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**The Honourable Frederick Blake Jr, Speaker**

# Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

## Members of the Legislative Assembly

### Speaker

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

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**Hon. Diane Archie**

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

**Mr. Ronald Bonnetrouge**

(Deh Cho)

**Ms. Caitlin Cleveland**

(Kam Lake)

**Hon. Paulie Chinna**

(Sahtu)  
*Minister responsible for Housing Northwest Territories*  
*Minister responsible for Homelessness*  
*Minister responsible for the Public Utilities Board*  
*Minister responsible for the Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission*

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**Mr. Richard Edjericon**

(Tu Nedhe-Willideh)

**Hon. Julie Green**

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*Minister responsible for Persons with Disabilities*  
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(Nunakput)

**Mr. Rylund Johnson**

(Yellowknife North)

**Ms. Frieda Martselos**

(Thebacha)

**Ms. Katrina Nokleby**

(Great Slave)

**Mr. Kevin O'Reilly**

(Frame Lake)

**Ms. Lesa Semmler**

(Inuvik Twin Lakes)

**Mr. Rocky Simpson**

(Hay River South)

**Hon. R.J. Simpson**

(Hay River North)  
*Government House Leader*  
*Minister of Education, Culture & Employment*  
*Minister of Justice*

**Hon. Shane Thompson**

(Nahendah)  
*Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs*  
*Minister of Environment and Natural Resources*  
*Minister of Lands*  
*Minister responsible for Youth*

**Hon. Caroline Wawzonek**

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

**Ms. Jane Weyallon Armstrong**

(Monfwi)

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**YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES****Tuesday, March 7, 2023****Members Present**

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

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

**Prayer**

---Prayer

**SPEAKER (Hon. Frederick Blake Jr.):** Ministers' statements. Minister responsible for Infrastructure.

**Ministers' Statements**

**MINISTER'S STATEMENT 329-19(2):  
CELEBRATING ENGINEERS AND  
GEOSCIENTISTS IN THE NORTHWEST  
TERRITORIES**

**HON. DIANE ARCHIE:** Mr. Speaker, the knowledge and skills of professional engineers and geoscientists are vital in meeting the priorities of our government and in supporting the quality of life for Northerners. As Minister of Infrastructure, I know how important these professions are to achieving our mandate priorities, especially in making strategic infrastructure investments that connect communities and increase the use of alternative and renewable energy. The work of these professionals informs the location and design of new structures, assists in responsibly extracting energy resources, and contributes to the development of climate change adaptation strategies for Northern communities and those building infrastructure in the territory.

Mr. Speaker, engineers are essential in developing infrastructure in the Northwest Territories. This is evidenced by the 27 airports, over 115 bridges, and several thousand kilometres of paved and gravel roads that carry people and critical supplies to our communities, all designed by engineers.

Energy conservation initiatives are key in reducing energy costs and greenhouse gas emissions in the NWT. Replacing the primary heat source for GNWT buildings across the territory with wood pellets is a government success story. The team of mechanical and energy engineers at the Department of Infrastructure has converted over 40 GNWT

facilities. This includes schools, health centres, airports, and others to biomass since 2007. Biomass now represents 36 percent of GNWT's overall heating energy.

Mr. Speaker, because designing, building, and maintaining infrastructure that is safe and reliable is so important, it is crucial there is a strong regulator to oversee these professions. The Northwest Territories and the Nunavut Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists, NAPEG for short, is that regulatory authority for practicing engineer and geoscientist professionals in both the NWT and Nunavut. It establishes and maintains the standards and ethics of engineering and geoscientist professionals to maintain integrity and public safety in these respective professions.

Over 2,000 practicing engineers are active and registered with NAPEG, with approximately 400 of being NWT residents and approximately 120 of them employed within the GNWT. These professionals design, build, and maintain the infrastructure that support our daily lives and the foundation for the industries that drive our economy. They are also the geoscientists supporting our territorial mineral and mining sector.

Along with being the regulatory authority for these professions, NAPEG is also focused on the future. Attracting and retaining talent to the North is a challenge and so is building professional diversity. NAPEG recognizes the importance of increasing diversity among professional engineers and geoscientists in the North and attracting underrepresented members of the population. That is why NAPEG is an active participant in the Engineers Canada 30-by-30 initiative, which is an effort to increase the number of newly licensed engineers who are women to 30 percent by 2030.

Mr. Speaker, the public infrastructure we all use and depend on is there, in part, because of the hard work of engineers and geoscientists. March is National Engineering Month in Canada. I would ask the House to join me in recognizing the contributions of engineers and geoscientists to the planning, design, building,

and maintenance of infrastructure in the North. Quyananni, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister. Colleagues, before we continue, I'd like to recognize Glen Abernathy, former Member, Minister of the 16th, 17th, and 18th Legislative Assembly. I hardly recognized Glen; retirement looks good on him. Welcome to the Chamber.

Ministers' statements. Minister responsible for Housing NWT.

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 330-19(2):  
HOMELESSNESS PROGRAMS OFFERED  
BY HOUSING NWT

**HON. PAULIE CHINNA:** Mr. Speaker, as a part of the GNWT's commitment to address homelessness in the territory, Housing NWT offers several client-centered programs. Today I would like to highlight some of these programs as well as the investments we have made, since the beginning of the 19th Legislative Assembly, to support residents experiencing homelessness and those at risk of becoming homeless.

Mr. Speaker, the Transitional Rent Supplementary Program was extended, and the funding was increased with a seamless application process to reduce barriers. In April 2021, this program evolved and is now called the Canada-NWT Housing Benefit Program, with half funded by the GNWT and the other half by the Government of Canada. In 2021, over 248 applicants accessed the program and is currently accepting applications with no waitlist.

Mr. Speaker, the Homelessness Assistance Fund is a one-time funded program to applicants up to a maximum of \$3,000. This program is flexible and is available to assist in different types of ways to include utility arrears, private market rental arrears, damage deposits, first month's rent, or travel assistance to a community in which individuals are guaranteed housing. Since this program was first offered in 2009, Housing NWT has supported 746 individuals and families to remain in their homes. To date in this fiscal year, Housing NWT has approved 56 successful applicants supporting single adults, couples, and families.

Another program that supports people experiencing homelessness is the Shelter Enhancement Fund. It provides northern communities with funding to repair and improve existing shelters, supporting building upgrades and equipment purchases. Since 2017, Housing NWT has provided up to \$750,000 to non-governmental organizations for emergency plumbing repairs, upgrades to electrical

systems, security systems, fire alarms, and new flooring and roofs.

Mr. Speaker, it is only through this kind of partnership and the approach that the NWT will be successfully addressing the territory's housing concerns. The Small Community Homelessness Assistance Fund is another good example of partnership. It combines GNWT and community resources to develop innovative supports that help communities address homelessness in ways that make sense to them.

In the past four years, Housing NWT provided over \$150,000 in funding to Indigenous governments and community partners. The Small Community Assistance Fund has supported several community projects including community engagements to reduce homelessness, the introduction of various community food programs, clothing and furniture banks, rent supplements, and vouchers for various essential goods and supplies.

Mr. Speaker, another program centered around partnership is the Northern Pathways to Housing program, targeting single adults experiencing homelessness. It provides clients with access to permanent supportive housing, rental assistance, and case management to maintain their housing. The purpose of this program is to move people out of homelessness and into a safe place to live while working with them one-on-one, living independently, maintaining their own home, and to address the issues that lead to their current situation. Northern Pathways is now operating in the communities of

- Behchoko, in partnership with the Friendship Centre;
- Fort Simpson, in partnership with the Liidlii Kue First Nation;
- In Aklavik, in partnership with the Aklavik Indian Band; and
- In Fort Good Hope, with the Kasho Got'ine Housing Society.

Northern Pathways to Housing works with partners to provide wraparound supports to stabilize our housing clients.

Mr. Speaker, Housing NWT supports seven emergency shelters throughout the Northwest Territories. We funded emergency overnight shelters in Yellowknife, Hay River, Fort Simpson, Inuvik, and Fort Good Hope, and work with community partners to provide emergency housing for those most in need. As part of Housing NWT's renewal, the public

housing intake application has been redesigned to include the social factor points for individuals experiencing homelessness as part of the point rating system. It now considers an applicant's housing history, looking specifically at periods where an individual has been unsheltered, emergency accommodations are needed or provisionally accommodated.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, Housing NWT continues to move forward with the housing stability worker pilot program, which started in Behchoko in the fall of 2018. This strength-based program provides direct support to public housing tenants at risk of eviction through a client-centered approach to improve tenancy practices and work towards the household goals. The Tlicho government is working with Housing NWT to build on this program.

Mr. Speaker, these homelessness programs and partnerships are key to helping the most vulnerable residents and improving housing outcomes for Northerners. Housing NWT recognizes that there is still a long way to go in terms of helping all residents reach their housing goals. We are proud to be working towards putting these goals to reach many Northerners. We will continue to listen, build, and work with our partners and stakeholders to address homelessness in the NWT.

I would like to thank the commitment and creativity of Housing NWT staff for taking the direction and initiative to create housing programs to best house and support the needs for the people of the Northwest Territories. Your time and effort have been greatly appreciated. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 331-19(2):  
CELEBRATING NATIONAL SOCIAL WORK  
MONTH

**HON. JULIE GREEN:** Mr. Speaker, March is National Social Work Month, and I am taking this opportunity to recognize the valuable contributions made by social workers in improving the health and well-being of individuals, families, and communities in the Northwest Territories.

This year's theme is Social Work Breaks Barriers. It is important to acknowledge that social work helps break down the barriers that prevent people and communities from thriving. This theme showcases how social workers support the empowerment of individuals, families, and communities to overcome

difficulties that may prevent them from reaching their full potential, safety, and overall good health.

Social workers are crucial to the well-being of communities. They provide essential services to those in need. They work in many different settings such as schools, health centres, and community organizations. They support individuals and families facing challenges such as those caused by the pandemic and floods, and they assist by providing essential services to support children and families in emergency situations. They help residents navigate health care, income support, and legal systems. They also advocate for the rights and needs of residents to ensure everyone has equal opportunities to succeed.

Mr. Speaker, in the NWT we have 134 licensed social workers. Their work can be incredibly challenging as they deal with emotional situations and individuals or families in crisis. Social workers possess a combination of compassion, empathy, and resilience. A strong desire to support others and make society a better place draws many social workers to the profession. They share common principles of belief in equality, social justice, as well as recognition that everyone has the right to reach their full potential.

The work being advanced by social workers in the Government of the Northwest Territories' child and family services system includes improving integration of diverse programs that support children, youth, and families such as access to safe housing, mental wellness supports and recreational opportunities. They are also available to connect families and individuals to resources and services for prenatal and postnatal care.

Mr. Speaker, social work is an essential profession to our residents and the health and social services system. I want to acknowledge each social worker, as well as all the other staff who provide supports within the social services system for their commitment to the work they do and, more importantly, for their compassion and devotion to the people of the Northwest Territories.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of Cabinet and NWT residents, I thank all social workers for their continued dedication. National Social Work Month serves as a reminder of the important role that social workers play in our communities and in the general wellness and health of our territory. I hope it will also inspire residents to consider a career in social work. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Ministers' statements. Ministers' statements. Madam Premier.

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 332-19(2):  
MINISTER ABSENT FROM THE HOUSE

**HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to advise Members that the Honourable R.J. Simpson will be absent from the House for the remainder of the week to attend the federal/provincial/territorial immigration ministers meeting in Halifax, Nova Scotia. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

### Members' Statements

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1436-19(2):  
CHILD AND YOUTH CARE COUNSELLORS

**MS. MARTSELOS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my statement today, I want to talk about the child and youth counselling program that the Departments of Health and Social Services and Education, Culture and Employment have been jointly rolling out over the last few years.

Mr. Speaker, the child and youth counselling program was first announced in 2018 and, as of 2022, it has been fully rolled out across all regions of the NWT. The intent of this program was to provide a higher level of mental health supports for students and families across the NWT. And this was done by challenging the qualifications, the titles, and job descriptions for all school counsellors. And one of the actions with these changes was to hire new counselling staff throughout the NWT schools to ensure that all child and youth counsellors will have specific qualifications and consistent quality care for students.

Mr. Speaker, when this program was first introduced, I was supportive of its intent to bring a higher standard of mental health care to all students of the NWT; however, as this program was being rolled out in the South Slave in 2021-2022, there was some unintended consequences that create the opposite effect for the students in Fort Smith because, unfortunately, these new standards created barriers for a long-time student counsellor who worked at PWK High School.

Mr. Speaker, once the CYC program was introduced, Fort Smith's long-time student counsellor, who was born and raised in Fort Smith and is Indigenous, had lost her job

because she did not have the new level of education that was required for the position. This change not only disrupted the livelihood of that employee, but it also disrupted the established relationships that she developed with both the students and the community alike. Despite her length of employment in the job and the strong desire and demand by the students to keep her there, it was decided by the government to let her go. After she left, it took a while for the position to be filled. But when it finally got filled, the new employee did not connect well with students resulting in reduced quality of mental health care for them for about a year. Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

---Unanimous consent granted

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Overall, Mr. Speaker, as these changes were carried out, I heard from many parents, educators, and students of their disapproval and disappointment regarding these changes. As a result, I spent considerable time talking to both the Ministers of education and health to try and retain the long-time student counsellor but regretfully were unable to do so. However, with the recent news of CYC undergoing an evaluation, I think there is potential to correct some wrongs and truly improve the level and quality of mental health care for students in the NWT. I will have questions for the health minister later today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1437-19(2):  
FUTURE OF LOCAL HOUSING  
ORGANIZATIONS

**MS. CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, for over a century, Denmark has delivered social housing through non-profit housing organizations. These organizations develop and own the buildings and residents influence their living conditions through a system of tenant democracy. As a result, Danish non-profit housing development is highly regulated in terms of financing, design, construction, and management. By Danish law, each municipality reserves roughly 25 percent of its social housing stock for refugees, unemployed people, and people with disabilities. Capital for building social housing comes from a national building fund or a revolving renovation fund set in Danish law and governed by a board of directors with oversight over the housing non-profit organizations. Every four years, the fund's operating levels and investments are agreed on by Danish



parliament. As a non-profit organizations repay their loans or tenants pay rent, the fund is replenished, creating a sustainable funding cycle for construction costs and a consistent funding mechanism for ongoing large scale maintenance and renovation of social housing properties. Affordable housing developers rely on sometimes dozens of financing sources to fill the gap of total construction costs. But with Denmark's national building fund, the non-profit housing development sector receives simplified financing largely from the fund itself at 88 percent investment, 10 percent from a no interest loan for a 50-year term and 2 percent from tenants' rent. But once the construction project is done, Mr. Speaker, tenants can exert some control over the operating budget, repairs, and overall maintenance which are overseen by non-profit housing organizations.

Western institutions pulled four lessons from the Danish social housing system. The first, build simplified mechanisms for affordable public or non-profit housing financing and establish loan repayment system under a revolving fund. Second, diversify tenants and owner incomes within buildings for more flexible ways of meeting repayment terms and capturing wider social benefits. Third, pursue cooperative housing policies. And finally, consider other income policies that complement affordable housing because income policies matter when developing and enacting housing policies.

Mr. Speaker, the Standing Committee on Social Development listened to community members speak on homelessness prevention. We heard equal parts of the history of what wasn't working and aspirational views of what housing in the NWT could look like. Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement. Thank you.

---Unanimous consent granted

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, colleagues. Mr. Speaker, here in the NWT, tenants want anatomy, respect, and progress. Image the shift from aspiration to action when public housing tenants are given a seat at the table to help self-determine how funds are used. Affording residents self-determination of their living conditions through tenancy democracy has potentially huge impacts on the financial sustainability and health of community housing. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1438-19(2):  
FORT SIMPSON DIESEL PLANT UPGRADE

**MS. NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have raised my concern in this House many times about the lack of long-term vision and planning when it comes to the North's critical infrastructure projects and, specifically, I am concerned about the planning and implementation of Fort Simpson's power.

The village's current diesel power plant sits on the bank of the Mackenzie River, directly in the high-risk flood zone. The land adjacent to this critical piece of infrastructure is washing away, undermined by the scouring action of the river. If another flooding event occurs, there could be severe consequences for the residents of Fort Simpson.

It is my understanding that work was being done to establish an LNG power plant that would supplement the existing diesel plant; however, given the reoccurring flooding in the region, it is clear that a full replacement on higher ground is required, and I would like to know the status of that upgrade. I am worried that this LNG expansion is not going to happen quickly enough given the impacts of the recent flood.

Mr. Speaker, our energy strategy is looking to reduce our emissions and get our communities on greener and renewable energy, something an LNG plant could help. Fort Simpson is not currently slated to be connected to our major energy infrastructure, including any future Talston hydro expansion therefore we must come up with a different solution. We cannot risk losing an opportunity to do something innovative utilizing LNG for this important energy infrastructure.

