is being addressed? Because if we're not going to make some progress here against the inflationary pressures, perhaps we can at least, you know, work on things like gas tax and the community infrastructure bank and stuff like that. So can the Minister speak to any of the kind of asks we're make to the federal government? Thank you.

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

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: So, yes, so presently when new funding comes out from the federal government, we're there trying to see if we can access it, if we can help with the municipality. As I said previously, and I think the last question that the Member asked, we did reach out to NWTAC. They've come up with a process that they're -- tri-territorially that they're talking about and whether there's a different -- three different avenues that we're working on together collaboratively and they are in the process of working with us. And there may be potential for the three territorial ECs to meet with the three Ministers on this and then they're potentially reaching out to -- I talked to -- to have conversations with the Premiers on that. So this is a very live issue. We understand the challenges. People have heard the concerns on this floor here today and elsewhere. So we are working on it, and we are trying to address this difficult challenge. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Yeah, thank you, Madam Chair. I know the department, well, is reviewing the three policies and, you know, I eventually understand we will update them. I get the kind of scale of that task and getting into the weeds of hundreds of millions of dollars and billions of dollars worth of infrastructure. But I'm just wondering as part of that work whether there is any desire to bring any of this into regulation or to bring it into contract with municipalities. I think there is a bit of a -- I get that we don't want to bind future Assemblies but the way that municipal -- or that school funding formula, as a contrast, works is

much more predictable. And it's set out in regulation and we -- without -- we know -- the DEAs know what they're going to get. And I think since we've come up with these new funding formulas, it's been a bit of a question mark about how and if we are ever going to close this gap. And if the reality is that that we're just never going to close it, then I think we need to tell communities that because capital planning takes 30 years and they have to decide whether to pave roads or whether to switch to trucked water or whether -- you know, to make very large decisions. To stop building recreational infrastructure.

So I'm just wondering if as part of we -- can we -- what is the timeline on reviewing all of these policies and whether there's an effort to give it some predictability of what this looks like going forward? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: I'll start and then I'll turn to the deputy minister.

So when we first started talking about it, we were talking 2023-2024. As I said in the House here, this is 2022-2023. So we'll be done this upcoming fiscal year. We are a year ahead of schedule. We are working on it. We are trying to address the challenges there.

And for the second part of the question, I'll turn to the deputy minister. Thank you.

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

MS. GAREAU: Thank you. Yes, as the Minister said, we are updating all three of our large funding policies in 2022-2023.

We do provide informal notice to community governments about what their funding levels for the upcoming year will be. And if there are reductions, which there have not been in the life of this Assembly and actually the prior Assembly before this, we do give them a heads up. The -- so from that perspective, you know, we do advise community governments use the same funding amount you received last year as the basis for your budgeting. We do have the ability as well to enter into multiyear agreements to provide some stability and predictability around the funding, but. And in prior years, we often published public communications to community governments to let them know at a global level that there were no funding reductions and we'll be starting that process again this spring once the budget is -- once the GNWT budget is passed so that communities have that information for their budgeting purposes. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Are there any further questions under the Municipal and Community Affairs, regional operations? Member for Thebacha.

MS. MARTSELOS: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just have a couple of questions. One of them is the \$825,000 recreation funding. Is that proposal based or is it per capita based, the funding? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: For that detail, I'll turn to the deputy minister. Thank you.

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

MS. GAREAU: Thank you. Yes, that funding -- I believe the Member's looking at the funding on page 352, and that funding is proposal based. Thank you.

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

MS. MARTSELOS: So if it's proposal based that means that any community could -- Madam Chair, anybody could -- any community or regional centre could put proposals in, anything to do with recreation or sport; right? Am I correct? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Yes.

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

MS. MARTSELOS: Madam Chair, I also wonder how come we had, in youth centres in 2021 Actuals, we had \$30,000 and then nothing for this coming -- these mains. I'm just wondering, we're always talking about encouraging our youth. We're always talking about the youth are the future generations of leadership. Is there any reason why there was no allocation for youth centres in the Northwest Territories? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: For that detail, I'll turn to the deputy minister.

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

MS. GAREAU: Thank you, Madam Chair. That \$30,000 is showing a one-time contribution we made in that fiscal year. It was not a regularly budgeted

program. So that's why it just shows up one time. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MS. MARTSELOS: Also under the youth contribution programs that develops the youth leadership, in 2021 we only spent -- well, because of COVID, I am sure, but we only spent \$45,000 of the actuals. Is that why we were keeping the same amount of \$225,000 within that -- in that line? Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Minister of MACA. All right. Thank you. Member for Great Slave.

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. Thanks to our great research staff, I have a very wonderful chart in front of me that shows that the amount of funding to municipal governments for environmental services, that the gap is actually -- will increase this year coming up.

I'm just curious to know what the department's plan is to deal with the environmental liabilities in our communities. I'm aware of a few projects, without naming those communities, that, you know, there is some dispute over whether the GNWT should be responsible for cleaning them up. Some predate the existence of the GNWT so that becomes a bit of a struggle. And in the meantime, I'm worried about people that are living with contaminated ground and -- which can also have a soil vapour component. So it's not only hydrocarbons in our ground water; it can be hydrocarbons in our soils. And I can think of two -- three communities right off the top of my head where I know of sites.

So what is the Minister and the department doing to resolve that and address that, and is there a way that we can actually get more money into these environmental services that's a great way -- there's always a training or a community component to those RFPs? It's a good way also to just keep some money into the communities themselves. Thank you.

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

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: For that detail, I'll turn to the deputy minister. Thank you.

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

MS. GAREAU: Thank you. Related to the environmental liabilities that may be still existing within the boundaries of community governments, there are ongoing discussions. Some of the -- as the Member said, some of the history to these sites is not always well documented or known. There are

ownership issues. Sometimes the polluter may no longer be in the community or the territory. It is a long process to try to solve those issues, so there's no definite timeline to have those resolved. However, the GNWT is actively monitoring those sites. For example, you know, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources does do the inspections related to ensure safe water, safe soil and, if there's contamination, to make sure that everybody's aware of that.