Mr. Speaker, expanding small scale LNG in Northwest Territories communities can play a key role in bridging the gap between our current high carbon intensive infrastructure and completely renewable energy in the future. It should be considered for use wherever it makes sense and, Mr. Speaker, where it makes sense is Fort Simpson. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1439-19(2):  
RENOVATION DELAY EFFECTS ON  
SCHOOL IN TUKTOYAKTUK

**MR. JACOBSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The community of Tuktoyaktuk's been waiting for our new school for several years. The school's been in the books since 2007, the year

when I first got elected. And Mr. Abernathy was a part of that, giving us the authority to move forward with it so I want to thank him and welcome him into the House. It's good to see him.

The GNWT secured \$36 million, Mr. Speaker, to renovate the space at the school and support high school programs. The original contract was awarded in 2020 and estimated completion 2023-2024. Mr. Speaker, the final year of this project, the community has been waiting a long time, making due with a school that's less suitable. But the renovations are still not complete because a contractor needs to get inside to do the work. The school wants to let the contractors in so they could get the work done so they could have the school back that can accommodate the students.

Mr. Speaker, the renovation at the school's been so delayed. Magalanik School took it upon themselves the space the contractors need, the GNWT support, but not only that the contractor's support. Magalanik School needs four portables, Mr. Speaker, to be brought into the community. They're trying to rent space in the community, Mr. Speaker, from the churches, from Kitty Hall, from other spaces in the community, which is not right. They're taking away. We could find four portable trailers. We could find stuff, like for the capital, just like nothing so it should be the responsibility of the contractor, Mr. Speaker, to provide these four trailers, portables for the students, to get the education done properly and not going to the Kitty Hall or to the church or wherever the space is rented. It's not right. We need to find suitable accommodation for the students, Mr. Speaker.

The GNWT has provided portables in other schools for renovations that's been underway. Why can't we provide the students at Tuk with four portables, Mr. Speaker? I will have questions for the Minister at the appropriate time. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1440-19(2):  
CRACK COCAINE ADDICTIONS IN TLICHO  
COMMUNITIES

**MS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Child and youth care counsellors. Mr. Speaker, March break 2023 is coming and a lot of youth will be looking for something to do and maybe exposed to drug use because of lack of activities in the communities. Yesterday I spoke of the need to work with community

leadership to protect against drug use. Today I want to continue that discussion. There are many people dealing with addictions. In my region, crack cocaine addictions.

Mr. Speaker, everyone knows someone who is using crack in my communities. This is an extremely addictive substance and, as I have said before in this House, kids as young as 12 years old are experimenting with drugs. What is more disturbing is we have drug dealers trying to use these kids to sell crack cocaine. This is unacceptable, Mr. Speaker. How can we help our small communities grow and become strong if our youngest cannot escape the influence of drug dealers?

Mr. Speaker, we hear from parents, grandparents, aunties, uncles, siblings, in the communities who are doing their best but fear for their children and grandchildren because they might fall into the grips of the drug dealers. We are losing people, youth, and parents to drugs. As a result, we have children in care of child welfare system due to parents abusing the addictions.

Mr. Speaker, this is a crisis we must manage. The child and youth care counsellor positions can help this work and support our residents. However, we need to ensure that they are culturally sensitive and trained. They need to work with the Indigenous government to help share information about resources and supports available for our youth. Without this collaboration, the child and youth care position will not be useful in protecting our youth from the illicit drug trade. Mr. Speaker, I will have question for the Minister of Health and Social Services. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1441-19(2):  
SURETY BOND REVIEW

**MR. O'REILLY:** Merci, Monsieur le President. In the last sitting, I questioned why the Minister and Department of Lands had contracted a southern accounting firm, Ernst & Young, to look at the use of surety bonds in the NWT to cover environmental liabilities. The sole source contract has now ballooned to over \$230,000. I also questioned why the department appears to have placed this work at the top of its agenda after a request from the mining industry to accept this form of financial security.

It's not clear how surety bonds fit into the stalled development of regulations for the Public Land Act unless the Minister is prepared to accept this less secure form of financial security. The

Minister said back in October that the report from this very expensive work would be ready in early 2023. I haven't seen that report or any recent public engagement on the development of regulations for the Public Land Act which will presumably set the forms of financial security that GNWT will accept for surface leases. No doubt the Minister is fully aware that this government already took a \$23 million hit because of GNWT's failure to request any financial security for the Giant Mine surface lease and more liabilities coming our way from Ptarmigan Mine and other operations that remain unsecured under watch like Cameron Hills and Prairie Creek.

On the issue of public engagement on the Public Land Act regulations, it's been radio silence since May 2021 when a "what we heard" report was issued on general concerns. One of the most popular measures suggested during this first phase was to restrict the Minister's ability to accept dodgy forms of financial security. I would place surety bonds in that category, especially when GNWT has little to no capacity to track the financial health of operators and those who back financial securities.

The second round of public engagement on the proposed Public Land Act regulations that was promised for late 2021 to early 2022 never took place. Stakeholder advisory committees were also supposed to be set up and that hasn't happened either, Mr. Speaker. I'll have questions for the Minister of Lands on the status of the work on surety bonds and when the public engagement on the Public Land Act regulations will begin again. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1442-19(2):  
HOMELESSNESS

**MR. JOHNSON:** Housing, housing, housing, Mr. Speaker. It's all we seem to talk about in this House. And, Mr. Speaker, credit is due that this Assembly has delivered more housing money than we have seen in decades, largely thanks to a lot of federal programs that have rolled out to both the GNWT and Indigenous governments. Yet, Mr. Speaker, we have absolutely no sense whether we have made any progress on ending homelessness in this territory, which ultimately is the goal, Mr. Speaker. And I suspect we have not made any progress at all, Mr. Speaker. I suspect, at best, we are trying as hard as we can against current tides of increasing rent, increasing house

prices, increasing construction costs, and a high cost of living, just to prevent more people from become homeless, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we don't even know how long our housing waitlist is. The best evidence we have is from the Minister anecdotally saying in one of her communities it was somewhere between three and seven years, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, we have asked countless questions of the housing minister, but it's important to remember that this is not just a housing initiative. In fact, income assistance and the housing allowance it provides is one of the single biggest things this government does to prevent homelessness. In addition, many of the key NGO and shelter funding flows through health and social services. And, Mr. Speaker, it seems that despite all of this spending and all of this talk, we are just yelling and going in all sorts of different directions without any sort of coherent plan. And, Mr. Speaker, we were promised a plan. That was the homelessness prevention strategy. We were promised that plan in 2020, 2021, 2022, and here we stand in 2023, after having spent millions of dollars, and we still do not have that plan, Mr. Speaker. I will have questions for the Premier who is responsible for coordinating the Homelessness Prevention Strategy on when we can finally see the plan, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1443-19(2):  
HAY RIVER SOUTH CONSTITUENCY  
OFFICE SERVICES

**MR. ROCKY SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I said I wasn't going to do a statement, but I can't. I just cannot do that. So I have to say something. So, Mr. Speaker, I am fortunate to have an office on main street in Hay River that's accessible to all residents and, Mr. Speaker, today I want to let those persons who stop by my office for coffee, and sometimes they actually ask for advice, I will be home Friday so when you see my truck outside come on in.

Mr. Speaker, a service I do provide to residents in Hay River is the preparation of wills, personal directives, and power of attorneys. I just want to let those who are waiting for their documents, expect a call next week to set up an appointment to review and sign off those documents.

And, Mr. Speaker, I would also like to let the shelter residents know that my office will be open starting Saturday at 7 a.m. so stop by for

a coffee and let me know what I missed over the last two weeks. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1444-19(2):  
BUDGET SHORTFALLS FOR REGIONAL  
AND SOCIAL SERVICES AUTHORITY

**MS. SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, when the regional health authorities were dissolved and the one super-board was created in the Northwest Territories, I recall the message was to the Northwest Territories it was to streamline services, to share resources. And one of the main reasons was to be able to save costs. Well, Mr. Speaker, this is not proven to be the case.

Mr. Speaker, our health authority budget has increased every year since its inception, and it does not look like we'll ever be able to work within its budget. We have heard the Minister explain what the drivers are, and we see no way around these issues.

Mr. Speaker, we have increasing addiction issues. We have increasing mental health issues. We have increased the needs of CFS for our families, and our staffing issues increased where we have shortage of nurses, shortage of doctors. You know, we're turning to using agency nurses, which is a huge increase on our budget. Mr. Speaker, we as a government really need to look at this decision and maybe reconsider was this ever really a good decision. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1445-19(2):  
EULOGY FOR JESSIE MAY SNIDER

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I rise in the House to advise you that respected elder Jessie May Snider passed away on February 28th, 2023. I would like to thank her family and brother for providing me with her Celebration of Life which I will share with you here today.

Jessie May Hardisty was born in a tent in Pehdzeh Ki, somewhere around Xahndah, on June 2nd, 1945 to Adeline and Edward Hardisty. Jessie was raised by Granny Jessie in Wrigley. As Jessie grew older, she went to residential school in Fort Simpson, Fort Providence, and Inuvik. Upon finishing school, Jessie went to work at Lapointe Hall as a kitchen helper. After working there for a while,

she moved to Yellowknife where she met her love of her life - Richard Snider. Sometime later, they moved to Calgary and as Robert said, "some of her kids had started to appear and they started to expand their family." They moved to another location to work BC and Manitoba and traveled across Canada. Jessie loved to see the country, its beauty, and other people.

Jessie did not like to live in the city, so the family moved to Fort Nelson, BC, to be with her sister Mabel. In 1980, they decided to move to Fort Liard. They stayed there until 1991 and then moved to Redknife. Living there helped her get back to her traditional lifestyle and, again, some more children somehow appeared. In 1997, they moved back to Fort Simpson and this where they remained and raised their family.

Jessie was so happy to move back to Fort Simpson because her brothers could provide her with moose meat. She loved her moose meat and berries that she would pick. As well, geese were on top of her menu when her son Darrell would bring it to her.

Mr. Speaker, Jessie's favorite pastime was to play bingo. As the story goes, she loved the number 10. Merle shared a story with Robert. One day she took her mother into town to get her bingo cards. As they were going back home, Jessie said, "Stop, I do not have B10 on my cards, so we have to go back and get a card with that number."

Mr. Speaker, Jessie was very successful at bingo. She won a couple of cars and several large jackpots. Besides her luck, she enjoyed connecting with friends and meeting them at these bingos and this was why she would travel the Deh Cho to attend bingos. She even attended a few bingo games in Las Vegas.

Mr. Speaker, all throughout her life she made many friends, and some were able to attend her funeral. The family would like to thank everyone who attended and those who sent best wishes. I can tell you her husband, children, siblings, extended family and friends will sadly miss her. Mashicho.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Nahendeh. Our thought and prayers are with the family and community at this time.

Members' statements. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member for Great Slave.

### Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery

**MS. NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would also like to recognize former Minister Glen Abernathy. He's also -- or am I looking the

wrong way, I can't see where he's at? He's also a former constituent of mine, a friend, and a mentor. So I just wanted to say welcome. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Great Slave. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member for Range Lake.

**HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd also like to recognize former Minister Glen Abernathy. He was the Minister of Health and Social Services for many years and although we miss him in the Assembly, I have a feeling that he was very happy that he didn't have to go through the pandemic with us. But thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Madam Premier. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member for Thebacha.

**MS. MARTSELOS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to recognize the pages from the PWK High School, Fort Smith, Brody Chepelsky-Tetso and Donald Ferguson. And I would also like to thank their chaperones, Christy and Tony Jones.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Thebacha. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member for Nunakput.

**MR. JACOBSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to welcome back into the House Mr. Glen Abernathy. Both of us were elected in 2007 and we'd work here all day and then we'd go to his house and we'd play Xbox, so those were the good old days. And just welcome him back into the House; it's good to see you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Nunakput. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Reports of committees on the review of bills. Reports of standing and special committees. Member for Kam Lake.

### **Reports of Standing and Special Committees**

#### COMMITTEE REPORT 47-19(2): STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT REPORT ON HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION: SUPPORTING PATHWAYS TO HOUSING NWT RESIDENTS

**MS. CLEVELAND:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Your Standing Committee on Social Development is pleased to provide its Report on Homelessness Prevention: Supporting Pathways to Housing for NWT Residents, and commends it to the House.

### **Standing Committee on Social Development Report On Homelessness Prevention**

For many residents, home is a place of family, love and comfort. It's where people are connected to their cultures and communities. Importantly, a home must be affordable, structurally sound, and large enough for all members of the family. Many Indigenous peoples want homes that meet their cultural needs and land-based lifestyles. A home is not just a physical structure; it's a way of life, a source of support, and a place that meets your basic human needs. Yet, far too many people in the Northwest Territories do not have a home to call their own. Each person in the NWT deserves the dignity of a home. Through a culturally safe, coordinated all of territory approach, it is possible to prevent homelessness. A collective response requires all to step forward and work toward housing all community members.

#### **Introduction: Homelessness Prevention**

The Standing Committee on Social Development focused their study on homelessness prevention. **Homelessness prevention** refers to targeted policies, practices, and interventions that prevent a person from experiencing homelessness or reducing the risk of homelessness recurring. Homelessness prevention also provides the necessary resources and supports for those in need of stable housing and other integrated services as a pathway out of homelessness. Committee chose this lens and has made recommendations to prevent or reduce the number of NWT residents who may experience homelessness in the future, as well as to provide interventions for those who are currently experiencing homelessness.

"The very thought that our people in the small communities who do not have a roof over their heads and are going hungry is unfathomable in this day and age." - Ron Bonnetrouge, Member of the Legislative Assembly for Deh Cho

#### **Understanding Experiences of Homelessness in the Northwest Territories**

The NWT is facing an unprecedented housing crisis directly connected to a rising number of people experiencing homelessness throughout the territory. In 2015, the City of Yellowknife counted 139 individuals as experiencing homelessness. In 2021, the City of Yellowknife counted 312 individuals as experiencing homelessness. This is a 124 percent increase over six years. To hear directly from residents and community leadership throughout the territory on the issues contributing to the

housing crisis and homelessness, committee traveled to three communities, hosted public hearings, invited written submissions, and posted an online survey. People were clear: There is a shortage of housing across the territory, there is not enough affordable housing, and of the housing units that do exist (both private and public) many are in major disrepair. As a result, residents are often faced with an impossible decision: live in unhealthy, abusive and/or overcrowded homes, or experience visible homelessness on the street or in a shelter.

Homelessness is experienced in different ways. Visible homelessness is commonly understood as people sleeping on the street, using emergency shelters or other crisis interventions. Hidden homelessness means that while a person may have a roof over their head, they do not have their own residence or any prospects of securing housing. Homelessness has been characterized as the personal failings of an individual. While it is important to understand individual causes and risk factors, it does not account for the social determinants of health that can increase or decrease the likelihood of experiencing homelessness. The social determinants of health include income, access to education, access to employment, food security, and housing to name a few. The inequities of Indigenous health are attributed to colonization and racism. Key determinants of Indigenous health are self-determination, de-colonization, and cultural continuity. Given half the NWT population is Indigenous, the causes and risk factors contributing to experiencing homelessness align with the legacy of colonization.

The impacts of homelessness included the loss of life; reduced life expectancy; substance abuse and addictions; exposure to violence; suicidal ideation; trauma; inability to secure employment; and increased vulnerability to illness and disease. In the NWT, the consequences of homelessness are deadly serious and life threatening. The pathways out of homelessness and toward homelessness prevention are multi-layered and achievable. They require housing, health, economic, and justice responses across the territory. Acts of reconciliation must be made to support the self-determination of Indigenous governments and peoples. Societal beliefs and attitudes must shift to honour housing as a human right. Through a culturally safe, coordinated all of territory approach, preventing homelessness is possible.

### **Committee Approach**

Committee puts forward this report and recommendations at a time of territorial, national, and global housing crises. The 19th Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories identified increasing the number of affordable homes and reducing core housing need as one of its priorities. Further, the Assembly's priority to implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the 2015 Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action, and the 2019 Reclaiming Power and Place: The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, affirms the rights, needs and priorities for Indigenous governments, groups and peoples.

Committee took two approaches to this report: A homelessness prevention approach (described above) and a trauma-informed approach. A trauma-informed approach recognizes a person holistically and acknowledges that a person may have or is currently experiencing trauma. One way that committee incorporated a trauma-informed approach is to center the voices of individuals and families with lived experience with homelessness.

### **Engagement Process**

From May to December 2022, more than 165 people came forward to give their perspectives on housing and homelessness. People engaged in community meetings, a private meeting with youth at Home Base YK, in-camera presentations, written submissions, and an anonymous survey (to protect confidentiality).