Just to clarify, the environmental services is -- so traditionally, that funding pot has been for the provision funding for community governments for them to provide water and sewer services. One of the areas that it did not historically cover was things like landfill sites, solid waste sites. So that work is going -- ongoing to make sure that community government's costs related to those types of sites are eligible for funding under that policy. That's one of the policy updates we're doing to that formula. Thank you.

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

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. And, yeah, that makes sense to me. I'm assuming, then, when once we start that work or we have landed on that that there would be then an increase to this amount of money that's being provided? I also maybe would wonder if perhaps a rename might be a little better for it because it is, to me it was oh just environmental services, that's my world. But -- well, water and sewer was kind of my world too but we don't talk about that.

So yeah, will there be more money coming and when can we sort of expect to see -- see that plan and that work and will it be shared with committee before things are finalized? Thank you.

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

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: For that detail, I'll turn to the deputy minister. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Deputy minister Gareau.

MS. GAREAU: Thank you. Yes, all three policies, so water, sewer, which is environmental services; O and M; and community public infrastructure, which is the capital funding, all three of those are being reviewed right now and our goal is to have them finalized and through review by the NWTAC and LGANT by November/December after which time they would be -- the Minister would be bringing them to committee for review and input. Thank you.

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

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. I guess is there -- and I apologize if that has been asked before, but is there the federal funding around -- as we progress through, like, disaster mitigation and adaptation, I know that often that funding resides with the Department of Infrastructure to go for, or it can be project based I guess from communities themselves. I'm just wondering is there any talk in -- with the feds that there is going to be more money coming for that kind of work? Like, I know a lot of our infrastructure -- I think of Hay River, for example, having lots of issues I hear currently with some water and such freezing and old systems that need replacing, and they can't build new subdivisions because they don't have water and sewer. So I guess how does MACA work with Infrastructure to access sort of those mitigation and adaptation pots? Thank you.

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

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: For that detail, I'll turn to the deputy minister. Thank you.

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

MS. GAREAU: Thank you. So Infrastructure and MACA meet on a regular basis. We do have some overlap with our federal counterparts but in some cases, we're dealing with completely different federal departments. So we do keep each other updated in terms of discussions happening at the federal level and where either them or us or any other government -- GNWT department may be able to access funding from them. So it's an ongoing relationship. And sometimes we sit at the same table, and other times we don't. But we are aware of the work each other is doing and the activity that's ongoing. Thank you.

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

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. Is the Minister and the department seeing any sort of uptake with the federal government and the recognition of how rapidly the North is changing? It was really impressed upon me being at COP with my colleague that, you know, this is happening at a much greater rate and accelerated rate in the North, and we had -- you know, had the federal government making all these commitments. So I'm just wondering, you know, is that going to change where maybe we are going to start to see 100 percent dollars here as well, like maybe the DND funding that we get for Arctic sovereignty and the Inuvik upgrade? I really feel that the federal government needs to recognize that this is becoming very critical, and we can't wait until they sort of come up with this Canadian-wide strategy, I think. Thank you.

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

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Yeah, I can tell the Member and the House here we've been addressing this with our colleagues and with the federal government, addressing these are serious situations, giving them live situations, i.e. Tuk, as well as other communities, some of the challenges. I mean, I lived it this past springtime. So we have been bringing it with the federal government. We've, in our asks, one of them is climate change and how we are going to be able to do it. We've had the conversations with Minister Gibeault about the adaptation strategy and how it's going to be impacting the North and how we're able to achieve that. So we are working on it with the federal government, making them well aware of it, because this is the reality. And as the Member is aware, when we were at COP it was educating. Like, it was very much educating people about how climate change is impacting us in the North. Like, it's three times bad for us, and we've been living it a long time. So again, it was about education. And I apologize to the Member wasting all this time but, yeah, that's where it is. Thank you.

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

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. I think I'm a pretty expressive person so you'd know if you were getting to the point where I wanted you to wrap it up.

No, I appreciate that. And I guess I struggle just that with the one voice and sometimes that we have a very -- of the 13 and you are know, that we're really not being heard at the table. And funny enough, it'll be when we're in panic and disaster that the rest of Canada might wake up to the fact that they're just going to be next, right. So I guess I don't know if I have a question. Just a comment. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Yeah, I thank the Member for that. And yeah, when I was at COP, we had those conversations with our counterparts, the provincial counterparts. It's been in conversations we've had on PTFs. We've been making -- having those conversations and we've been very clear that these are -- we're living it and this is how we need help. And to BC and Ontario's credit, both Ministers were very receptive of that. Thank you.

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

MS. WEYALLON-ARMSTRONG: I was going to ask we are on regional operations? Here, community

government funding, it's 49 for this fiscal year and still the same in the new fiscal year. Does this reflect the current -- because we know that the inflation fluctuates and we talked about it before. I'm just wondering if it's added within this 49 for the next fiscal year?

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

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you. For that detail, I'll turn to the deputy minister. Thank you.

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

MS. GAREAU: Thank you. The Member is correct, there is no increase in the community government funding line, but there is an increase going to community governments. If you look at the community government mandate funding line, an increase from \$3.3 million to \$4.167 million. And that's the funding that is proposed to be approved to help reduce the municipal funding gap. Thank you.

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

MS. WEYALLON-ARMSTRONG: Okay, how is this fund being allocated? Is it based on per capita or infrastructure? There's a community government funding.

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

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: So there's a formula that was developed, and that how the funding's allocated, according to that formula. Thank you.

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

MS. WEYALLON-ARMSTRONG: It would be nice if we could see that formula, how the funding's being allocated. And this also this other one too, community government mandate funding, that one that -- to close the gap. How is that funding going to be allocated among 33 communities?

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Minister of MACA.

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: So for that detail, I'll just turn to the deputy minister. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Deputy minister Gareau.

MS. GAREAU: Thank you. MACA has a formula funding to allocate the community government funding. Various things in it, including things like population. But we will use that same formula to allocate the community government mandate funding. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Member for Monfwi.

MS. WEYALLON-ARMSTRONG: Thank you. And this water and sewer services funding to provide funding to support community government, so that's 19. How is that being allocated too as well, to the community? Because -- I would like to get answer for that first please.