### **Recommendations**

The recommendations put forward are intended to support pathways out of homelessness and towards being safely housed, as well as recommendations to prevent or reduce the experience of homelessness in the future.

#### **Recommendation 1**

The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends that Housing NWT establish a youth housing fund by the 2023-2024 fiscal year with sustainable, multi-year funding available to Indigenous governments and non-governmental organizations to purchase, operate and manage safe housing for children and youth in care.

#### **Recommendation 2**

The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends the Department of Health and Social Services create an

Indigenous Child and Family Services Navigator position dedicated to youth who are aging out of care find stable housing and other supports.

### **Recommendation 3**

The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends Municipal and Community Affairs lead an all-of-government approach to ensuring all children and youth have access to sports with increased funding, subsidies and vouchers for sports equipment and registration fees.

### **Recommendation 4**

The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends that Housing NWT establish a women's housing fund by the 2023-2024 fiscal year that provides sustainable, multi-year funding to Indigenous governments and non-profit organizations to purchase, operate and manage housing for women and their children who are at risk of violence or have experienced violence.

### **Recommendation 5**

The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends that the Department of Health and Social Services lead the development of 2SLGBTQIPA+ guidelines for emergency shelters, transitional housing, and non-profit organizations providing housing and homelessness prevention supports by the 2023-2024 fiscal year.

### **Recommendation 6**

The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends that the Department of Justice increase funding to the Men's Healing Fund to support regional healing programs for the holistic health and well-being of men.

### **Recommendation 7**

The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories complete Truth and Reconciliation Call to Action Number 21 and secure substantive federal funding for an NWT Indigenous healing centre to support Indigenous individuals who have been harmed and/or traumatized by the Indian residential schools system, Sixties Scoop, and other acts of colonization.

### **Recommendation 8**

The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends that the Department of Health and Social Services

expedite the application, approval, and reporting requirement process of the On the Land Healing Fund to uphold Indigenous governments' and organizations' self-determination and ensure allocation of annual funds.

### **Recommendation 9**

The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories take an all-of-government approach to providing sustainable, multi-year funding for emergency shelters, transitional housing with wraparound sobriety and mental health supports, and supported living housing with managed alcohol and harm reduction programs.

### **Recommendation 10**

The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends Housing NWT work with Indigenous governments and the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation to establish an Indigenous housing fund that will provide Indigenous governments and/or Indigenous non-governmental organizations financial support to purchase, operate, and manage housing aimed at Indigenous individuals and families.

### **Recommendation 11**

The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories work with Indigenous governments, architects, engineers, and other professionals to help develop a suite of Indigenous-led climate change responsive designs for emergency shelters, transitional housing, affordable housing, and housing for seniors and housing for those with disabilities.

### **Recommendation 12**

The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends the Government of the Northwest Territories meet its commitment to develop an all of government Homelessness Prevention Strategy by April 2023.

### **Recommendation 13**

The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends the Department of Education, Culture and Employment partner with the northern private sector, non-governmental organizations, and Indigenous governments to develop one-year lease agreements and rental assistance payments to accommodate private sector lease requirements to support housing partnerships and increase access to affordable housing.

**Recommendation 14**

The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends Housing NWT amend the collection policy and forgive any arrears up to \$30,000 for Indian residential school survivors as an act of reconciliation before the end of the 19th Assembly.

**Recommendation 15**

The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends Housing NWT implement the principles of the collection policy and develop a strategy by the 2023-2024 fiscal year to forgive arrears that cannot be collected despite demonstrated effort.

**Recommendation 16**

The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends Housing NWT eradicate the residency policy and update the public housing point rating system with community membership as an additional factor with corresponding points and significant weight.

**Recommendation 17**

The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends Housing NWT develop a first right of refusal clause in leasing agreements to ensure family members of tenants receive the first opportunity to lease a public housing unit before the unit goes to market.

**Recommendation 18**

The Standing Committee on Social Development recommends the Government of the Northwest Territories provide a response to this report in 120 days.

**Conclusion**

This report and recommendations were written to honour the voices of NWT residents and provide meaningful recommendations for pathways out of homelessness and towards housing NWT residents. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MS. CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Great Slave, that Committee Report 47-19(2), Standing Committee on Social Development Report on Homelessness Prevention: Supporting Pathways to Housing NWT Residents, be

deemed read and printed in Hansard in its entirety. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Kam Lake. The motion is in order. To the motion?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Question.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? Any abstentions? The motion is carried. Committee Report 47-19(2) has been deemed read ---

---Carried

Reports of standing and special committees. Member for Kam Lake.

**MS. CLEVELAND:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Great Slave, that Committee Report 47-19(2), Standing Committee on Social Development Report on Homelessness Prevention: Supporting Pathways to Housing NWT Residents, be received by the Assembly and referred to Committee of the Whole. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Kam Lake. The motion is in order. To the motion?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Question.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? Any abstentions? The motion is carried. Committee Report 47-19(2) has been received and will be moved into Committee of the Whole for further consideration

---Carried

Reports of standing and special committees. Returns to oral questions. Acknowledgements. Oral questions. Member for Nunakput.

**Oral Questions**

QUESTION 1439-19(2):  
PORTABLES FOR MAGALANIK SCHOOL

**MR. JACOBSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today, Mr. Speaker, I was talking about Magalanik School and the retrofits that's happening in the community. For the last two years, I guess we've been waiting for an update from the contractor, and we've been still waiting for that timeline to get some completion or a notice of what's happening.

Mr. Speaker, can the Minister of Infrastructure commit to working with me and the contractor, who the contractor is a holder is an Inuvialuit development corporation, are willing to work



with me to work with the contractor to get four portables into the community instead of trying to use our local community buildings and stuff like that being taken away from the community during the day and the evening. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Nunakput. Minister responsible for Infrastructure.

**HON. DIANE ARCHIE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the GNWT is working with the Beaufort Delta District Education Council, the BDEC, to look at space for the community to use as temporary classrooms until the Magalanik School expansion and renovation is complete. I hear the Member wanting to work together, look at space, so, I mean, we can have that discussion. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. JACOBSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the Minister for that. Mr. Speaker, you know, four portables being brought into the community, I think that could be utilized as a -- when they're done with them, they could be put into the housing stock, something we all need, more houses.

Mr. Speaker, what support can the Minister of Infrastructure provide to the students of Tuk on temporary houses to students that construction is underway to make sure that we're trying to work with IRC and IDC to get these -- it should be the contractor's responsibility to get these portables, and I'm calling them out today. And I want to work with the Minister to make sure that happens, to bring in four portables, because this is supposed to be a good news story but now, Mr. Speaker, it's nothing but headaches from my mayor. I hear it from my mayor; I hear it from TCC. What's the plan; what's happening? We're already utilizing stuff that's -- we're wearing down our own stuff, like the community hall, the church, you know, everything. We need to bring in something new. If we could do it for down in Yellowknife, we could do it for up in Tuktoyaktuk. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. DIANE ARCHIE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the GNWT has worked with the contractor to get a new project schedule moving -- for moving the temporary classrooms outside of the gymnasium so that we can allow the gym to be open at start of the school year, which is in September. I do want to say that we don't have any portables that could be deployed to Tuk. And as well, Mr. Speaker, we don't really have the budget to be able to accommodate and purchase the additional portables. So I just want to be upfront with the Member that, you know, we are trying

to get the school opened in September but the project does continue, and we are working with the contractor to be able to get an updated schedule so that we can share with the community. And, you know, I've heard from the community leaders as well. The mayor has reached out and just wanted updates, so we are working to be able to provide those. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. JACOBSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, with the four portables that we're asking for, would it be able to ask the contractor to bring them in and sublease them back to BDEC, I guess. I seen a tender that went out to the community yesterday asking for rental space in the community. Why is it so hard to get four portable units into the community for no more than 16 students, and there's four classes that has to be brought in. So how hard can that be to work with the contractor. They got \$35 million. They must have been saving. And everybody wants to blame COVID yet in regards to the price cost. So why can't this happen, Mr. Speaker? Thank you.

**HON. DIANE ARCHIE:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned we are working with BDEC, the GNWT, Department of Infrastructure as well as Education, Culture and Employment, to look at some solutions on how we can accommodate the students. The timeline to procure, construct, and deliver portables to Tuk doesn't really align with the timelines to be able to get the gym opened for school year. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. JACOBSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, you know, like I said before, you know, we could get those portables brought up. You know, they're already pre-made in the south if need be. But the thing is the biggest thing it has a rippling effect on my students and the community. There's no gym. Mental health issues. It's ripples right across for the community as a whole having no gym. And I really wish that the Minister -- I know she will work with me to get it done but, you know, having a joint meeting with the Inuvialuit Development Corporation and the contractor, with myself and my leadership from Tuk, to go over the plan and what's happening and a timeline. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. DIANE ARCHIE:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I know the Member is very frustrated about the timeline and getting the school in Tuktoyaktuk open. You know, we have been -- we've reached out to the contractor to be able to provide the Department

of Infrastructure, as well as the community, with updated plans on what we're doing to ensure that we get this school open for the kids in September, Mr. Speaker. We will work with the Member and be able to come up with timelines and perhaps, you know, if we need to have meetings with the Member and the leadership, that's something we can do. Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 1440-19(2):  
EVALUATION OF CHILD AND YOUTH CARE  
COUNSELLING PROGRAM

**MS. MARTSELOS:** Mr. Speaker, can the Minister provide some insight on the reasons why an evaluation of the child and youth counselling program was initiated recently? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Thebacha. Minister responsible for Health and Social Services.

**HON. JULIE GREEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you to the Member for the question. It's the practice of Health and Social Services to evaluate programs once they're up and running. The last segment of this program was introduced in the last school year. So the timing was right to conduct an evaluation of the program now. Thank you.

**MS. MARTSELOS:** Mr. Speaker, can the Minister explain what the scope of the evaluation of the CYC will be and what the intended outcomes are for that review? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. JULIE GREEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the CYCC program was developed with feedback from a wide variety of people, including students, parents, health authorities, and others. And so we're going back to that group and asking them what they think the strengths and weaknesses of this program is, and particularly the extent to which it is achieving its goal of improving access to mental wellness supports for youth. So the evaluation -- there was a portion of it that began last year with staff who were leaving in the last school year and continuing on now with the public engagement period. And rather than waiting for the whole report to be done at the end of August, myself and the Minister of ECE have committed to make changes that will be in place in time for the new school year where those changes seem to be of benefit to the program. Thank you.

**MS. MARTSELOS:** Mr. Speaker, can the Minister explain the type of feedback the health department has received to date from students, parents, and educators on the impact of the CYC has had in schools so far? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. JULIE GREEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the only formal feedback we've had to this date is from individuals who accessed the child and youth care counselling program that was captured in the 2021 community counselling program client satisfaction questionnaire. That questionnaire showed a 78 percent satisfaction rate with CYCC services. But it's important to note that the response rate for that questionnaire was low, and so rather than relying solely on that we are now inviting parents, students, teachers, and community members to give us their views on how the program is working. Thank you.

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

**MS. MARTSELOS:** Mr. Speaker, with the introduction of the CYC, there were several former student counsellors in all regions of the NWT, including in Fort Smith, who lost their jobs because they didn't have the education, qualifications, required for the new positions. Given this program evaluation, can the Minister tell us if there's a potential for former school counsellors who lost their jobs under CYC to have their old jobs reinstated or reconsidered? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. JULIE GREEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this evaluation is not at that point and this is not the forum for HR. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 1441-19(2):  
FORT SIMPSON DIESEL PLANT

**MS. NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Minister of Infrastructure. Given that we have had these recent flooding events that are really highlighting the vulnerability of our infrastructure and that we're likely to see more coming, can the Minister tell me if the Fort Simpson diesel plant is being moved or completely replaced given its current location? Thank you.

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

**HON. DIANE ARCHIE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, when the flood happened in Fort Simpson, there was big concern from the community. The mayor

reached out and was concerned about the flooding.

The Northwest Territories Power Corporation reached out and received some federal money to replace the plant, and we received the funding and then the flood happened and so we've had to go back and, you know, look at what we need to do because it is a big concern. We know that. We've found location off the island. So this is something that we are working on. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MS. NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I guess then from hearing that, it doesn't sound like there's any plans to do anything with the plant on the island but rather to look at the new location where the LNG plant was proposed. It's my understanding that the original LNG plant proposed was only supplemental but now needs to be a full plant to populate -- sorry, to power Simpson. So what is the cost for that entire LNG plant that would be needed to power the entire village? Thank you.

**HON. DIANE ARCHIE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Northwest Territories Power Corporation board is having a meeting on Friday. You know, we are hoping to get some confirmation to be able to continue some of the scoping that is required for this construction. Mr. Speaker, we're hoping to get this done by the summer. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MS. NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So get what done by the summer? Is that the designs, is that the money from the federal government that's needed, the building of the plant itself, geotechnical designs; can the Minister be a bit more specific about what's going to be done by the summer? Thank you.

**HON. DIANE ARCHIE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the work that's being completed now is ongoing. We don't have a cost estimate. We are looking at the relocation of new plant projects. So once we get that in place, Mr. Speaker, that would be able to help us to go to the feds through Infrastructure Canada to be able to look at the costs of this project. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MS. NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to have to go on the round for a second set of questions because I have a lot here.

So my question -- my last question will be on is the plan -- or sorry, first of all, I'm concerned that this design and cost estimate hasn't

already been done since it's been about a year since we knew that this supplemental plant was not going to be large enough. Therefore, what is the Minister planning to do this flooding season when the road next to the diesel plant is undermined? Is there an emergency plan or some sort of safety plan in place should the undermining of the river lead to the inoperability of the plant as it is now? Thank you.

**HON. DIANE ARCHIE:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we are working with the community to look at this, unfortunately it's not going to be done this year. We all know how long it takes to be able to build infrastructure. So we are working with the community and working with the flood response to be able to, you know, have something in place for if there happens to be a flood again in Fort Simpson. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### QUESTION 1442-19(2): SURETY BOND REVIEW

**MR. O'REILLY:** Merci, Monsieur le President. My questions are for the Minister of Lands. The department has placed top priority in our requests from the mining industry to use surety bonds as an acceptable form of financial security. Ernst & Young were sole sourced for \$230,000 to tell the government that surety bonds are good financial security.

Can the Minister tell us whether the report is finished and will be released publicly? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the GNWT led by the Department of Lands has hired a consultant, as the Member has said, EY Consulting Services, to conduct research on surety bonds as a form of reclamation security. This information will inform decisions on the form of securities that the GNWT may consider. EY has now completed their research and identified some draft findings, and the final report will be made available publicly once it is finalized by EY. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Merci, Monsieur le President. I want to thank the Minister for that. Of course I probably should have squeezed in when is it going to be released? But our government is poised to accept surety bonds without a real plan to prevent further public liabilities like Giant Mine, Cameron Hills, Mactung, Ptarmigan Mine, and more. Can the Minister tell us when

GNWT will change its approach to financial security and regularly accept surety bonds? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, using EY's draft findings, the GNWT is working on guidance which will provide industry with clarity regarding the form of the security that GNWT will accept in the future. I will inform MLAs on this guidance when it has been completed. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Merci, Monsieur le President. I want to thank the Minister for that. It's been radio silence on any public engagement on the development of Public Land Act regulations that will deal with financial security and other matters. Nothing has been done on public engagement since the release of the "what we heard" report in May 2021. That's 20 months ago, Mr. Speaker.

Can the Minister tell us when his department will start the promised phase two of public engagement and finally set up the stakeholder advisory committees? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the Member for the question. The Public Land Act regulations are near the end of the drafting process. The Department of Lands is working collaboratively with Indigenous -- or Intergovernmental Council Secretariat partners and the Department of Justice to prepare regulations that meet the needs and desires of the public in the Northwest Territories. Stakeholder engagement is anticipated to continue into the late spring of 2023. Public engagement and section 35 consultation with Indigenous governments and Indigenous organizations, it's also anticipated to occur into the late spring of 2023. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** Merci, Monsieur le President. I want to thank the Minister for that. I just don't really understand why the work with the Intergovernmental Council can happen in parallel with public engagement. This department and others just seem to leave the public engagement to the very end of the process. By then all the important decisions are made; it's too late.

So, you know, can the Minister tell us if there is actually going to be any meaningful public engagement on the development of the Public Land Act regulations including the forms of acceptable financial security? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned, stakeholder engagement is anticipated to continue into late spring of 2023. Public engagement and section 35 consultation with Indigenous governments and Indigenous organizations is anticipated to occur until the late spring of 2023. The public land use regulations will establish accessible forms of security for disposition of public lands. Mr. Speaker, we are working on trying to get this done by the end of this sitting. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 1443-19(2):  
HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES DEFICIT

**MS. SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Minister of Health and Social Services. Last year, NTHSSA's one-year deficit hit a record high of \$33 million and yesterday the Minister confirmed that this year's deficit would be in the same ballpark. That would push our accumulated deficit over \$200 million. The Minister also stated that the health sustainability office is dealing with the problem but that doesn't seem to be producing any results. So what are the challenges that the sustainability office is having to reduce this deficit, Mr. Speaker?

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

**HON. JULIE GREEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thanks to the Member for the question. The office is now fully staffed. For a while there was an issue with staffing in the office so that they could do their work but that is not an issue at this point.

The basic issue is that it's like playing whack-a-mole in the Department of Health and Social Services. When we finish paying for one thing, another thing needs funding. And this has really become more acute in the time that I've been Minister of Health and Social Services. There are more calls for more services to be covered by our health system than ever before without any commensurate means of looking at ways to increase revenue, decrease non-core services, or in other ways to try and bring our finances into alignment. So the result is that we -- that the NTHSSA was not properly funded when it was created. It's still not properly funded. And the situation that we find ourselves in is that we run a deficit annually. And as the

Member knows, the last deficit was \$33 million. Thank you.

**MS. SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, yeah, so the Minister -- will the Minister commit to public reporting in the next NTHSSA annual report on what results the sustainability office achieves, because I know with what she's saying that they're fully staffed now, because that would have been my second question if they have enough resources but, can we know what their achievements are so that we can know if the work that they're doing is actually producing end results. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. JULIE GREEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, yesterday during the mains examination of the department, I committed to a confidential briefing to the committee on accountability and oversight of the NTHSSA finances, what savings have been realized, what pressures are driving costs up, and so I'm going to repeat that here again today. At a very high level, it can be included in the annual report. But my caution about that is that the annual report won't be out until the fall, and it won't cover anything that happens after the end of this month. So the timeliness of that document is not great. Thank you.

**MS. SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So if the Minister won't be able to commit to the -- because of the timing, then can the Minister commit to some type of public -- I mean, different departments have different ways to show this publicly. Maybe, like, my colleague always asks for it online so we could see how they're -- it's like the child and family services, you could check to see how you're doing and what things are being done. So will the Minister commit to something like that so the public knows that you're doing the work. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. JULIE GREEN:** Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure what exactly is possible. But I believe that it's important to provide accountability to the public for both our spending and our debts. And so I will work with the department to develop some kind of public reporting. I can't say right now whether that will be online or not. But I will work towards public accountability on this public reporting. Thank you.

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

**MS. SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you for that, to the Minister. Is the Minister confident that the NTHSSA deficit will be less than \$30 million next year? Is there a target as to what they're hoping to be under or -- I guess

that's my final question, because I'm not sure much more I can ask on this topic. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. JULIE GREEN:** Yes, thank you. Mr. Speaker, I don't have a firm idea of what the deficit will be. I know that we're paying more for travel; we're paying more for freight; we're paying more for drugs; we're paying more for staff, especially because we have so much temporary staff and they are expensive to acquire and work here. So I am very concerned about all those things that are driving costs up. And on the other side, there is uncertainty about the revenue that we're going to get from Canada through the CHT and the tailored bilaterals, whether they're going to renew the Territorial Health Investment Fund. So there are just so many unknowns at this point that all I can say is I will buy the Member lunch if we don't have a deficit. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 1444-19(2):  
HOMELESSNESS

**MR. JOHNSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, it's kind of been a long march to one day the GNWT would have a plan to address homelessness. You kind of think it would be something we'd have in the first place, but I'm hoping that the Premier could give us some good news and update the House on when the strategy to address homelessness will be complete? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Yellowknife North. Honourable Premier.

**HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This strategy to address homelessness is a pretty important document, in my personal opinion, based on my professional experience before coming into the ledge and my personal interest in politics as well. When it was first brought to me and said we need to change the strategy, one of the first things I looked at when looking at it is the stakeholder engagement which, Mr. Speaker, I felt was a little bit lacking. So we have provided a "draft" draft that we are seeking feedback from MLAs to see if we're on the right track. We will be doing engagement with the sheltering agencies and other agencies that are directly impacted by homelessness. And we are expecting that a draft, final draft, will come to the Assembly, be tabled in the House here within this sitting, so towards the end of March. Again, there will be work after that. And so the final strategy, not in draft, will be tabled in the May, June session. But hopefully the draft will

be at the end of this month. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. JOHNSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, I'm hopeful too that at least a draft will get tabled. I think at some point we seem to have kind of lost sight of the goal, which is, you know -- in our mandate we're committed to adding a hundred new public housing units, which certainly helps, you know, with homelessness. But the goal is not just to add and maintain our public housing stock. The goal is to actually end homelessness, and I mean that under the definition. I often point to the Yellowknife ten-year plan to end homelessness. I point to the fact that Medicine Hat, which has far more people than the Northwest Territories, has ended homelessness, meaning that when we go out and count, there are less than three people who identify as chronically homeless which is the goal, Mr. Speaker. It's the goal we should be working towards. So can the Premier confirm whether our strategy will actually be one to end homelessness? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm just going to be honest here, Mr. Speaker. In my 20 plus years of being a social worker and working directly with homeless people, I cannot make a commitment that says we will end homelessness. I think that's a fallacy, Mr. Speaker. So our goal is to end long-term chronic homelessness. There are situations every single day, and this is based on 20 years of working with people, that today you might not be homelessness; tomorrow you might lose your job; you might have a bad relationship; you might end up homeless. So, Mr. Speaker, the goal is not to end homelessness. The goal is to end chronic long-term homelessness within this plan. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. JOHNSON:** Yeah, thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know what, I'm actually glad to hear that. I think we're getting into semantics. When people say end homelessness, they mean that when you go out and count the people on the street, they haven't been chronically homeless usually for a period of about three months. You know, you want to try and get someone back into housing in some sort of form, whether it's transitional, in three months. So I don't want to get into semantics of what ending homelessness does as long as we're somewhat in the same ballpark.

My real question -- my next question, though, Mr. Speaker, is we love our big strategies, but we don't necessarily like funding them. Can the Premier inform this House of whether the draft strategy or the final strategy or some point the

final strategy will actually be costed and have some money with it, Mr. Speaker?

**HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There's a couple of things that I am trying to get done within this homelessness strategy. One is to have some costing. Of course, some things, Mr. Speaker -- some things -- I'm hoping to have a logic model because I've heard that from Members right across this Assembly about measurable outcomes, etcetera. And we had no measurable outcomes or even baseline data for homelessness at this point, Mr. Speaker. We don't even know how many people are homeless. So data collection is a part of the homelessness strategy that we'd be looking at. Some costing initially. But this strategy is not going to be done in six months. And my guess is not even in six years. I think this will be a long-term strategy. So some costing will be done but not the whole costing for the whole strategy, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

**MR. JOHNSON:** Yeah, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also want to make sure that we're not trying to reinvent the wheel here. We know that a number of our communities have housing plans. We know a few of our Indigenous governments are working on housing plans. I mentioned earlier the Yellowknife -- the City of Yellowknife created a ten-year plan to end homelessness, which was costed. They really fell behind and then required a lot of federal and GNWT funding to do it. But I think that the framework is there, at least in the Yellowknife model.

Can the Premier speak to how all of those other plans will work into our strategy? I want to make sure this is truly a whole-of-government and a whole-of-territory approach. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yeah, I do think that it does need to be looked at not just from a housing perspective. A lot of times people think that homelessness is just a lack of housing. That's not -- that's, again, a fallacy, Mr. Speaker. In my personal opinion, homelessness comes from many factors. It may be situational, bad relationship today. It could be mental health and addictions. It could be other factors that some people prefer to live in different ways. And so it's important that we not reinvent the wheel. And that's why I'm looking for the stakeholder engagement which is critical. That'll involve the sheltering agencies. It'll involve all the agencies that are involved in homelessness, including the City of Yellowknife who is very active in addressing homelessness. We need to look at what their plans are and

incorporate into ours. Reinventing the wheel is not the way to go.

One other point I want to make, Mr. Speaker, is that I've realized over my seven and a half years of being in the Assembly is that homelessness is a really hard topic. People are not really comfortable with it. Better get comfortable. The reality is that we tend to shuffle them from department to department, and you can't do that with homelessness. It does take an integrated approach. We're looking at -- depending on the draft and the feedback we get, we're looking at actually taking that and actually having a division within the GNWT that addresses homelessness so that it can be an all-of-government approach so it's not shuffled from department to department within this Assembly, past Assemblies and the next Assemblies to come. So thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 1445-19(2):  
LOCAL HOUSING ORGANIZATION  
FUNDING

**MS. CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Oh Mr. Speaker, I'm sorry, I'm operating out of my computer today. There we go. My questions today are for the Minister responsible for Housing NWT.

Mr. Speaker, to calculate the annual funding it provides to LHOs for repair and maintenance of its public housing portfolio, the corporation uses a formula that multiplies a fixed amount by the number and type of housing units. The LHOs are expected to allocate the funds according to the needs identified in the annual property inspection and condition rating process. So I'm wondering if the Minister can let the House know if LHOs are adequately funded as per the Housing NWT formula? Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Kam Lake. Minister responsible for Housing NWT.

**HON. PAULIE CHINNA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you to the Member for the question as well too. You know, since I've had the housing portfolio, I've had the opportunity to travel to the majority of the communities throughout the Northwest Territories. I've met with the local housing authorities. I've met with the board of directors as well too. Also with the district offices to really thoroughly understand the housing delivery program right at the grassroots, right at the ground level, and what I was able to see and understand is that no, the local housing authorities are not adequately funded. And through that, we've created a

housing strategy as well too where we are going to be identifying those impacts that we need to address. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MS. CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm wondering if the Minister responsible for Housing NWT can let the House know what the current difference is between what is funded and what is actually required? Thank you.

**HON. PAULIE CHINNA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you to the Member for this question as well too. What I've come to understand is that we need homes throughout the Northwest Territories. We need a lot of homes. But also with our constant advocacy with the Indigenous governments, stakeholders throughout the Northwest Territories, with the federal government as well too, to put houses on the ground. Mr. Speaker, there's a huge difference. When we're looking at putting homes on the ground, we need to address the social impacts of that program delivery. We also need to provide adequate programming as well too to support our local -- our homeowners in our smaller communities for our seniors, for our youth, and for me, Mr. Speaker, that is the huge difference. But what is required throughout the Northwest Territories is we need more homes, and we need more houses on the ground. We need operational and maintenance funding. We need more money coming to the Northwest Territories. And by that, working with Indigenous governments, stakeholders, nonprofit organizations, we've seen a huge address to housing needs throughout the Northwest Territories with our work with the federal government. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MS. CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I think this side of the House is well aware that the Northwest Territories has a housing deficit and needs more homes. My question was what is the current difference between what is funded and what is required? Thank you.

**HON. PAULIE CHINNA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just bluntly, I want to say that we need more operations and maintenance funding for our public housing -- for our public housing units throughout the territory. But through our strategic renewal as well too, these issues are going to be addressed and it's going to provide us a further guideline on what we are going to be expecting in the months and the years to come as well. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MS. CLEVELAND:** Mr. Speaker, we sit on this side of the House when we go through budgets

and we ask these questions about what budget do you need in order to operate a housing corporation? What budgets do you need in order to be able to do the minor and major repairs of public housing so that you can deliver safe housing to northern residents? So I'm perplexed as to why the Minister cannot tell me how much she is underfunded in order to be responsible to her mandate. And it's frustrating to me because on this side of the House, we keep saying to Housing, what do you need; what do you need? And so I'm still asking, what do you need? If I can't get the question here today, what I would like to ask, Mr. Speaker, is the current Housing NWT annual report does not give an adequate snapshot of Housing NWT assets, their condition, and asset maintenance costs. In 2008 -- so many, many years ago, Mr. Speaker, 15 years ago -- the Auditor General recommended that the corporation regularly report on the condition of its public housing portfolio.

So will the Minister ensure -- because she cannot answer the question here today -- that the corporation's full list of assets by community, their condition, and required asset maintenance costs be included in Housing NWT's next annual report? Thank you.

**HON. PAULIE CHINNA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you to the Member for the question. And I don't feel that I'm not able to answer the question adequately. We are in a housing crisis. We have lobbied with the federal government as well. You can see construction happening throughout the Northwest Territories. We've enhanced those opportunities at the local community level. We've engaged with the stakeholders throughout the territory as well to address adequate housing throughout the Northwest Territories but also trying to find solutions on how to address housing throughout the territory. And looking at putting a number on it, we're looking at millions of trying to address housing needs throughout the Northwest Territories. And right now, working with Indigenous groups is key, is how -- you know, we have the same lobbying efforts as they do as well too. We need to get more housing into the smaller communities. We need to have adequate programming. But we just do not have the funding. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 1446-19(2):  
CHILD AND YOUTH CARE COUNSELLORS  
STAFF INTEGRATION

**MS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, if this government build more houses in communities and met the basic human needs, this evaluation of the CYCC would not be needed.

I'm going to say these questions anyway even though the Minister's going to say that it's under evaluation. So, Mr. Speaker, we need to ensure that CYCC staff understand the unique culture of our communities so that students can trust them and use them. Can the Minister explain how the CYCC staff become integrated into the communities so that there is trust between them and our students? Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Monfwi. Minister responsible for Health and Social Services.

**HON. JULIE GREEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm going to start by saying the CYCC program has a steering committee, and the Tlicho Community Services Agency sits on that steering committee. So it's not like there's a big huge gap between the Tlicho Community Services Agency and the program itself.

That said, there is antiracism and cultural safety training offered, 14 different sessions between February of this year and March of next year. Of course, the Living Well Together curriculum is mandatory for all GNWT staff. So there are several important ways that we impress on new hires the importance of cultural safety and antiracism.

**MS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, drug addiction, especially crack cocaine, is a major issue in my region. And even now with the all-season road open to Whati, they are seeing the impact, the social problems. So can the Minister explain what is being done to educate students on the negative impacts of using drugs and how we can make sure the CYCC staff can direct students to the supports they need to avoid or overcome addictions? Thank you.

**HON. JULIE GREEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the CYCCs are available to talk about a broad range of issues that youth encounter, whether that is drug use and abuse, family violence, negative social interactions, and so on. They are there to support the students and talk to them about the issues that are of concern to them, and that would include drug use. So we have various media campaigns that dissuade or attempt to dissuade people from using drugs, and those would be available to the people in the Tlicho region as they are every other part of the NWT. Thank you.



**MS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we need to ensure the Indigenous government are working with the schools and the Government of the Northwest Territories to make CYCC positions as effective as possible. How is the Government of the Northwest Territories working with the Tlicho government and other Indigenous government to share best practices and information on supporting students in being drug free and directing them to support where they are available? Thank you.

**HON. JULIE GREEN:** Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned, the CYCC program has a steering committee that includes all of the health authorities, including the Tlicho Community Services Agency. So I certainly think that there would be a possibility for the Tlicho Community Services Agency to raise issues in that forum. There's also a board of the TCSA who could be involved in this area of advocating for services for its students. So I think there are a number of ways.

There are big ways too, like the bilaterals, which I attend and answer questions directly to the Tlicho government. There's the NWT Council of Leaders. So I have to say that the CYCC program issues seem to resonate most in the Tlicho region. I'm aware of that. The evaluation is underway. It's being expedited so that changes are going to be in place for the next school year, in the fall of this year. So we are trying to take into account people's concerns and to address them. Thank you.

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

**MS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Okay, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, since this program is, you know, going under review, I would like to ask the Minister what is the new equivalency going to be of the program once the review is completed? Thank you.

**HON. JULIE GREEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think I missed a word in the Member's question, but I think she wants to know what's going to happen after the evaluation of the program is finished.

We can't know that at this point. We need to collect more information from the people who use the program, teachers, parents, students, community members, and we need to hear what the strengths are in the program, what the issues are, and what ideas, hopefully, they have to address those issues. So once that work is complete, we'll have a better idea of the future of it. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 1447-19(2):  
BACK-UP GENERATORS DURING AN  
OUTAGE

**MR. ROCKY SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about NTPC. I want to take about aging infrastructure that NTPC has. I want to talk about frequent power outages. And I want to talk about temporary backup power. But my questions aren't for the Minister of NTPC; it's for the Minister of housing.

Mr. Speaker, during an extended power outage, what backup power is available to housing units owned by Housing NWT? Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Hay River South. Minister responsible for Housing NWT.

**HON. PAULIE CHINNA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd have to get back to the Member. I don't -- I'm not familiar if we do have backup generators for when the power goes out in our smaller communities. I'd have to get back to the Member. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. ROCKY SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Power outages during the winter months can result in considerable damage to equipment -- I mean to the house, to the appliances in there as well, and also, you know, it's hard on the people who may have to be stuck in a cold house for an extended period of time. So has the department considered this a potential issue, or has it been a potential issue in the smaller communities further north?