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

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: The funding formula. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MS. WEYALLON-ARMSTRONG: Okay, with the recent experience in Tlicho region, that was an emergency for us because having, you know, access to clean water, and that's one of the mandate for the government too, is that to have -- to provide funding for program and services in the communities. This was an emergency. Flooding and fire is also an emergency situation. That's natural disaster. And so I just wanted to see -- I wanted to know why water and sewer, especially for water, having access to clean drinking water was not part -- is not seen or part of an emergency situation for communities as large as Tlicho region, especially in Behchoko where there -- we're the largest Dene community in the Northwest Territories. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Minister of MACA.

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: For that detail, I'll turn to the deputy minister. Thank you.

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

MS. GAREAU: Thank you. We do have a disaster assistance policy which is used to respond to major emergency. The situation in Behchoko did not meet the criteria laid out in that policy which is, you know, it has to be a sudden unanticipated event that impacts a large number of people. And I know that the situation in Behchoko, there were several -- you know, many people impacted by it. The difference is that it is the community government's responsibility to respond and -- which they did, and they did a very good job in terms of, you know, bringing in MACA, bringing in other expertise and getting the repairs done as quickly as they could. Thank you.

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

MS. WEYALLON-ARMSTRONG: It was not considered emergency even though the pipe has been there for over 50 years and full of asbestos,

people in that area are drinking from that so you don't consider that emergency? It's -- you know, that's -- I don't agree with that. So I think that should have been considered as emergency because it's impacting people's health. So, yeah, anything that's with -- that contained -- like, that was built over 50 years ago and not regularly maintained and full of asbestos is an emergency. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member for Monfi. Are there any further questions under this section? Member for Hay River South.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just want to go to the line item there, senior citizens and disabled person's property tax relief.

The community of Hay River has a large number of seniors. And one of the issues that came up was this tax relief program and, you know, they heard that I think that there was possibly going to be a review, and I think a lot of them or some of them took it to mean that they were -- it was going to be discontinued. And what I'd like I guess is for the Minister to just explain to me I guess how this program works? Thank you.

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

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: For that detail, I'm going to turn to the deputy minister. Thank you.

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

MS. GAREAU: Thank you. This piece of legislation, it does provide the -- that municipal taxation authorities can exempt a certain portion of -- either a senior citizen or a disabled person can exempt a certain amount of their taxes. We have started a review of this legislation and our intent had initially been to bring it forward, bring a legislative proposal forward during the life of this Assembly. We have delayed it until the 20th Assembly. But we have started work undertaking the review work to be prepared to advance this early in the life of the 20th Assembly. Thank you.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yeah, I guess, you know, the seniors, the ones I talked to, they're concerned that, you know, there's a move to basically end this funding. So, you know, if such a decision was to be made, how would -- you know, what criteria would you be looking at to base something like that on? Thank you.

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

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you. I wouldn't want to speculate. Like, we are looking at bringing this forward into the next Assembly. So I don't want to speculate on what is or isn't happening with this. I think the Member is asking me to see the future, and I don't know what's going to happen with this. Thank you.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. You know, they're going through a review process and that's to figure out what's going to happen in the future. I'm not asking the Minister to tell me what's going to happen in the future but to just give me some idea of the criteria that's used to -- you know, moving forward in how they're doing the review. Thank you.

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

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you. So he's asking for the -- what the process is? I can get the deputy minister to provide that. Thank you.

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

MS. GAREAU: Thank you. The NWTAC has passed resolutions at their annual general meeting to ask MACA to examine this piece of legislation given that it is out of date and it hasn't been comprehensive-reviewed. So that's one factor we're looking at. We're looking at the resolutions that they've passed. And, you know, the legislation is out of date and it does need to be modernized.

The other piece -- the other aspect we're looking at is they're -- just over time, there have been some administrative processes, both in the GNWT and by municipal governments, where the program may not be -- you know, the high elements of the program are being delivered consistently in every community, but there may be some small differences that have just emerged over time and how the programs are administered. So we want to just make sure that that is all cleaned up and that all of the -- everybody delivering the program is delivering it the same way across the territory. So those are the main elements of the review, really just to modernize it and just to ensure consistency in application. Thank you.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. You know, in looking at the policy and the way it's -- it rolls out is that, you know, there's a flaw in there in the sense that if you have a couple and one's 65 years and over and the other one's younger, they're forced -- if they want to use that tax relief program,

the only way they could do it is for one person, the younger one, to be removed from title, which is -- which is interesting because if for some reason one of them passed away, then, you know, they're -- they're put in a position where the -- where the house has to probably go through probate versus just going through a straight survivorship. And you know, there's added cost to that as well. So, you know, as -- I'm hoping that, you know, that's something that through this process that that's considered. Because all it is is, you know, we're forcing them to do something that we shouldn't -- they shouldn't have to do. It just doesn't make sense to me because, you know, if you got a couple, they're a couple and that's it, whether one's 65 and the other one's younger. So is that something that would be looked at as well? Thank you.

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

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: We'll agree with him, yes.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just want to go to the infrastructure, community infrastructure gap as well.

You know, it -- when I look at it and, you know, and I think about how it's -- we're ever going to close it, it sounds like we're not going to be looking to the feds, really, to provide any support, and it sounds like the department doesn't really think that the feds can provide the support that's required. But I find it I guess it's unreasonable to place that burden on taxpayers when in the North here, it's bad enough that the cost of living is high and it's only going to get higher as we go along here. So somehow, we've got to pay for it. So I guess I'd ask the Minister, you know, what is it? Like, what are -- we've been working at this for a while, and I'd like to know, you know, do we have any solutions in sight? Is there anything that you can see? Is there anything that -- you know, that's come across your table that you can point to and say, yeah, this here might work to close that gap? Thank you.

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

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you. Yeah, so as I said previously here in this House here today, we've had a meeting with NWTAC. We have a number of ideas that NWTAC has brought to us. And we are working with them on these ideas. This potentially could resolve this funding gap challenge that we are facing. And we are working on that with NWTAC on it. Thank you.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. You know, and I'm glad that, you know, that's happening. And, you know, I just wanted him to, you know, come and say that again so people hear it. And, you know, we need to look at a -- you know, we -- people like to see timelines because we're always, well, we're working on it but, you know, we come up with something, and, you know, it might -- it probably won't happen this Assembly. Maybe it'll happen next one, the one after that, I don't know. But I think that what's going to happen here is we're just going to see that -- that gap ever increasing. And, you know, it's going to take I think everybody to -- to come up with a solution for it. And my solution is always go to the feds and try and get them to, you know, pay for it. But, you know -- so it's just a comment there on that one. I just want to see it, you know, closed as quickly as possible.

And just one more comment as well, you know, if -- we all -- you know, we talk about it as part of mandate items and when we sit on this side, we don't have to tell Cabinet that -- that we want \$5,000 or we want \$10,000 in there. I'm sure that they're smart enough on that side to realize that's what we're trying to do. Thank you.

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

---SHORT RECESS

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): I now call Committee of the Whole back to order. Committee, we are on Municipal and Community Affairs, regional operations.

Any further questions under that department from Members? Member for Tu Nedhe-Willideh.

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just wanted to take a look under grants in lieu of taxes. I want to just make a couple comments, and I'll try to keep it short as possible.

I just wanted to mention that as the new MLA for Tu Nedhe-Willideh riding, I also come from a background of being the Chief of the Yellowknives Dene First Nation and the Akaitcho Territory government. And I also just wanted to just mention on some of the feedback I've been getting back from my constituents in regards to taxation, and I just want to talk about two things -- or a couple things I guess.

One is the honour of the Crown and when we say that, it's -- when the treaty was made in 1900, July 25th. In that treaty that talked about there would be no imposition of tax of any kind. And it didn't say in the Commissioner's report whether you had to be on

reserve or not. It was very clear that there'd be no -- no imposition of tax.

And so later on, the 1967, the territorial council was created, and we called it the NWT Act, that governs what we have here today. And since devolution in 2014, it gave the territorial government greater control over lands and federal lands in the Northwest Territories. But the thing is that in our riding, and our constituents are bringing to my attention that, you know, we got cabin owners that are being taxed and they're deeply concerned about that. But yet at the same time, I'm not sure how the -- the MACA is working with the -- the other department that's working on the claims for the GNWT at the main table discussion with the Akaitcho Territory government and the NWT Metis Nation. Regardless, you know, there is a process already in place and some of my constituent members are very concerned that the taxation of their cabins and that kind of thing is a concern to them.

So I'm not really sure how or where MACA is in terms of trying to get this thing resolved, but what I would like to see is if that issue could be either looked at or put on hold until the resolution of these outstanding payments are done. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh. I think that taxation goes under the Department of Lands. Sorry, Minister of MACA.

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Yeah, so what the Member's talking about is very much about Finance and Lands. So I can tell you right now what is happening. We've been working with our Indigenous governments. If you want to get -- if it's a right-based cabin, all you need to do is get -- reach out to their organizations or the Department of Lands. So if they want to go through their Band or their municipal governments, they go through that. And if they -- or they can reach out to the regional office and tell them it's a right-base cabin. We've had the same -- we've had the same thing for whether it's -- all Indigenous governments. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. EDJERICON: Yeah, Madam Chair, that answers my questions because I mean, it's -- there is a process in place but then that's avenue we -- to address this issue. That would be great. Mahsi.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh. So if there's no further questions under regional operations, Municipal and Community Affairs, regional operations, 2022-2023 Main Estimates, \$102,915,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, committee. We will now turn to page 355 and 356 with information items on 357 and 358. Municipal and Community Affairs, school of community governance. Member for Thebacha.

MS. MARTSELOS: Thank you, Madam Chair. On page 356, there's an allocation to the program management of \$1,072,000, and the training programs itself is 1.8, \$1.83 million.

You know, the allocation of training in that program seems -- I mean, it takes \$1 million of program management for 1.8. The balance doesn't seem quite right. So I was just -- I just wanted an explanation on why you have to have such a large program management for a course for training programs for \$1.8 million. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: For that detail, I'll turn to the deputy minister. Thank you.

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

MS. GAREAU: Thank you. The funding in place for program management is for both headquarter and regional positions. So the school of community government has eight positions, three that are physically located in headquarters and three that are -- sorry, five that are physically located in regions. But all of the regional staff do report into headquarters which is different than you'll see our regional operations staff. So all of their salary and O and M is in that one line which is where that figure comes from. Thank you.

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

MS. MARTSELOS: Thank you, Madam Chair. So when you go down a little bit further, so the \$886,000 in contract services, I assume that's part of the training program. Is that training done by Northerners, or is it brought in -- is someone brought in from southern entity? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: So Northerners. We try to get as many Northerners to do the job where possible. If there's an expertise out there that we don't have in the North, then we go down south. But our first priority has always been Northerners, to train Northerners. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MS. MARTSELOS: This is a really important part in community governments, especially in small communities. And I know that we're going to a polytechnic university very short in the future and hopefully in the next year or so. I guess I'm kind of wondering what is the oversight on these training programs? Because it's -- that is really important with the governance within the communities. Many times we run into -- you always hear on the news that oh, there's been deficiencies and all this in this such and such a community. There's an investigation going on and all these things. And you know, sometimes when you have outside forces that are training the people that are going to be running these community governments, it's questionable. Yeah, you have to be -- you have to know the community and you have to be from the North in order to -- for this to be successful. So I'm kind of wondering on the oversight of this program. And with that, I just -- you know, this morning I had a discussion somewhere else at a different committee, and I was just -- I was questioning that because it came up for some reason. And with the new polytechnic concept coming on board and most places, in all communities, they have learning centres in all communities, and with the oversight of doing this properly, I just thought that this money would be better spent within the polytechnic university, and I -- it's just something to think about because of all -- you know, then there'd be a unified place and the training and delivery would be -- we would have oversight on it. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Yeah, so when the school of community government got developed, it was to help the communities when it was with the -- or the college and that. The problem was is that it didn't meet the needs of the communities. So these programs that we developed were for the communities. They did have a committee, an evaluation committee that looks at it and that there. But for further detail, I'll turn to the deputy minister. Thank you.