**HON. PAULIE CHINNA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Since I've had the portfolio, I haven't been asked this question. I don't know if it's an issue in our smaller communities, but I can get back to the Member. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. ROCKY SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This question, I know, the Minister will be able to answer because we just had a chat about it yesterday.

Is the Minister willing to have the department cost out an upgrade to electrical panels in existing units that would allow for use of small generators to power the houses during an outage? So it's a matter of flipping a switch and plugging in our little Honda generator or whatever you have. Thank you.

**HON. PAULIE CHINNA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am always looking for innovative

ideas on how further look at cost savings, energy savings throughout the territory. And the Member is correct, I'm interested in looking at this further, so I'd like to bring this back to the department as well and looking at those emergency circumstances when it comes to power outages as well. We do live in such a harsh climate as well and looking at the harsh weather conditions in the winter as well. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. ROCKY SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And would the Minister consider having her department look at actually building, you know, that right into the new units that are -- that will be coming on stream or going forward? Thank you.

**HON. PAULIE CHINNA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, I will bring this back to the department as I'm quite interested in looking at emergency responses when we're looking at power outages in smaller communities. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 1448-19(2):  
CHILD AND YOUTH CARE COUNSELLOR  
EQUIVALENCIES

**MS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I was asking -- I know they do the evaluation for a reason. There's a reason behind it, because the program is not working in many of our communities. But even like my colleague from Thebacha mentioned, that a lot of people lost their job as a result of the new -- of the equivalencies. So I'm just asking the Minister that once the evaluation is completed, what kind of options are they looking for in this -- for this, part of the equivalency -- like, what kind of options are they looking for within this -- for this CYCC positions, like, once it's completed? Like, what kind of options. Like, right now the barrier is the master's degree so I'm just checking -- asking about the equivalency of the positions. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Monfwi. Minister responsible for Health and Social Services.

**HON. JULIE GREEN:** Okay, first of all, this program is being evaluated because it was first introduced in 2018 and the rollout finished last year so it's time now to revisit its strengths and areas that require improvement. That's the reason that it's being evaluated.

What we committed to doing was changing things leading into the next school year as we

found issues and ways to address them. So, for example, there's long been discussion about the threshold of education for the CYCCs being too high and excluding people who may have good cultural connections but not the same level of education required. So a second job description has been drafted to allow regional mental health teams more flexibility in capturing a wider variety of counselling candidates to fill those roles in schools. So in plain language, what that means is the master's degree is no longer the only qualification or the most important qualification for filling those jobs. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister. Oral questions. Written questions. Returns to written questions. Mr. Clerk.

### Returns to Written Questions

RETURN TO WRITTEN QUESTION 58-19(2):  
FRANK CHANNEL BRIDGE REPLACEMENT

**CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Tim Mercer):** Mr. Speaker, I have a Return to Written Question 58-19(2) asked by the Member for Monfwi on February 14th, 2023, to the Minister of Infrastructure, regarding Frank Channel Bridge Replacement.

**1. Can the Minister provide a detailed breakdown of the additional costs identified for the Frank Channel Bridge Replacement Project?**

Mr. Speaker, since the original 2021 application to the National Trade Corridors Fund, project costs for the Dehk'e Frank Channel Bridge have increased due to a variety of external factors. This experience is not unique to this project or to the Northwest Territories. All jurisdictions in Canada are experiencing inflated commodity costs, supply chain shortages and increased labour costs, which are impacting infrastructure projects.

Regarding the Dehk'e Frank Channel Bridge, the Department of Infrastructure received an initial cost estimate from the Tlicho-Kiewit general partnership and also solicited an independent third-party cost estimate. Both estimates indicated the previously announced \$50 million contribution agreement was not enough to deliver the project.

Mr. Speaker, the Government of Northwest Territories has requested a top-up to the funding agreement with Canada that, if approved, would increase the total contribution agreement to \$70 million. The project will be advancing to procurement stage and therefore the detail breakdown cannot be shared.

**2. Can the Minister provide a detailed breakdown of funding already committed or budgeted by the GNWT, and or committed/budgeted by the federal government?**

In 2021, the Government of Northwest Territories and Infrastructure Canada announced \$50 million in funding for the replacement of the Dehk'e Frank Channel Bridge under the National Trade Corridors Fund. This would be cost shared, with Canada contributing 75 percent and our government contributing 25 percent.

It is important to note that total project costs include more than construction costs. Other costs relate to engineering work, design, consultants, project management, environmental permitting and monitoring, and contingency funding.

**3. Can the Minister provide a copy of the last structural assessment completed on the Frank Channel Bridge?**

Later today, at the appropriate time, I will table two documents to answer the Member's question: the 2021 Frank Channel Bridge Inspection Report and Inspection Form.

The Inspection Report finds that no major repairs are immediately recommended for the bridge. It did recommend that the potholes in the deck be repaired. These potholes were subsequently repaired by the department.

The report also recommends that repairs be done to the existing bridge if the new bridge is not constructed within five years, including:

- Rehabilitating the deck;
- A routing inspection;
- Repainting several bridge elements;
- Replacing the bearings on pier 2; and,
- Repairing concrete on several bridge elements.

**4. Can the Minister provide a detailed contingency plan for continued operation and maintenance of the Frank Channel Bridge if construction of the replacement is delayed?**

Department of Infrastructure staff inspect the bridge on a regular basis. Minor and preventative maintenance of the existing bridge will continue, as required. The structure also undergoes an intensive inspection every three years. The last intensive inspection was performed in July 2021.

Appreciating the Member for Monfwi's concerns about community safety, we welcome her to attend an upcoming inspection of the bridge. My office will reach out to her, as well as to community leadership, about accompanying departmental staff and myself on a routine bridge inspection this upcoming summer.

If future inspections determine additional interventions are required to prolong the lifespan of the current structure until the new Dehk'e Frank Channel Bridge is built, mitigations could include reducing the bridge to single lane with alternating traffic, reducing the maximum weight of vehicles crossing the bridge, or a combination of both.

Please note that the current bridge crossing speed is already reduced to 40 kilometres per hour, which was the first step to reduce impact and prolong the lifespan of this critical piece of infrastructure.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Replies to the Commissioner's address. Petitions. Tabling of documents. Minister responsible for Infrastructure.

### Tabling of Documents

TABLED DOCUMENT 876-19(2):  
GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHWEST  
TERRITORIES BRIDGE INSPECTION FORM  
– FRANK CHANNEL BRIDGE, JULY 2021

TABLED DOCUMENT 877-19(2):  
STANTEC CONSULTING LTD. 2021 FRANK  
CHANNEL BRIDGE INSPECTION REPORT  
DATED FEBRUARY 12, 2022

**HON. DIANE ARCHIE:** Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following two documents: Government of the Northwest Territories Bridge Inspection Form - Frank Channel Bridge, July 2021; and, Stantec Consulting Ltd. 2021 Frank Channel Bridge Inspection Report dated February 12, 2022. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

TABLED DOCUMENT 878-19(2):  
PLAIN LANGUAGE SUMMARY FOR BILL 72:  
OPIOID DAMAGES AND HEALTH CARE  
COSTS RECOVERY ACT

**HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE:** Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following document: The Plain Language Summary for Bill 72: Opioid Damages and Health Care Costs Recovery Act. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Madam Premier. Tabling of documents. Minister responsible for Environment and Natural Resources.

TABLED DOCUMENT 879-19(2):  
WHAT WE HEARD: A FOREST ACT FOR  
THE NWT, FEBRUARY 2023

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following document: What We Heard: A Forest Act for the NWT, February 2023. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister. Tabling of documents. Member for Frame Lake.

TABLED DOCUMENT 880-19(2):  
LETTER DATED DECEMBER 26, 2022  
FROM ALTERNATIVES NORTH  
REGARDING COMMENTS ON FOREST ACT  
SUMMARY OF POLICY INTENTIONS

**MR. O'REILLY:** Merci, Monsieur le President. I wish to table the following document: A letter from Alternatives North regarding comments on Forest Act Summary of Policy Intentions dated January 26th, 2022. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. Tabling of documents. Notices of motion. Member for Great Slave. Notices of Motion

### Notices of Motion

MOTION 75-19(2):  
MAXIMUM ALLOWABLE RENT INCREASE  
FOR PRIVATE RENTAL UNITS

**MS. NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I give notice that on Thursday, March 9th, 2023, I will move the following motion:

Now therefore I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Hay River South, that the Legislative Assembly recommend that the Government of the Northwest Territories update the Northwest Territories Residential Tenancies Act to include maximum allowable rent adjustments which are no more than the five-year average of the Canada Consumer Price Index;

And further, the government include in the Northwest Territories Residential Tenancies Act that increases to rent above the five-year average of the Canada Consumer Price Index can be applied for by private landlords to the NWT rental officer;

And further, the Government of the Northwest Territories provide a response to this motion within 120 days. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MOTION 76-19(2):  
EXTENDED ADJOURNMENT OF THE  
HOUSE TO MARCH 27, 2023

**MR. ROCKY SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I give notice that on Thursday, March 9th, 2023, I will move the following motion:

I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Nahendeh, that when this House adjourns on Thursday, March 9th, 2023, it shall be adjourned until Monday, March 27th, 2023;

And furthermore, that at any time prior to March 27th, 2023, if the Speaker is satisfied, after consultation with the Executive Council and Members of the Legislative Assembly, that the public interest requires that the House should meet at an earlier time during the adjournment, or at a time later than the scheduled resumption of the House, the Speaker may give notice and thereupon the House shall meet at the time stated in such notice and shall transact its business as if it had been duly adjourned to that time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Hay River South. Notices of motion. Motions. Notices of motion for the first reading of bills. Member for Thebacha.

### Notices of Motion for the First Reading of Bills

BILL 76:  
AN ACT TO AMEND THE ELECTORAL  
BOUNDARIES COMMISSION ACT

**MS. MARTSELOS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that on Thursday, March the 9th, 2023, I will present Bill 76, An Act to Amend the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act, to be read for the first time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Thebacha. Notices of motion for the first reading of bills. First reading of bills. Second reading of bills. Madam Premier.

### Second Reading of Bills

BILL 72:  
OPIOID DAMAGES AND HEALTH CARE  
COSTS RECOVERY ACT,  
CARRIED

**HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE:** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for

the Sahtu, that Bill 72, Opioid Damages and Health Care Costs Recovery Act, be read for the second time.

This bill creates a cause of action for the Government of the Northwest Territories in its own right against manufacturers and wholesalers of opioid products, and their consultants, for the recovery of the cost of health care benefits caused or contributed to by an opioid-related wrong. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Madam Premier. The motion is in order. To the principle of the bill.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Question.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? Any abstentions? The motion is carried. Bill 72 has had second reading.

---Carried

Second reading of bills. Member for Thebacha.

BILL 73:  
AN ACT TO AMEND THE LEGISLATIVE  
ASSEMBLY AND EXECUTIVE COUNCIL  
ACT, NO. 4,  
CARRIED

**MS. MARTSELOS:** Mr. Speaker, I move, second by the Member for Nahendeh, that Bill 73, An Act to Amend the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act, No. 4, be read a second time.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 73 amends the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act to adjust the indemnities and allowances listed in Parts 1, 2 and 3 of Schedule C annually using the average change in the Consumer Price Index over the past five years.

Currently, MLA indemnities and allowances are adjusted each year on April 1st based on the CPI for the previous calendar year. If the status quo is maintained, MLA indemnities and allowances will increase by 6.8 percent on April 1st of this year.

Mr. Speaker, this bill will help avoid sharp increases in MLA pay in years when inflation is unusually and temporarily high. Implementing a five-year rolling average as a basis for future annual adjustments to MLA indemnities is the approach used in Manitoba, Mr. Speaker, and it will help smooth out any unusual and temporary spikes in inflation.

For April of 2023, this bill will reduce the annual adjustment from 6.8 percent to 3.02 percent.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Thebacha. The motion is in order. To the principle of the bill. Member for Frame Lake.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Merci, Monsieur le President. I wish to speak to the principle of the bill. This is probably one of the shortest bills this Assembly will ever deal with, but I think it's important that the public and media understand what this bill is all about. And I believe that the Member for Thebacha has explained it probably much better than I'm going to try to do right now. But what this is really to do is to replace the current way of calculating MLA's indemnity, or salaries, office holders, and allowances. Right now those are changed according to the consumer price index as of April 1st each year. This is going to move it to a five-year rolling average. And I'm not opposed to that, but I think the timing of the bill is the issue, Mr. Speaker.

And as I understand -- or what the honourable -- the mover indicated was that this is as a result of the high -- relatively high rate of inflation that we're experiencing now. As of April 1st, MLA salaries and indemnities and allowances would go up by 6.8 percent. As of April 1st, that would cost about \$350,000. So moving to a five-year rolling average will reduce the increase to 3.02 percent but increase subsequent years by as much as about 2 percent, depending on what the rate of inflation or the consumer price index is until a new equilibrium is established. So I do not support this change for a number of reasons.

First, I just don't think it's good practice for sitting politicians to change their remuneration. There's already perception of conflict and perhaps even a real conflict of interest when we attempt to change our own remuneration. And this is why we actually appoint an independent commission on compensation and benefits every couple of Assemblies to look at these issues and bring back recommendations to us. But those recommendations, when they're brought back to the House, if they're accepted, they're only implemented for the next Assembly so sitting MLAs are not, you know, making changes to their own remuneration, and I think that's a far better practice.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, I think there's going to be perception that these changes are really interfering with the upcoming collective bargaining with the Union of Northern Workers for the majority of our employees. That contract is coming to an end as of March 31st, 2023, and I expect, as I understand bargaining's probably already started on this, so I think this sets a bad precedent. It's not unlike what happened perhaps in the last Assembly where initially MLAs decided to take a two year pay freeze

after some presentations from Cabinet that were akin to the sky is falling. And I think that set us up for a bad set of negotiations in the last Assembly, and I think this is probably going to head us in the same direction, Mr. Speaker.

Thirdly, the last thing I guess I'd like to say about this is that I think this is really about -- the effect of this will be about reducing, you know, our ability to attract quality people to this Assembly and to political life, that we want more representative candidates to come into this place. And I think this is going to probably make it less attractive over time. And I think it also feeds into the narrative that politicians are paid too much, work too little, and are expendable. And I'm not prepared to enter into that narrative, Mr. Speaker.

So for all these reasons, I do not support this bill. However, I'm not opposed to going to a five-year rolling average of consumer price index to calculate increases to remuneration but that should apply to the next Assembly. So at the appropriate time, I will move an amendment to that effect. I don't expect that it's going to pass but we'll see. But I certainly look forward to the debate on this, and I expect and would encourage constituents to contact us about what this bill is really all about. Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. To the principle of the bill. Member for Great Slave.

**MS. NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I think it's worth clarifying that if this bill is not introduced that all Members in this House will get a cost of living increase that is the current CPI, which is over 6 percent. What this bill does is actually reduces the amount of money that MLAs would get as a raise come April 1st by smoothing it out using that CPI five-year average. Why I think that it's important to make this designation is that we as MLAs are not actually changing what our remuneration is at this point. What we're doing is actually proposing a change that minimizes that cost of living raise that we would be getting regardless such that it doesn't look like we are taking advantage of an odd spike in the CPI at this time. So I do support the principle of this bill. I am a single person. I have one income. I have to run a household on that income. In my professional life, I could make at least \$50,000 more a year plus better benefits and such and more vacation. So, therefore, for me it is important to recognize that I believe that MLAs already make a fairly small amount of money comparatively to other professionals in this territory. We are struggling just like everybody else to pay bills. I've heard my colleague here

speak many times about paying for things out of his own pocket for his constituents. I do the same. I daily am hit up for money. And at this point, while it may sound like I'm being greedy, I need that cost of living raise. I do agree for it being spread out over the five-year rolling average; however, I do want to clarify that this is not MLAs giving themselves a raise. If anything, this is MLAs giving themselves a cut. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Great Slave. To the principle of bill? Member for Range Lake.

**HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also want to do some clarifications here. The intent of this bill is not around collective bargaining and it is not Cabinet directed or Cabinet did any presentations so I can't speak for the previous Cabinet, but I can speak for this one. At no time has Cabinet talked to the Regular Members in trying to say that this should be -- the sky is falling and that this needs to happen. This is an initiative by the Legislative Assembly, and I do support this initiative. The supply chain issues since COVID hit have been horrible for all of us. Our cost of living has gone up. Inflation is impacting residents, businesses, employers right across the board. I think that all of us at this time of what's happening, not only in the NWT but across Canada, have to be conscious of what we're doing to stop the rising inflation. And in my opinion, Mr. Speaker, this is part of that, that we would try to curb the inflation rates that are going to be unacceptable and unlivable for many people and residents of the Northwest Territories. So I do support this bill. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Range Lake. To the principle of the bill. Member for Hay River South.