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

MS. GAREAU: Thank you. I don't have much more to add to what the Minister said. But there are a series of technical committees that provide administrative oversight and to help with the curriculum offered by the school. So that's how we do the -- you know, that ensuring those technical requirements are there and that the staff actually delivering the training to community governments has the proper technical background. Thank you.

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

MS. MARTSELOS: One question, does the school of community government also offer the governance process with the leaders that are elected? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Yes, they do.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Thank you. School of community government, questions? Member for Great Slave.

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm just looking at the website for A Brilliant North Program, and I note that it was -- the action plan was developed in 2010, and a lot of the targets and such are from around that time. So I'm just curious to know what the \$565,000, what sort of phase or stage of this project is it in? Is it just continuing on with the work that Brilliant North did, or is there a new action plan since 2010? Thank you.

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

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: For that detail, I'll turn to the deputy minister. Thank you.

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

MS. GAREAU: Thank you. Actually there are discussions happening right now between us and the local government administrators of the NWT to determine is the action plan that we've been using all along, is it something we need to revisit or are we happy with it, or do we need a new one. So those discussions are ongoing right now. Thank you.

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

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you for that. I'm glad to hear that. It seems -- and I'm going to actually dive further into this action plan later so I can get more details on it. But it seems like a good thing.

We've heard the department mention LGANT a couple times now, which is the Local Government Administrators of the NWT. And I know it's part of a national body. Can the Minister of the department speak to, like, how many people are in LGANT here in the North, like how does that work? It's, like, a third -- third party NGO-type scenario? Thank you.

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

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: For that detail, I'll turn to the deputy minister. Thank you.

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

MS. GAREAU: Thank you. So MACA primarily deals with two organizations. One is the NWT Association of Communities, which is the group that represents mayors and Chiefs. And the administrators group is the equivalent except at the senior administrative/Band manager level. So, you know, I deal a lot with LGANT/bureaucrat-to-bureaucrat versus the Minister dealing with the NWTAC at the political level. Thank you.

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

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you. I appreciate that clarification. I think I knew that at some point in time and then sort of had this other vision because LGANT was always putting on -- or had for a while put on sort of events in the North. There was a fun disaster relief training one where everyone had to get together and figure out -- I think it came about because we were talking about a berm around Yellowknife if there had been a fire.

So I'm just curious to know is there more of that type of a thing being done with LGANT? It seemed like a great opportunity because then it's not just, you know, them getting together in the scenario of, like, always talking about necessarily work but almost forming a collegiate group of some sort. So I don't really know if I'm framing this right but maybe -- I see the DM nodding and hopefully she understands what I'm getting at. Thank you.

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

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: For that detail, I'll turn to the deputy minister. Thank you.

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

MS. GAREAU: Yes, so LGANT has an annual general meeting annually, and they do offer training. And their training is really geared to -- LGANT is really focused on supporting communities to recruit and train and retain their community government staff and sometimes focus really on those key administrative positions, so the senior administrative officer, the Band manager, or the, you know, director of corporate or the director of finance, those positions. And the -- you know, they really are about building public service capacity at the community government level. And they often frequently do get together and provide training to their membership or meet on areas of common interest. Thank you.

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

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you. I appreciate that. I guess in my former life, I had a lot more experience dealing with the NWTAC versus LGANT so I'm more familiar with what they do. And I know that the NWTAC has provided technical advice in some ways to the department, specifically around infrastructure, aging infrastructure, permafrost melt, etcetera. I can't think of an area where we would need actually to be increasing those resources. And I'm wondering, you know, what the department is doing to support the NWTAC in building out those types of resources. And succession planning. I can think of some key people involved there that should they decide to not continue on, a huge amount of wealth and knowledge and networking, because I know -- like I said, they've always worked really well with NAPEG and the engineers, so. Maybe the Minister or the deputy minister could speak to that. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Deputy minister of MACA. Deputy minister Gareau.

MS. GAREAU: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yeah, so MACA deals very closely with both LGANT and NWTAC. We do core fund both organizations. And, you know, they are -- they are very concerned with issues such as succession planning at community governments but also for their own organizations. And, you know, I'm not sure what plans they have but I'm assuming that they would have those plans in place for succession planning. But they are both -- both organizations really do represent -- work to represent the interest of community governments and work -- work very closely with MACA on a wide, wide, wide variety of projects. Thank you.

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

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you for that. And again, sometimes I realize I probably should know how some of these things work, but there's a lot of details floating around in my head.

I guess I'm wondering if perhaps through the Minister and the department that we could maybe have a -- I hate to say this to my colleagues -- but a briefing or have a meeting with both of these community -- organizations in order more to -- because I know we've had them come and present to specific committees on -- on certain items, but I think, for me, it would be useful to understand them as an organization as a whole or how they interact and where their wants and needs are as another sort of stakeholder in the game that we don't really have a lot of access to. And because we don't sit on the -- any of the intergovernmental councils, for us to meet those types of people and hear from them could maybe be difficult. Or they're not aware that we're looking for information. So maybe the -- if the Minister could speak to that. Thank you.

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

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you. If committee wants that, we're more than willing to work with committee and NWTAC and LGANT. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. No? Member -- Minister.

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: We still have three presentations to committee that we still haven't figured -- or scheduled yet. So I apologize, I just want to make sure people are aware that we have three that we're trying to get done. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. You hear that, Member for Yellowknife North? Member for Great Slave.

MS. NOKLEBY: Yeah no, and I appreciate that. And I don't think that this would be one of those ones that I would even say it needs to be done before the next session or anything. So maybe something more just on the radar, or even perhaps information provided to those -- if they're not already aware, to those groups that of the feedback loop to the standing committee so that they are maybe more aware that they have a role or an avenue in which they can approach us to provide information. And I think sometimes, I just say that in general, we -- a lot of people don't know that they could reach out to a committee clerk and provide information on any topic they want. I think this would be two good organizations to target with that kind of messaging. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member. No further questions? School of community governments. Member for Yellowknife North.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. Firstly, I would also like to apologize. I'll get a hold of the Minister, and we'll schedule those briefings as soon as possible.

I'm looking at the contract services budget here, and I'll note that last fiscal's actuals we spent \$97,000 out of 868, about 10 percent, of the budget. I'm going to go out on a limb here and say that's because that was COVID and we didn't deliver a lot of the school of government programming in person as we intended.

Can the Minister just tell us about this upcoming fiscal and whether we're going to spend all of those -- that contract services money? Thank you.

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

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Yeah, so the Member is correct, because of COVID we tried to do things online and that, and some of the biggest challenges is people like in meeting -- or in person meetings, hands on. So, yeah, we feel that we're going to be able to achieve what we said we -- that amount of money moving forward. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. School of community government.

All right, no more further questions? So Municipal and Community Affairs, school of community government, operations expenditure summary, 2022-2023 Main Estimates, \$2,955,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, committee. We will now move on to Municipal and Community Affairs, sport and recreation and youth on page 360, with information items on 361, 362, and 363. Are there any questions?

Seeing no questions -- oh, Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. I know that this activity's usually near and dear to the heart of the Minister but it's the only activity within MACA that we actually see a decline in funding over time. Look at 2021 and, you know, to 2022-2023, and it's a decline of money. Maybe there might have been some bump up for COVID, I don't know. But this activity, the money's actually declining. Can I get an explanation for that? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Yeah, so if you look at it, COVID relief was at \$1.8 million. It's not being available moving forward. So that's where our numbers are. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Okay, thanks, Madam Chair. Yeah, okay, when I look at page 361, I can see the COVID relief funding for 2020-2021 but there's nothing after that. So, you know, why -- then I'm going to go back now to page 360 and, you know, the main estimates for 2021-2022, \$5.507 million. And then for 2022-2023, \$5.38 million. Why is there still a decline even though the COVID relief money is not being -- there's none in last year or in 2022-2023, why is this declining? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you. For detail, I'll turn to the deputy minister. Thank you.

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

MS. GAREAU: Thank you. So the figures on page 360 show the full details of this activity. So the compensation, the O and M, and the grants and contributions versus page 361 just shows the grants and contributions. So it doesn't include the salary and O and M. And as the Minister pointed out, the main -- the 2021 Actuals include that one-time almost \$2 million from Canada. So that's the major change in funding, was that one-time funding we received in the -- and it shows up in the prior year actuals. Thank you.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks. Maybe I'll take another try at this. Okay, so there are staff presumably in this activity, and I'm just going to turn the page over to seven. So I would have thought that there would be at least a collective agreement increase but what we actually see is that the budget for this activity actually going down at a time when a collective agreement increase should be here. So where's that money being found, and why is it this activity getting less money in 2022-2023 than the year before? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Sorry, so I'm looking at the budget here in the 2022-2023 Main Estimates, we have 5.38, and under the revised one was 5.342. So we've seen an increase of 38 from the revised budget. So the -- but for that detail, I'll turn to the deputy minister. Maybe I'm missing something. Thank you.

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

MS. GAREAU: Thank you. So the -- the change from the 2021-2022 Main Estimates to the 2022-2023 Main Estimates -- main estimates, so going from that \$5.507 million to the \$5.380 million is a combination of collective agreement increases, but there was also a budget reduction applied in this activity for the travel reductions. So there was a total reduction, I believe it's around \$168,000 in travel in this activity. Thank you.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Yeah, thanks, Madam Chair. Well, I guess I just will put on the record that it's disappointing to see a decline in funding for sport, recreation, and youth from what we had in our main estimates last year compared to what we're going to do in 2022-2023. At the same time that there should

have been a collective agreement increase, we're spending less money on sport, recreation, and youth. And I just don't think that that's sends out a good signal. Thanks, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Any further questions? Member for Kam Lake.

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Yeah, Madam Chair, I'd like to echo what my colleague for Frame Lake is saying. These are our mental wellness dollars right here, especially for small communities that may not have access to the same facilities or same programs here in Yellowknife.

And just in reference to the travel dollars or travel restrictions that have gone down, I'm wondering if the Minister can speak to the impact of the reduction of those travel dollars and what travel was reduced from this key activity? Thank you.

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

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: For that detail, I'll turn to the deputy minister. Thank you.

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

MS. GAREAU: Thank you. So this activity does show a total collective agreement increase of \$38,000 in the compensation and benefits line. The budget for travel in this activity has decreased by, I believe it's \$165,000. And so you'll see it went from \$456,000 in 2021-2022 Main Estimates to \$291,000 in 2022-2023 Main Estimates. So this is a going-forward budget reduction.

In terms of the impact of that, the staff are having an in person meeting. The sport, rec, and youth staff are having an in person meeting in April to start doing their work planning and to plan on how they're going to continue to deliver the services that we've historically provided.

You know, COVID has shown that we can do some of our meetings virtually; however, the priority will be on the travel -- the regional travel to be able continue to -- you know, to help get back in the communities and help and start getting going again on our sport, rec, youth activities. Thank you.

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

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, my concern is that the intent of travel reductions were to I guess remove dollars from a budget item for southern travel, not for northern travel. And so my concern is a greater impact in the North here. And we always understood that there

was still going to be some travel needs, especially travel needs that were required for access to programs and services for youth. And so my question is does this have an impact on the ability of children or youth in the territory to travel for sport? Thank you.

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

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: No. Thank you.

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

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I appreciate that very clear and concise answer.

My next question is in regards to multi-sport games which we see had actuals of 650, and then is no longer in the budget. I'm wondering, given that it was funding to support NWT -- or Team NWT participation in major supporting events, is that removed because it's not on Arctic Winter Games year? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Member for -- or Minister of MACA.

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: For that detail, I'll turn to the deputy minister. Thank you.