**MR. ROCKY SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, although I understand the intent of this bill, as a politician for me it's never been about the money. It's about doing what's right for the people. And also, you know, we have to understand that, you know -- or to understand what people are going through, we almost have to live that as well. And there's a lot of people out there that I know that are struggling that I -- you know, I provided money to and I provided other supports as well. And, you know, I still kind of, you know, make ends meet. So I guess what I'm trying to -- what I'm going to do is introduce a revision to the motion as well and that's to freeze this year's increase and then go to a rolling average starting in a year from now. So, you know, at the end of the day, like I say, it's -- there's a lot of people out

there struggling, and I think it's important that, you know, we do our part as well. And, you know, probably a lot of people here, maybe they made more money, you know, in other jobs, and that's their choice. If they want to go back to that, that's fine. The other thing is -- and we talk about, you know, recruiting people by, you know, having, you know, a higher remuneration for politicians but I don't think that's true. I think at the end of the day, we probably attract more people who really want to do this job. We get people from the communities. The North is small. And sometimes it's about, you know, picking the person who believes in what's happening on the ground, believes in people. And if we don't do that, we may as well not be here. Because for me, it's doing the right thing for the people. And right now, you know, when it comes to unions well, you know, they got -- they have to do what they have to do and at the end of the day, you know, I look at where I'm at and the decisions I have to make and it's got nothing to do with the union and their negotiations as well. So, yeah, so what I'm going to be doing is to ask for a -- is asking for a zero percent for a year and then go to rolling average after that. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Hay River South. To the principle of the bill? Member for Monfwi.

**MS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this is not about us. This is about the people that we serve in our region. And MLAs, the way that I look at them is that we are public servants. So we are here serving the people in the Northwest Territories just like under the people that are working for the GNWT under -- that are under the UNW collective agreement. For whatever UNW gets, I think -- I strongly believe that MLAs should be getting the same. Mr. Speaker, if this is good enough for the UNW who are representing the staff in the region, it should be good enough for us. So the way that this is presented at 6 percent increase, I do not support but maybe I will support with the amendments made. Like, zero percent and with some amendments made that's reflective of the UNW collective agreement. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Monfwi. To the principle of the bill. Member for Thebacha.

**MS. MARTSELOS:** Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to waive Rule 8.2(7) and have Bill 73 referred to Committee of the Whole for consideration later today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** We'll still have to have the vote. To the principle of the bill.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Question.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? Any abstentions? The motion is carried. Bill 73 has had second reading.

---Carried

Second reading of bills. Member for Thebacha.

**MS. MARTSELOS:** Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to waive Rule 8.2(7) and have Bill 73 referred to Committee of the Whole for consideration later today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Thebacha. The Member is seeking unanimous consent to move Bill 73 into Committee of the Whole later today. Are there any nays? There are no nays. Member for Thebacha. Oh sorry, the motion is in order. To the motion?

Okay, we already got unanimous consent. Okay, Bill 73 will be moved into Committee of the Whole for further consideration later today. Thank you.

---Carried

Second reading of bills. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters, Bill 23, 29, 60, 61, 63, 66, 67, and 68, Committee Report 40, 43, 44, 45-19(2), Minister's Statement 264-19(2), Tabled Document 681-19(2), Tabled Document 694-19(2), Tabled Document 813-19(2).

By the authority given to me as Speaker, I hereby authorize the House to sit beyond the reasonable hours of adjournment, with Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes in the chair.

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

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** Merci, Monsieur le President. Committee wishes to deal with Tabled Document 813-19(2), 2023-2024 Main Estimates, with Legislative Assembly and Department of Environment and Climate Change. Mahsi, Madam Chair.

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

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

---SHORT RECESS

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** I will now call Committee of the Whole back to order. Committee, we've agreed to consider Tabled Document 813-19(2), 2023-2024 Main Estimates. We will now consider the Legislative Assembly. Does Mr. Speaker have any opening remarks?

**MR. SPEAKER:** Yes, I do, Madam Chair. I am pleased to present the 2023-2024 Main Estimates for the Legislative Assembly. Overall, the Legislative Assembly's estimate proposes an increase of \$2,165,000, or 8.5 percent, over the 2023-2024 Main Estimates.

Madam Chair, this year's estimates will focus on three overarching priorities, the majority of which will sunset at the end of 2023-2024:

1. Adoption of the independent commission and compensation benefits recommendations, which is estimated at \$135,000.
2. The 2023 general election is anticipated to cost \$1,323,000.
3. Transition out from the 19th Assembly into the 20th Assembly is estimated to cost \$777,000.

I look forward to answering any questions Members may have.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Mr. Speaker, do you wish to bring witnesses into the House?

**MR. SPEAKER:** Yes, I do.

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

Mr. Speaker, would you please introduce your witnesses.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Madam Chair. To my right, I have deputy clerk, members and precinct services, Ms. Kim Wickens. And to my left, I have deputy clerk, House procedures and committees, Mr. Glen Rutland.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Does committee agree to proceed to the detail contained in the tabled document?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Committee, we will defer the departmental summary and review the estimates by activity summary, beginning with expenditures on behalf of Members on page 9. Questions. Member for Frame Lake.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Madam Chair. So on page 9, the compensation and benefits is increasing by about, it looks like almost \$600,000. Can I have someone explain to me what that increase consists of? Thanks.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Madam Chair. And thank you for the question there, Mr. O'Reilly. Just to break it down a bit here, under Member's base salary, it's \$137,000. Capital allowances for expenses is \$13,000, CPI increase of \$120,000. CWEA prorated at \$139,000. Transition allowance, which makes up the most part, at \$474,000.

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Madam Chair. And thanks for that information. So how much of this is this, say the 6.8 percent increase in CPI for indemnity office holders and allowances? That total, I think -- can someone tell me what that total is? Thanks, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Madam Chair. The one-time forced growth funding at 6.3 percent would be \$305,000 to fund for the Consumer Price Index. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** Okay, thanks. And so if this was reduced to the 3.02 percent, it would be, I don't know, probably \$150,000; is that a correct ballpark figure? Thanks, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It'll actually be \$154,029. Thank you.

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** No, thanks for that, the accuracy of those numbers, much appreciated. I don't have anything further. Thanks, Madam Chair.



**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Are there any further questions from Members from the expenditures on behalf of Members?

Seeing none, Legislative Assembly, expenditures on behalf of Members, operations expenditure summary, 2023-2024 Main Estimates, \$10,930,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. We will now go to Office of the Chief Electoral Officer, beginning on page 11 with information items on page 12. Questions?

Seeing no questions, Legislative Assembly, Office of the Chief Electoral Officer, operations expenditure summary, 2023-2024 Main Estimates, \$1,973,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Next is Office of the Clerk, beginning on page 14 with information items on page 15. Questions.

Seeing no questions, please turn to page 14. Legislative Assembly, Office of the Clerk, operations expenditure summary, 2023-2024 Main Estimates, \$10,081,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Office of the Speaker, beginning on page 17 with information item on page 18. Question. Member for Frame Lake.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Madam Chair. Yeah, on page 17, I guess there was quite a -- anyway, back in 2021-2022, actuals were about \$1.4 million and 2023-2024, it's around -- well, 545. What happened in 2021-2022? Thanks, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'll hand it over to Ms. Wickens for more detail.

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

**MS. WICKENS:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, in 2021-2022 we had a sole inquiry, and those costs were used to cover that.

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** Oh yes, no further questions. Thanks, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Are there any further questions to Office of the Speaker from Members?

Seeing none, please turn to page 17. Legislative Assembly, Office of the Speaker, operations expenditure summary, Main Estimates 2023-2024, \$545,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Statutory offices beginning on page 20 with information items on page 21 and 22. Questions.

Seeing no questions. Thank you. There's an additional information item on page 23. Are there any questions? If there are no questions, please turn to page 20.

Legislative Assembly, statutory offices, operations expenditure, Main Estimates 2023-2024, \$4,926,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Members. Please return now to the departmental summary found on page 5. Revenue summary information item on page 6. Questions. No further questions, committee, I will now call the department summary.

Legislative Assembly, operations expenditure, total department, 2023-2024 Main Estimates, \$27,655,000. Mr. O'Reilly.

COMMITTEE MOTION 371-19(2):  
TABLED DOCUMENT 813-19(2): 2023-2024  
MAIN ESTIMATES – LEGISLATIVE  
ASSEMBLY – DEFERRAL OF DEPARTMENT  
(PAGE 5),  
CARRIED

**MR. O'REILLY:** Merci, Madam la Presidente. I move that this committee defer further consideration of the estimates for the Legislative Assembly at this time. Mahsi, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** The motion is in order. To the motion?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Question.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried. Consideration of Legislative Assembly 2023-2024 Main

Estimates, operating expenditure, total department, is deferred.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the witnesses for appearing before us. Sergeant-at-arms, please escort the witnesses from the Chamber.

Committee, we've agreed to consider Tabled Document 813-19(2), 2023-2024 Main Estimates. We will now consider the Department of Environment and Climate Change. Does the Minister of Environment and Climate Change have any opening remarks?

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** Yes, I do, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Go ahead.

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I am here to present the 2023-2024 Main Estimates for the Department of Environment and Climate Change. Overall, the department's estimates propose an increase of \$2.671 million or 2.2 percent over the 2022-2023 Main Estimates. These estimates support the mandate objectives for the Department of Environment and Climate Change while continuing to meet the GNWT's fiscal objectives to prioritize responsible and strategic spending.

Highlights from the proposed estimates include:

- An increase of \$1.7 million for barren-ground caribou research and monitoring offset by a sunset of \$560,000 for previous increased funding for some Bathurst and Bluenose-East monitoring activities, for a total of \$1.14 million in additional funding;
- Additional sunsets of \$3.598 million which includes \$960,000 related to the Section 11 Conservation Agreement for Boreal Caribou, \$2.259 million for the Nature Fund Protected Areas Agreement, \$219,000 for the Approach to Unauthorized and Rights-Based Occupancy, \$110,000 for Sustainable Livelihoods, and \$50,000 for Flood Impacts. The department has a commitment for a bridge-funding agreement with the federal government for Section 11 and Nature Fund activities to offset most of these sunset amounts;
- Forced growth funding of \$1.091 million for forest management personnel, that includes fire crew extensions and two new fire crews given longer wildfire seasons;
- An increase of \$3.535 million due to a change in accounting treatment to move funds from the work on behalf of third

parties fund to the operations and maintenance fund for the Alberta/Northwest Territories Bilateral Water Management Agreement, the Mutual Aid Resources Sharing Agreement and the Barren-Ground Research, Monitoring and Management Agreement; and,

- A \$219,000 reduction in funding for contract services.

These estimates continue to support the priorities of the 19th Legislative Assembly and vision of budget 2023 by:

- Continuing work on the 2019-2023 NWT Climate Change Action Plan, and ensuring climate change factors are integrated into government decision-making;
- Supporting initiatives that promote economic diversification and jobs in communities by supporting jobs related to protected areas, a sustainable forest industry, expanding waste diversion programs, and support for the traditional economy including the Genuine Mackenzie Valley Fur Program;
- Contributing to the GNWT-wide efforts to implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and support regional based decision-making through participation in the NWT's long standing co-management systems for land, water, wildlife and forests, and ECC's support for sustainable livelihoods;
- Supporting the GNWT's work to improve food security through country food, land-based programming, effective management of harvested species, their habitat, and assisting with agricultural land uses;
- Modernizing land management, including how we serve our land administration clients, supporting sustainable economic development and taking leadership on climate action;
- Supporting efforts to reduce the municipal funding gap through the transfer of land to communities.

That concludes my opening remarks, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Do you wish to bring witnesses into the House?

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** Yes, I do.

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

into the Chamber. Minister, please introduce your witnesses.

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm pleased to be here today to present the proposed 2023-2024 Main Estimates for the Department of Environment and Climate Change. With me today I have Dr. Erin Kelly, deputy minister of environment and natural resources and acting deputy minister of Lands. She's on my right.

On my left is Julian Kanigan, assistant deputy minister of Environment and Climate Change, Environment and Natural Resources.

We also have Dr. Brett Elkin, assistant deputy minister, operations, for environment and natural resources.

And Blair Chapman, assistant deputy minister of operations for Lands.

So we may be switching people in and out, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** All right. Thank you. Can you just clarify again, I didn't get -- so the gentleman's last name to your --

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** -- Kanigan.

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

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** Yes.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. And if you want to just introduce the witnesses, if you have to switch them out and just let me know if there's a question that you can't answer. I'm just going to let Members know that if we have to switch during the question time, I'll get the clerk to pause the time just while you're switching out so it doesn't eat up time if it comes to that. All right.

This is a new department, you know, there might be lots of questions. All right, so does committee agree to proceed to the detail contained in the tabled document?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Committee, we will defer the departmental summary and review the estimates by activity beginning with corporate management, starting on page 79, with information items on page 80 and 81. Questions. Member for Yellowknife North.

**MR. JOHNSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. When can we expect to see an organizational chart for the new department? Thank you.

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

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

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Deputy minister Dr. Kelly.

**DR. KELLY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. There's a high-level organization chart that can be found in the main estimates as it is, and we're currently working with staff in the department to go through the organization design. We want to make sure that we do it right the first time. Our hope is that we'll have that -- the majority of it done before April 1st but there will be some optimization that occurs into the new year. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MR. JOHNSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Yeah, I guess it's my hope that before we approve the budget for this new department, MLAs would be able to see some sort of -- even if it's the draft before April 1st, detailed organizational chart. I'm going to drill down a little bit more into some questions about that.

Can someone explain to me how we go about deciding -- you know, presumably I'm looking at this, there's obviously duplications. You can only have one director of finance, you know, and one manager of comms or policy or how you go about deciding and when you will decide who of the duplicate positions gets the job? Thank you.

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

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

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

**DR. KELLY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. We're currently working with human resources to determine and look at this process. This has been an ongoing process where folks have been involved from the department. It's unlikely that there will be a detailed organizational design fully implemented before April 1st. We're looking at making sure that the assistant deputy ministers and the directors are in place. But this is an HR process and will follow the HR rules regarding this. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MR. JOHNSON:** Yeah, thank you. You know, I get we're probably not going to finish everything up. But can someone just explain to me -- I mean, there's certain positions where

clearly -- or it seems to me come April 1 you absolutely have to decide, you know, who is the superintendent in a region. To just have two people saying they are this regional superintendent for ECC seems a recipe for disaster. So, you know, how -- can someone just explain to me how we decide that? Is it a public competition, do we -- does the deputy minister and the Minister appoint one of the two? Could anyone, in theory, apply; I just want to understand the process. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

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

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

**DR. KELLY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. There are defined HR processes for dealing with this. The first one is to look at the org design to determine if there are affected employees. We're in the process of doing this at this time. We will be following the HR process as we go forward. As I mentioned, our priority right now, and this has been communicated to staff, is to ensure that we have the assistant deputy ministers and the directors in place prior to April 1st, which is our goal. We have long been communicating that this would -- that there would be an optimization phase where we would need to look at the org design in more detail to make sure that the org design that we ultimately come up with is the right design and works for the people that are in the department and doing that work.

We will ensure that there is -- that as of April 1st, they're still able to conduct all the work that the department needs to do, especially with our partners. That's something that's a goal of the department as well. But we need to follow the HR processes. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MR. JOHNSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Can I get an answer -- so okay, the goal for April 1st to have all the ADMs that I can see on this chart here and all the directors in place. Would that mean that they are all just acting in those roles, or would they actually have been hired to that role through the HR processes? Thank you.

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

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** Take it to the deputy minister. Thank you.

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

**DR. KELLY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It is our goal to have folks into those positions permanently. There may be some that are transfer assignments until we can get there, but our goal is to be as consistent at that level as possible and to have those people in place to help with the optimization because ultimately, they will be the leaders of these teams. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Are there any further questions to the corporate management? Member for Kam Lake.

**MS. CLEVELAND:** Yeah, thank you very much, Madam Chair. And, Madam Chair, I'm sure the Minister can kind of sense some uneasiness from Members on this one here and especially approving a budget with almost 500 staff in it. And to be honest, it actually increases by one staff member from 2022-2023 to 2023-2024. So I'm not sure -- maybe I can start there. Why, if we don't even have an org chart, is the department increasing a staff member? Thank you.

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

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

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

**DR. KELLY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. So the budget that you're looking at right now is an A plus B budget. It's the ENR budget plus the Lands budget. As we described previously, we need to go through this optimization period and our hope is that through business planning, we'll be able to show where there have been the changes in some of these staff members that Members are putting forward.