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

MS. GAREAU: Thank you. That \$650,000 in 2021 actuals for multi-sport games has actually just been restated. That funding for that purpose has been moved to the physical activity and sport fund. And it's the actual that -- it's been moved to the lottery fund, and that's actually where the multi-sport games are funded out of since the fund was created. Thank you.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I guess I just want to as well echo what my colleagues from Yellowknife had said, is that -- and, you know, these are mental health dollars as far as I'm concerned as well. You know, we're coming out of a pandemic and, you know, we know that there's -- there's issues out there. And, you know, when I look at this COVID relief funding and, you know, it's not there anymore and now is when we actually need it to, you know, promote sports and get people back -- back, you know, playing hockey, skiing, you know, jogging, whatever, biking, you name it. And, you know, it -- this money here, you know, it's not a lot but it goes a long ways. It impacts education. It impacts health. And, you know, it builds self-esteem. It does all -- does all those things. And

for some reason, we sort of put it on the back burner and I'm not sure why that is. Maybe it's because most of us are older and we're this -- you know, a quiet and -- lifestyle and, you know, don't see exercise as important. But it is. So I would just -- and I'm just going to make a comment here too. So -- and I don't need any answers or anything. I just want to make sure that the department knows how important, you know, sports, recreation and youth are. And the know the Minister knows that already. And I would just like them to, you know, give it a little bit more emphasis, and especially in the -- especially in the -- like, in the small communities where there's not a lot to do, and we got to make sure that, you know, they have access to -- to what we take for granted in -- you know, in Yellowknife, in Hay River, in Fort Simpson, in the big communities. Like, you know, we got some nice facilities there. You know, we've got a lot more people to -- to volunteer and, whereas the smaller communities, they don't -- they don't have that luxury. So I think that, you know, when we're looking at these numbers, we got remember all that and just the impact that it has on the lives of people that we're trying to -- those are the people that we're trying to, you know, set on a path of -- where they're going to take -- you know, take over from us. They're going to be the school teachers. They're going to be the trades people. And lawyers, doctors, you name it. So -- yeah, so more of a comment and I know the Minister is -- I don't have to preach to the converted. So thank you.

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

MS. NOKLEBY: At risk of sounding like a broken record, I do echo my colleague's comments around the importance of sport. I know I played sport a lot as a child, various ones, and I -- yeah, I can't stress the importance of it.

I do have a question, though, besides just saying how wonderful all this is.

I note that in the -- that we have the Nongovernment Organization Stabilization Fund, and we see this one -- we see a general one, and this one is one geared towards sports, youth, and rec. It hasn't had an increase over the last while, and I'm just wondering would these organizations have been able to apply for the funding under the COVID relief funding? Is that why that number didn't rise in the 2021-2022 to sort of help them with COVID? Thank you.

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

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: No.

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

MS. NOKLEBY: All right. Could the Minister speak to what are those nongovernment organizations that do -- are affected by the stabilization fund and why they -- did they need to see more funding during COVID and not get it? Thank you.

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

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: So for the groups that are NGOs, it's application-based. They apply, and we were able to give them funding. If the Member is looking specifically for -- I think she's looking for specifically the groups that access it. We can get you that information. Thank you.

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

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yeah, I appreciate that commitment from the Minister. I would like to see those organizations. I've spoke often about how I think NGOs do better with their money than maybe some of the departments do. So I -- this is an area where I hope that when we come back in a year that we are going to see more money here.

And I guess then, though, the question is, before I ask you for more money for it, is this fund usually fully subscribed? Is it one that is undersubscribed? Oversubscribed? Do we add more money as needed from other areas, or do we cap it? Thank you.

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

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: My understanding from all of the briefings and that, it's all -- it's always been allocated every year. Is there a bigger demand than we have? Some years, yes. Some years, we've -- we meet our needs with the money we have in there presently. Thank you.

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

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yeah, I mean, again, I'll just reiterate that I would support adding more money here in coming years even now but I know we're probably past that stage.

How does this money work with other funding under, say, Health and Social Services for wellness and things? Can organizations access this pot, then access Health and Social Services pots, access housing pots? Are they able to pool that money, or is it pretty specific? Thank you.

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

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Yeah.

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

MS. NOKLEBY: It was not a yes or no question. I think you were nodding yes to the earlier part so -- and I see you nodding now. So I appreciate that.

Again, I look at some of this, and I see funding, Get Active NWT, not very much money. Is there a reason that we have to have these all sort of separated out like this? I'm not advocating for less detail than people want but if there's one pot and there's one application and there's one -- it seems like maybe we could cut down on some of this administrative stuff because they're -- perhaps they all kind of are with the same goal. Thank you.

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

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: So these pots of monies were developed for specific projects and that. But we can go look back at this but right now, we have earmarked for certain projects that -- under each title. But we can go back and look at this. Thank you.

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

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yeah, I guess that this is sort of again one of those areas where I think we need to shift our thinking. And rather than having a pot of money because we want to make this type of organization be able to put on an event, but instead we looked at these kinds of pots of money of, like, this is small community money; this is regional centre money; this is Yellowknife money. Everybody knows upfront what everybody's getting and then we allow the organizations within that -- that definition to then decide how they're spending their money themselves, whether that be an event, whether that be a sports meet. I don't really think the nature of the event really warrants a different administrative task. And maybe I'm wrong. But I think that is something that perhaps could ease some of the burden from -- particularly small communities of always having to apply for government funding or the onus being put back on them that well, there's money out there; what do you mean, you didn't get it? Like -- you know, and again, I come back to this government being a little bit -- it's difficult to find information and you don't know what you don't know and you can't ask questions that you don't know you should be asking sometimes. And I think we're burdening our small communities and our regional centres probably with unnecessary paperwork. Thank you.

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

MS. WEYALLON-ARMSTRONG: I see there's seven positions here that's for sports and recreations, active positions, and they're all located in headquarters, and there's six other regions. Any position is open and -- and is important for us, especially in the small communities in the regions where there's not too many employment. I think these positions, seven positions, or you know, like, one for each regions here -- there's six regions besides Yellowknife -- would be better utilized in the regions where -- because it's working with youth, and we -- working with youth volunteers. I see the budget has increased, not, you know, much, but as -- there's an increase in there. So is there any plan in the future to move to -- to move some -- those positions to the regions?

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Minister of MACA.

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you. No. We have five regional positions out there. Well, we have ten right now. But we're looking at relocating five EMOs. But we have those positions out in the regions right now. Thank you.