The changes that we're seeing right now are due to the fact that there are some sunsets of positions, and there are new positions fire-related from supplementary funding for the fire program that have come into play. That's why you're seeing the change in the numbers. I'm happy to get into more detail when we get to those parts of the main estimates. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MS. CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Yeah, I just have uneasiness with bringing more people into the fold when there's already so much change happening

during this optimization phase. I'm wondering if the deputy -- or if the Minister, sorry, can speak to what the deadline is for the org chart for the rest of the staff if we know that as of April 1st we'll know who ADMs and directors are. I'm wondering if there is the ability to kind of stipulate a deadline on the rest of that?

My concern is that it's not really fair to public servants to not have any certainty in their jobs. Just from hearing from different people that, you know, work for Lands or, you know, traditionally Lands or traditionally ENR, there's a lot of concern over what the future holds. That creates really, really negative staff morale. It creates fear of sustainability of income, and people end up looking for other jobs right away. And so my concern is not only for the certainty of the staff but also for the sustainability of this new department Environment and Climate Change. Thank you.

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

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** I'll start, and then I'll turn to the deputy minister. So we've been working in conjunction with our staff. We've been talking to our staff as we move forward. We are engaging them in our process. It's not where we've -- in previous, there's -- they didn't have a say in it. We're actually working with them on the process. And we've had numerous conversations with our staff. We've had our staff out in the regions as well at the headquarters. So for further detail, I'll turn to the deputy minister. Thank you.

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

**DR. KELLY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. There's definitely always concern, and it's warranted during these processes. It's very challenging for people when there's change, and we recognize that, and work very closely with folks and had many discussions about this. We made a decision at the beginning of this that it was best to have the folks who are doing the work involved in looking at the org design and the optimization of that because they know best how they work with others, rather than going in and just defining an org design that may not work in the end. And we're trying to minimize the potential for there to have to be far more work done on the org design, which would just keep people in kind of limbo for quite some time.

With this, we expect that there are actually quite a few -- quite very few people that are going to be impacted. Let me say that again because I misspoke. Very few people that will be impacted. We're working with HR to define the

number right now. But at this point, it's looking like less than ten individuals that may be affected. And of those, there would be people that would be offered a reasonable job offer. It's very few people that would be impacted in this. And that messaging has been made clear to folks at the department as well. So I'm hopeful that people will feel more comfortable that this is a small number of folks that are being impacted.

The messaging from the GNWT has been clear that this is not a reductions exercise. It's to be more effective and efficient, and that's part of why we need this optimization phase which will culminate in a business plan and that is where it's intended to show the changes so we have time to make sure that we're doing it right. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MS. CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, my next question is in regards to computer hardware and software. One of the things that helps the government be a lot more effective and efficient is being able to have systems that speak to one another. Is there a concern from ECC in terms of amalgamating the software that each department is currently using or in being able to have kind of, for example, Lands software be able to speak to other departments for more effective and efficient working relationships and breaking down silos. Is there a concern that this value is enough or not enough, or is there concerns around, I guess, the digitization piece? Thank you.

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

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** Could the Member tell us exactly what page she's on. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** 79.

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

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

**DR. KELLY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. So this computer hardware and software line is for corporate management, so it's for the directorate layer of the department. So we're not concerned. The variance that you're seeing here is related to an unbudgeted computer software and hardware expenditure that was quite small. When we get into the more detail in the main estimates, it'll become clear that there's more funding for computer hardware

and software in each of the different activities. And we think that there's enough to support the merger. There's actually quite a lot that's been going on between the departments right now looking at making sure that things talk to each other and that we're going to be able to continue with business as usual as of April 1st. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

Are there questions under corporate management? Member for Frame Lake.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Yeah, thanks, Madam Chair. So given that this is a new department that's going to be created as of April 1st, one of the things that usually happens is you get an establishment policy that -- for new departments. And I'm just wondering where we're at with an establishment policy for this new department? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** Thank you. So we sent a draft letter to SCEDE on February 2nd on this. But we are actually -- it's going to Cabinet soon, and we're processing with that document. Thank you.

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Madam Chair. Yeah, I'm not sure how much detail I can get into but I think it would be fair to say that there was significant concerns expressed about what was in the establishment policy and, probably more importantly, what wasn't there. What kind of changes are going to be made and are we going to see it before it's finalized by Cabinet? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** So we seen -- we've got their recommendations. There's some recommendations that we agreed to and some that we did not. But we will be getting back to committee on what we're -- how we're proceeding. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** Yeah, okay, thanks. Well, glad to hear that some of the concerns, and they were pretty serious, were actually acted on. But I guess are the Regular MLAs going to get to

see that before it's approved by Cabinet, I guess is my question. Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

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

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

**DR. KELLY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. We look closely at the input that was provided from committee. Some of the input was at a level that generally is not in an establishment policy although we recognize the intent and importance of the input that was provided. Where it was consistent with the input into an establishment policy, we did that. And we are -- we will be providing, as the Minister mentioned, comments back during the process with where those edits have been made. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** Yeah, thanks, Madam Chair. I think I can feel a Member's statement coming on. But I don't think we're going to get another chance at it, and I think that's probably not good because there was very serious concerns raised with it. And we'll just have to wait and see, but the Minister knows that if I'm not happy, I'm going to get up and talk about it in the House. So not much more I can do right now. Thanks, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Any further questions? Mr. O'Reilly.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Sorry, thanks, Madam Chair. I wasn't clear; my apologies. I don't have anything further on this first activity. Thank you.

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

**MS. MARTSELOS:** Thank you, Madam Chair. When two departments come together, you expect some reorganization and no duplicates. I just wonder what the criteria was for this amalgamation of these two departments, and I wonder if there's not -- and they've added one position already. So there's no -- there's more duplicates, okay. Usually when you amalgamate something, it's for lesser costs. And we're not seeing that in this whole transaction. I could see it if it was giving more positions to the regional centres and small communities, but I can't justify to build an empire here again in headquarters. I just want to know the rationale behind this whole transaction, and I'd like to hear what the

Minister has to say on that. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** Thank you. So when we first started doing this process, we said it's not a cost saving measure. We will amalgamate it, it's A plus B, as the deputy minister said. But then we're going through the process of optimization. So it's going to take us a bit of time to do the optimization. We don't want to, in the past, just cut. We're not just cutting to cut. We're trying to make sure that we do it right moving forward. So that there is where we have our staff in place, having our conversations, where we need to see things and where we need to be able to put our programs and our staff. And that's what we're doing. So that was part of the optimization process. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MS. MARTSELOS:** Madam Chair, for clarity, I never mentioned cuts. If they're going to use the same budget and they're amalgamating, maybe some of those positions should have gone to the regional centres and even to some of the smaller communities. That's what I said. You know, I just -- I have a real problem especially with the -- because we don't have an actual chart in here but I'm just wondering -- so you have a deputy minister and then senior management. How many assistant deputy ministers are scheduled for this department? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** Thank you. So the work chart's on page 70, and my understanding is we will have five deputy ministers. But for clarity, I'll turn to the -- or sorry, not deputy ministers, assistant deputy ministers, sorry. Five assistant deputy ministers. But for clarity, I'll turn to the deputy minister. Thank you.

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

**DR. KELLY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. So there are four assistant deputy ministers between ENR and Lands at this time. There is one new assistant deputy minister position for operations that will be a regional position that is -- it is envisioned as an Indigenous pathing position to support Indigenous people to getting into senior management in the new department. So that's the new assistant deputy minister position that we're looking at.

With respect to the positions -- the change in positions that folks are seeing, there was a sunset of eight positions related to section 11 agreement and the nature fund agreement. And there was forced growth for ten new positions, all of them regional related to forest fire.

So as folks are aware, our fire season went until October this year, which is far longer than normal, and we're seeing more fires in some of the areas of the Northwest Territories than we've ever seen before. So we were able to access forced growth funding as a department to support firefighting personnel in several communities, a wildfire training position in Fort Smith, and a fire technician position in Lutselk'e. And all of those positions are regional positions. That's why you're seeing the difference in positions.

With respect to those duplicate positions, those will be addressed through the optimization process that we're dealing with, and we will make -- as I mentioned, we're expecting that there will be less than ten folks that are affected that are unionized employees. So that will be dealt with through the optimization phase that we're currently working towards. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MS. MARTSELOS:** Madam Chair, I'm just concerned I guess about the regional office in Fort Smith, especially the ENR office. I want to ensure that affirmative action is followed and, you know, we have someone that is born and raised in Fort Smith, educated there, and I just want to ensure that all those things come into play when the time comes. And I'd like to know how -- I'm sure that everybody feels that way, even with the Inuvik region, with the other regional offices in the territory. And I just want to see how the Minister feels about that. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** We will be following the affirmative action policy, the HR policy, so I can guarantee you we will be following HR as the Member quite eloquently suggested. Thank you.

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

**MS. MARTSELOS:** No questions, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Are there any further questions under corporate management?

Seeing none, please turn to page 79. Environment and Climate Change, corporate management, operations expenditure summary, 2023-2024 Main Estimates, \$11,789,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. I'll now go to environmental management monitoring and climate change, beginning on page 83 with information items on page 84 and 85. Questions. Member for Nunakput.

**MR. JACOBSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. No, just in regards to climate change and monitoring on the river from what's happening in Alberta, we always worry about it because we used to have a lot more check stations in regards to water stations along the Mackenzie River coming all the way down to Tuk. What's the status of those, and how many do we have active? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

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

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

**DR. KELLY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. We conduct regular monitoring at approximately 80 sites. Of these, 40 sites are part of the Northwest Territories community-based monitoring program near 21 communities, and there's also sampling of trans-boundary waterways on the Slave, Hay, Liard, and Peel Rivers. There are 38 sites for the community-based monitoring network. There's 26 sites for our North Slave water quality network. And the South Slave water quality network, there's ten sites. And then the trans-boundary river network one, there's four sites.

We also, through our trans-boundary agreement, have access to monitoring information that Environment Canada collects and that is collected by Alberta Environment and Parks, and we're able to access that as an early warning system for information coming towards the Northwest Territories on water quality. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MR. JACOBSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Water quality down and saying some from spring I guess, until October on the river, how many times are those sites checked in regards

to water testing on that river? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

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

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

**DR. KELLY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Many of the water quality stations that the GNWT supports are not done in the wintertime but the ones that the federal government does are. And the only time that they're not sampled is when the ice is not safe for folks to go on. The GNWT, in situations where there are concerns about water quality, will work with communities. For example, what's happening in Fort Smith right now, where we're using the drinking water and to take additional sampling under ice, but there are challenges with ice safety. So in the late spring and in the fall before the ice is safe is the only time that those federal stations are not monitored to my understandings. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MR. JACOBSON:** Thank you. Thank you, Madam Chair. In regards to the Mackenzie River Basin board, is that -- like, the board on that -- where is everyone -- I guess board members or directors, where they're from and how they're selected? Thank you.

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

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

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

**DR. KELLY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. So the Members of the Mackenzie River basin board, there's Indigenous members and government members from each of the governments that are within the Mackenzie River basin. So Yukon, Northwest Territories, BC, Alberta, and Saskatchewan, as well as the federal government. And then there's Indigenous representatives from those areas as well.

For the Northwest Territories, we have an Indigenous steering committee for the water stewardship strategy. They use criteria to select one of their members to participate on that board because then they come back, and they communicate with the Indigenous steering



committee. And right now it's Leon Andrew of the Sahtu. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MR. JACOBSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. In regards to that, Madam Chair, with the water strategy, I guess with the spill that we had in Alberta last week that -- from that Esso site, was there any I guess flags raised in regards of doing more water sampling and checking of the sites for coming up in the upcoming -- like if not now, like in the near future? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** Yes, like I said in my Minister's statement, we are working with the Town of Fort Smith to increase the monitoring on that. And as well we're working with -- I think it's the Town of Fort Chipewyan and they've -- they're monitoring as well, and we're checking their data as well. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MR. JACOBSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. That's all the questions I have right now. Thank you.

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

**MS. NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, some of my questions have been answered already. But I am going to come back to, unfortunately, the ADM conversation and more so in a different manner, not so much whether you need five. But I look at some of the distribution of the percentage of funding or amounts of work that seem to be within the department under the different ADM streams proposed, and I'm wondering some look very heavy. Like, one is 48 percent of your budget is the wildlife and forest management, and then others are only like 6 percent. So I'm just wondering about the workload distribution for these ADMs. I get that for now some of the really technical stuff is probably still staying lumped together, for lack of a better word, but I'm just wondering has -- I know this will be part of the optimization but are we overburdening, say, the poor ADM of wildlife and forest management versus the one of corporate direction considering they have such different sizes of departments? Thank you -- or areas.

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

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

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

**DR. KELLY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. So actually there's been a look at the workload and that's how we ended up with the ADMs that we have. So right now at Environment and Natural Resources, the ADM that's responsible for wildlife and fire is also responsible for all of the ops, the regional ops for the territory, right. So all the superintendents also work with them. So we looked at dividing out the workload. Fire has a large budget. That's what you're seeing there with that big budget piece, but we looked at what the workload was and tried to make those equal, as equal as possible.

With respect to the regional ops ADM, there is one issue that we need to work on through optimization and that's at ENR, the way that the budgets were done, the regional ops portion of the budgets was part of wildlife or part of environment, for example. For Lands, they have a regional ops budget. So in this budget, you'll see that there's a relatively small budget for regional ops and it's because we need to work to try to show the ENR -- the ENR one is in the actual activity. Under wildlife, for example, the regional ops is there as well, and we need to work towards for next main estimates to be able to display that better. So hopefully that helps with the explanation of why there's a difference in the level of funding that you can see there but the workloads have been balanced. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MS. NOKLEBY:** Thank you. So just to make sure that I understand it correctly -- it's been a long few weeks. So then that means that in the next estimates we sort of start to see the ops pieces pulled out of these specific sort of wildlife forest management, for example, and moved into the regional operations so that it will become more of a fulsome look? And I see everybody nodding their heads so I'm going to say -- take that as a yes and not go back to them and ask my next question, which is around some of these pieces, like the traditional knowledge funding, the water strategy action plan, etcetera, in the contribution. And, again, I always just want to put a plug in, because I know these are great areas in which we can get youth out and money into communities and have the people come and -- what's the word -- the guardians, etcetera, all be involved.

So I'm just curious to know why we're not seeing too much of an increase here. I mean, I

guess we are a bit and -- no, that's something else. But, yeah, we aren't seeing more of an increase into these types of programs where we really could be facilitating that development of those skill sets in youth and others. Thank you.

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

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

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

**DR. KELLY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. One of the awkward things about main estimates is that when we go section by section, we don't see all of the traditional knowledge funding that's put forward, right. So we're seeing it piece by piece that applies to this particular section of the main estimates. I would definitely say that there's far more money that's being spent on traditional knowledge throughout the entire main estimates than what's being displayed in this one part of it. We're always looking for opportunities to include multiple knowledge systems in the work that we do to include youth and to make sure that we're working with elders in the work that we do. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MS. NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. And I guess I just always come back to this one because it's -- I just know for myself and having getting into sciences and such, it's usually just one exposure to one sort of professional that might make that difference for yourself. So is it possible for us, and I know that there's a lot of work already being done here, but at some point to maybe have that all gathered together. And I get that ENR -- or ECC now is a very technical type department; however, a lot of that work that's being done there is so important when it comes to traditional knowledge and Indigenous people that I feel like we -- you know, it would be nice to know what all is being done in one place at some point to sort of look at or analyze the spending in this department and see actually -- and not just from a like how can we do it better, but how good are we doing it, you know, and maybe being a good news story about further conversation around our regulatory process and how we do involve the peoples whose land it actually is. Thank you.

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

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** It's going to the deputy minister. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Okay. Deputy minister.

**DR. KELLY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. So we do have a traditional knowledge annual report, and one of the functions that ENR has right now that will be part of ECC is the coordination for traditional knowledge reporting for the whole of the GNWT. And we're working on a traditional knowledge action plan that we have input from Indigenous governments and Indigenous people across the Northwest Territories that will be -- we're looking at for the end of this year, which will also help with that.

There are traditional knowledge line items kind of peppered throughout the main estimates here so you can see where the department is working on it. But those two pieces are where they're kind of pulled together, the work that's being done on TK within the department and also among all GNWT departments. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MS. NOKLEBY:** Thanks, Madam Chair. Yeah, and I really do appreciate that, and I obviously need to get my hands on the latest traditional knowledge report and see so that I can speak better to it.

I guess I do want to come back a little bit to the spill that did occur in Alberta that we weren't notified about. Is there a mechanism in place -- I guess, first of all, was the spill reported through their own mechanisms that we have such as the 24-hour spill report line? So were they following the regulatory process and if so, is there some way that someone in our department or our government is checking that, or do we just only rely on them notifying us? Thank you.

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

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

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

**DR. KELLY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. So our understanding is that Imperial Oil did, in May of last year, let the regulator know that there was seepage that was occurring. That information was not relayed to us at that time. We also understand that in early February there was a spill, and that information was not relayed to us at that time. That's why you would have heard the Minister's statement, and we've been in discussions with Alberta.