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

MS. WEYALLON-ARMSTRONG: Can you repeat that again?

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Minister -- just wait for your mic, Member for Monfwi. Minister, would you repeat your answer.

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Okay, so no, we're not looking at relocating those seven positions from headquarters, but we do have regional positions presently in the regional offices. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you.

MS. WEYALLON-ARMSTRONG: Like, regional superintendent? I know there's three positions in Tlicho region. What I'm talking about is the sports and recreation position is very important for many of the regions. Just like my colleague here, they -- you know, they talked about it, the importance to -- especially for youth, and we need to keep our youth active and busy, you know, to -- so that they don't, you know, get into trouble or, you know, in the communities. So I think those positions, I believe that we should have more positions in the communities, in the regions, especially from this seven. I don't know what they do here, but there's seven positions. I would like to see those positions being transferred to the regions. There's six regions besides headquarters. We can -- you know, they will be utilized well. They will be -- you know, and they're going to be working with the volunteers and youth. Because I serve four communities, and some of my colleagues, they serve four or five communities as well. So I think -- I would like to see that in the future,

that these positions that deals with youth and recreation through sports be transferred to the communities. Thank you.

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

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you. So each region has a regional recreation development officer or a position in the region. So North Slave has one. The South Slave has one. The Deh Cho has one. The Sahtu has one. And the Inuvik region has one. So we have regional positions out there that work with the youth and sport and rec positions. These are headquarters functions to do with territorial and national activities. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MS. WEYALLON-ARMSTRONG: I just want to tell you again, Tlicho region is not part of North Slave region. So there's nothing in Tlicho region. I would like to see a position in Tlicho region because we have four communities that we are representing. So I would like to change that, you know, instead of North Slave, I would like to see one in North Slave region -- in Tlicho region, I mean. Sorry about that. Thank you.

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

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: So the position is out of Behchoko. It is in Behchoko and then in that office there. So we had two but we're moving one to EMO, but the position is in -- out of Behchoko. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MS. WEYALLON-ARMSTRONG: Thank you. Well, I will follow up with that and check because I know there is a regional superintendent position that's in the community. So, but I -- there's nothing for the sports and recreation, and I know that we work with Yellowknife on that. So I'll follow up. I'll check. I'll talk to the deputy minister after. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. No further questions, Member for Monfwi? Okay, thank you. Sorry, I cut off Member for Great Slave. I didn't think she had a question. She still had a minute and a half left on the clock. So I'll give it back for a minute and a half to finish up her questions. The regional, I think it was. So you can reask it again.

MS. NOKLEBY: I appreciate that. Thank you, Madam Chair. And I just want to actually reiterate the question I was asking. I don't have anything further after that. It's just what would be the barriers -- I'll frame it better.

What would be the barriers to the options I suggested around changing the way the funding is set up? So is there a specific reason, say, from where the money is coming from federally that we couldn't go to more of a model where it's small community/regional centre/Yellowknife? Thank you.

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

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: For that detail, I'll turn to the deputy minister. Thank you.

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

MS. GAREAU: Thank you. One of the barriers could potentially be just, you know, there's -- there is quite a bit of demand for sport, rec, and youth funding. And even just the wide variety of activities that we're able to support with our budget, for example, you know, like a high performance athlete, and the -- the funds that we -- that we provide for that purpose, like, you know, just even their training needs, is just so, so different from, you know, funding to communities to, you know, here's \$10,000 for how you can help seniors get active. Like, there's such a wide range of projects and types of events that we do fund through this. So we just want to ensure that we continue to fund those activities because communities have previously told us that that's what they -- the activities that they would like supported. Thank you.

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

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yeah, okay, I appreciate knowing the reasons why before I kind of go down some charge that I shouldn't. So I do appreciate what the deputy minister is saying. And then I guess my question is just then when the stats are reported back to us, do we have that breakdown in small community/regional centre -- I see the DM nodding yes. So I will look for that. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. If there are no further questions, I'll call the page.

Municipal and Community Affairs, sports and recreation, operations expenditure summary, 2022-2023 Main Estimates, \$5,380,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, committee. There are further information items on the next two pages. Do any Members have questions on those?

Okay. Well, then I'm going to note the time. So noting the clock, Members, I will now rise and report progress.

---SHORT RECESS

Report of Committee of the Whole

MR. SPEAKER: May I please have the Report of Committee of the Whole. Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes.

MS. SEMMLER: Mr. Speaker, your committee has been considering Bill 23, 29, 38; Minister's Statement 202-19(2); Tabled Documents 561, 567, 578, 579-19(2), and would like to report progress, and, Mr. Speaker, I move that Report of Committee of the Whole be concurred with. Thank you.

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

---Carried

Third reading of bills. Madam Clerk, orders of the day.

Orders of the Day

COMMITTEE CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Ms. Cynthia James): [Translation Unavailable]

Orders of the day for Tuesday, March 8th, 2022, 1:30 p.m.

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

15. Notices of Motions

16. Motions

17. Notices of Motions for First Reading of Bills

18. First Reading of Bills

- Bill 46, An Act to Amend the Motor Vehicles Act

19. Second Reading of Bills

20. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters

- Bill 23, An Act to Amend the Public Utilities Act
- Bill 29, Resource Royalty Information Disclosure Statute Amendment Act
- Bill 38, Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2021
- Minister's Statement 202-19(2), Annual Status Report on the Mandate of the Government of the Northwest Territories, 2019-2023
- Tabled Document 561-19(2), 2022-2023 Main Estimates
- Tabled Document 567-19(2), Annual Status Report – 2019-2023 Mandate of the Government of the Northwest Territories, February 2021-January 2022 of the Government of the Northwest Territories, 2019-2023
- Tabled Document 578-19(2), Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 3, 2021-2022
- Tabled Document 579-19(2), Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 3, 2021-2022

21. Report of Committee of the Whole

22. Third Reading of Bills

23. Orders of the Day

[Translation Ends]

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Madam Clerk. This House stands adjourned until Tuesday, March 8th, 2022, at 1:30 p.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 6:06 p.m.