Their perspective on this at this point in time is that they didn't think that -- they thought that it was contained and would not be able to get into the tributaries and into the Athabasca River. We have suggested that we feel that with seepage, that's hard to ascertain and that with spring melt runoff, there is a likelihood that some of that could potentially get into tributaries. So it's not up to the company itself to report to the GNWT, and we don't always have access to spill reports in other jurisdictions. It is written into the agreement that the Government of Alberta will notify us of these spills. And to be honest with you, they've done a fairly good job of notifying us of some of the other spills that have happened in certain basins. This one, obviously not. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MS. NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. And with my previous hat on, I can understand exactly how this would have happened and sometimes, you know, just a spill gets reported and it really doesn't have much consequence and so therefore it probably just didn't trigger anybody in Alberta to actually think to tell us.

I guess -- I have already requested, and I hope that I'll get them, any technical reports that were issued or given to us. And I guess with my last minute left, can the Minister or department speak to what actually was spilled? Like, what are the contaminants of concern and, you know, is it just around hydrocarbons or are we looking at other chemicals and such used in the process? And if so, how far out did they spread that they're aware of now? Thank you.

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

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

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

**DR. KELLY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. So it was industrial wastewater that was spilled and also that is seeping is my understanding. And we are actually scheduled for a briefing with Imperial on Thursday. Alberta did respond last Thursday, and there was a briefing with folks from the Alberta Energy Regulator that we attended. And to answer some more questions, we have a briefing where we can ask some of these questions as well. So hydrocarbons, and then there were a number of other metals and sulfides. So metals like arsenic and things that you would expect would be associated with this type of work. And we do not have technical reports at this time. I'm assuming that

that's -- that the technical briefing will be what we get on Thursday. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** No, thank you. Yes, sorry. I just wanted to tell the -- I do have a meeting with the Minister on Thursday at 1 o'clock. So I will be having that conversation with the Minister Savage as well. And we have written out a letter to Minister Savage and to the federal minister, and we're in the process of trying to table those documents here in the House. Thank you.

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

**MR. ROCKY SIMPSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, you know, I guess the topic of water is very important. You know, the Mackenzie River basin I think counts for about -- has a drainage area of about 1.8 million square miles, which is about 20 percent of Canada's land mass. And you know, it all comes down, you know, funneling through this area. And, you know, as we see more development in south, the bigger the impact could be. And, you know, with the Kearn spill, for some reason we missed it. Partly because, I guess, we weren't informed by the Alberta government. And secondly, I'm not sure if anybody was monitoring, you know, the media or as well the Alberta regulator's pages as well, web pages or whatever. And, you know, I think that it's important that we do that. But anyways, we missed it and now it's big news all over. But one thing that I guess I'm interested in is that we do have these trans-boundary water agreements. And how many do we have, I guess, with respect to, you know, the Mackenzie River basin? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON:** Thank you. Minister.

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** So we have three. One with the Yukon government, one with BC, and one with the Alberta government.

**CHAIRPERSON:** Thank you.

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** Sorry, and we're negotiating with Saskatchewan.

**CHAIRPERSON:** Thank you. Member for Hay River South.

**MR. ROCKY SIMPSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. And the minister in -- I think in the media there had indicated that they would be using a dispute mechanism. And I'm just wondering, you know, how -- or if that mechanism has been used and how it will be used in this instance with the Kearn spill. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON:** Thank you. Minister.

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** So this is the first time it's being used. We've tried to do the other process of reaching out to the Alberta government and getting the information this way. But because of the severity of this spill and them not telling us information that we needed, we've implemented this. And for the detail on how the process works, I'm going to, with your permission, turn to the deputy minister. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON:** Thank you. Deputy minister.

**DR. KELLY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. So there's a number of things that can be done under the dispute resolution mechanism, and we're working with Alberta right now on what this will look like for this one. So there's a discussion of where we would like to go with this.

The GNWT's perspective is that we would like an independent look to come back to the bilateral management committee and tell them what their thoughts are on this. It is under the agreement that Alberta government's responsibility to notify us of spills. That's one of the reasons that we signed the agreement. And part of it was because we were learning about things in the media in the past. And I will say again that, in general, Alberta has let us know about spills in the past. But in this case, we were not alerted to it. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON:** Thank you. Member for Hay River South.

**MR. ROCKY SIMPSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Yeah, I guess on the news the premier said -- of Alberta said it wasn't, you know, their responsibility, and it was up to Imperial to notify the parties that might be -- you know, that are looking at damages. But the one thing I guess with this dispute mechanism, you know, we're doing extra probably testing hopefully. Is there a cost -- an extra cost related to this now, and would that dispute mechanism allow for those costs to be picked up by the Alberta government or Imperial? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON:** Thank you. Minister.

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** I'll start, and then I'll turn to the deputy minister. So I know what the premier of Alberta said. We don't have an agreement with the industry. We have an agreement with the Government of Alberta. And I've made that very clear it is with them that they need to be sharing this information. So I need to make that very clear. I've had that conversation today. And so sharing it here

today but for further detail on the process, I'll turn to the deputy minister. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON:** Thank you. Deputy minister.

**DR. KELLY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. So for the dispute resolution mechanism, we'll have to see what additional costs are related to that. The monitoring costs that we're incurring could be brought forward to the bilateral management committee as part of this, and I'm -- we can definitely do that. The cost for the BMC are shared between the NWT and Alberta as per the agreement itself. So the dispute resolution mechanism cost would be part of that shared expense. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON:** Thank you. Member for Hay River South.

**MR. ROCKY SIMPSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. One thing I haven't really heard, I guess, in the news or from the department is the involvement of the Indigenous governments in the territories who -- you know, who have comprehensive agreements signed. And in those agreements, you know, they have some, you know, water rights and, you know, the right to, you know, quantity and quality of water as well. So what discussions have been taking place with Indigenous governments within the Northwest Territories? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON:** Thank you. Minister.

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** So as soon as we hit the send button to tell you guys what was going on, two seconds later we reached out to our Indigenous governments and gave them the same information. But that's the process. For further detail on what the staff have done, I'll turn to the deputy minister. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON:** Thank you. Deputy minister.

**DR. KELLY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. So we sent out information, as the Minister mentioned, to Indigenous governments, also to community governments because we know that they have concerns as well. We're working with the community government in Fort Smith as well as the Indigenous governments on the monitoring, the additional monitoring that is to take place. And we do have, as I mentioned earlier, the Indigenous steering committee that -- that group, as I mentioned, they nominate the Mackenzie River basin board member but they also nominate the bilateral management committee member that takes part in the bilateral management meetings with Alberta and Northwest Territories. That was done purposefully so that the Indigenous members have links back to all of the Indigenous members of the Indigenous steering committee

so there will be a way of sharing information that way as well, including through the dispute resolution mechanism. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON:** Thank you. Member for Hay River South.

**MR. ROCKY SIMPSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I just want to talk a bit about the, I guess, water research and monitoring. And, you know, after a couple years of flooding here, how much additional work is going into that to monitor, like, especially for Hay River and the Hay River watershed, are we doing any extra work so that we can, you know, get some idea whether -- and somewhat predict, I guess, whether we may see flooding? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON:** Thank you. Minister.

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

**CHAIRPERSON:** Thank you. Deputy Minister.

**DR. KELLY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. So we have a staff of several hydrologists that work diligently on looking at and creating outlooks. They do not have predictive capacity. They do work with their colleagues in the federal government and upstream with other governments. Predictive capacity on rivers that are subject to ice jam flooding is very, very challenging work. What we can do and what we continue to do is look at the snow survey data that is collected and make sure that gets out to the communities. Our hydrologists work with MACA and with communities themselves during these times where the -- and we do put out public announcements, as you've seen, when there is the potential for flooding. And then there's -- during flooding, there's daily information that's posted and sent out to folks who are part of a distribution list. And when it's not flood time, there's monthly outlook emails that are sent out that express what's going on with respect to water levels, water levels and snowpack throughout the territory. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON:** Thank you. Member for Hay River South.

**MR. ROCKY SIMPSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Can you -- I guess, you've identified some criteria there, but I -- can you expand on that bit because, you know, we talk about, you know, volume of snow; we may have some rain down south; we have cold weather possibly that could impact it; we might have -- you know, you say that with ice we -- you know, it makes it difficult to predict as well but, you know, if it -- it just depends what the weather's like we could

have thicker ice. If we don't have a lot of snow, that could cause that as well. We have, you know, in the Hay River for instance, we got the mouth of the river and the -- you know, the channel and that's getting, you know -- I guess basically the silt is increasing, the amount of silt that's in there. Does that have -- you know, what kind of impact does that have. We've got two channels there. We've got the west channel and the east channel. And so I'm just trying to get an idea, you know, what we're looking at when we look at flooding aspects. Thank you.

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

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

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

**DR. KELLY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair -- Madam Chair, my apologies again. Not having a good day with that; I'm sorry.

So all of the factors that the Member mentioned are things that are considered and all of those things, including the existing water level from the -- like, from the previous year, if it's high, are all things that are challenging with respect to predicting if flooding is going to occur. Our department works with the federal government, Natural Resources Canada and Environment and Climate Change Canada, to refine methods to create inundation hazard and risk floodplain maps in locations that experience ice jam flooding. So this will result in preliminary inundation maps for Hay River, Aklavik, and Fort Simpson. They also monitor and evaluate water, snow, and climate conditions prior to ice breakup. They share those snow surveys that I mentioned as well as a spring water outlook. And I also spoke about those daily updates during critical flood times. And then there's a monthly water monitoring bulletin to the public. Our scientists have written initial reports for MACA on the recent flooding events that describe the factors that contributed to the flooding as well as the uncertainty of direct linkages to climate change. I guess those are the types of things I think that the Member is looking for. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Madam Chair. I want to thank my colleague from Hay River South for asking a number of the questions I was going to ask, and I want to thank the Minister for pointing out to the premier of Alberta that we signed a trans-boundary agreement with their

government, not Imperial Oil. So maybe educating the minister when you're meeting with her tomorrow, getting the premier to actually read the trans-boundary agreement might be helpful.

But I guess I want to get some assurance that there's -- if we enter into this dispute resolution process, that if there is like an independent third party review, extra monitoring costs, work that we have to do, that there's the ability to recover some or all of those costs through the dispute resolution process. So that's my question to the Minister. Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** So first and foremost, the meeting's on Thursday, not tomorrow, and I apologize if I gave the misinformation. We would try to get the money back through the process. So we do have a process, and costs are a part of that process. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks for that. Yeah, and I look forward to the letters the Minister's going to table. But I guess I want to go back to, you know, where we started with some of this stuff, and this was the move on the part of maybe the Alberta and federal governments to have some sort of control discharge from these humongous tailings ponds. And, look, I'd rather have a controlled discharge if the water's treated properly than this kind of stuff happening because this kind of stuff is going to happen; it's going to continue to happen until -- it's inevitable. So where are we at with this process to look at whether and how discharges might be allowed from those tailings ponds? As I understood it, Alberta was supposed to do some kind of modeling, some sort of health impact, maybe ecosystem impact work; where is all of that at and what level of engagement and involvement do we have? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, with the process, six information gaps have been identified by oil sands, mine monitoring science team, modeling environmental concentration and effect, human and ecological health risk assessments, technical -- technology-based effluent limits assessment, toxicity testing, enhanced baseline environmental monitoring, and local and regional scale environmental

monitoring. And as I stressed to the minister from Alberta, until we see the science we do not want to see water flowing -- treated effluent put in there. But for further detail, with your permission, I would ask the deputy minister to enhance the answer. Thank you.

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

**DR. KELLY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. So both Alberta and the federal government are looking at regulations for this. Alberta has told us that they're doing this assessment of information gaps to determine if this is the approach that they want to take. They have -- they're saying that they have not made a decision on treated -- release of treated effluent yet. We have received four of the six reports on the information gaps. We are in the process of reviewing them. We have external experts that are reviewing them with us who have experience in all of these fields. There has been one that we have responded to, and there's been technical meetings on a couple of the other ones but we have not responded to the other three that we have at this point, and we expect to get the other two as they complete their work. So the water experts at the GNWT, combined with expertise outside that we've contracted, are reviewing these and bringing forward any concerns, and then they are being brought forward through the bilateral management committee to Alberta government. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** Great, thanks, Madam Chair. I appreciate that level of detail. And I support the department getting the expertise that's necessary to do this work, and I know you got -- you went out for two RFPs. I think you got another one out there now, so that's good. Is any of this stuff public, and where would you find it? Do we publish, or do we make any of this information, these peer reviews that we're doing, is any of this stuff available for people here to see what's going on? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

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

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

**DR. KELLY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. We have, on many, many occasions, at the DMC, after meetings with ADMs and the deputies,

relayed to Alberta how important this is to the residents of the Northwest Territories and, in particular, Indigenous governments in the Northwest Territories. We have asked them to engage with Indigenous governments and with the public on this approach. They have not finalized their engagement process that they're going to use for this. The federal government has said that they will engage with Indigenous governments in the Northwest Territories on their process.

We have also brought forward that we would like them to provide us with some messaging that they feel comfortable with that we can make public because they have asked us at this point to keep our responses technical and government to government right now, and we've expressed that there will need to be information provided on what this looks like. And they have said that they will work with us and understand that needs to happen once the review process has occurred. So I'll just reiterate we have asked them that when they -- if they decide to go forward with the regulatory process after they've completed this that it involves public and engagement with Indigenous peoples in the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** Yeah, thanks for that. Look, I think I understand a little bit of the complexity of all this stuff. But if we're submitting stuff, why can't we post that to an ENR web page and let the public know what we're doing. The other guys, they can do whatever they want; they can keep secrets; they can, you know, have misunderstandings about what information they share with us. But why can't we post the submissions, these peer reviews that are being done, on an ENR web page so the public and Indigenous governments know what we're doing? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** I would turn to the deputy minister so she can give you the correct answer. Thank you.

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

**DR. KELLY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. These reports are confidential, and the only way that they would share them with us was that our responses were confidential until the report is completed, and they've been able to do the analysis. So they're science-based reports and they're confidential reports. We were able to

access them through the trans-boundary agreement and have the ability to provide comments. And at this point in time, Alberta's keeping that confidential. And as I mentioned, we've expressed to them the need to make sure that this information becomes public and that Indigenous governments are aware of the findings. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** Okay, thanks, Madam Chair. If I wasn't concerned before, now I'm really worried that all of this stuff is happening in secret behind closed doors. This is not good. And I'm not sure we should even be participating in that kind of process. That is very upsetting that -- look, good that we're getting experts; we're doing our homework to look at this. But if all of this stuff is happening behind closed doors and is being kept secret and we're only going to find out about it if Alberta decides they're going to do a regulation, that's not a good place to be. So I don't know, Minister -- or sorry, Madam Chair, I think the Minister needs to raise this on Thursday with the Alberta environment minister that this is just a totally unacceptable process, for us spending taxpayers' money doing all of this stuff in secret, not telling our people what we're doing. This is wrong. Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** I'll start, and then I'll turn to the deputy minister. So we will have the conversation. I can guarantee that Alberta government is listening to what's happening and has been listening to it. I can -- because soon as we reached out to the minister's office, the staff were reaching out to our staff right away. But for the process, I know the Member's not happy with the process but at least we're getting the information. But for detail, I'll turn to the deputy minister. Thank you.

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

**DR. KELLY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. This is Alberta's engagement process, and they're engaging internally within Alberta on whether they're going to do regs or not. And through our trans-boundary process, we were able to get access and have the opportunity to provide input. Their process at this time is confidential and from our standpoint, we most certainly want to take part in this process because we're able to see these reports as they're being drafted; we get to provide input from an NWT perspective and be clear right from the get-go what the NWT's perspective is. Once the

regulations are being contemplated, if the regulations are being contemplated, because Alberta's been clear with us that they haven't made that decision yet, we have been very clear at multiple levels that there needs to be public and Indigenous engagement on this issue in the NWT. They are committed to doing that in Alberta. And as I mentioned, the federal government will be engaging with Indigenous governments in the Northwest Territories and Alberta. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Thank you. Thank you, Madam Chair. Here I know that with the contaminated site it's under the environment protection and waste management. So last year it was near budgeted 344. I just -- I want to know how much is allocated for the contaminated sites this year?

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

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

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

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** Madam Chair.

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

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** Can the Member tell us what page she's on. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** 83.

**MS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Thank you.

**DR. KELLY:** All of the funding that ENR has for contaminated sites would be under environmental protection and waste management. But it should be noted that the Government of the Northwest Territories has an environmental liability fund, and so when there's remediation work that is being done, that's where the money to do some of the remediation work comes from. So it's not just in this place where you would see the contaminated sites budget. Other departments also have funding to do work on their own contaminated sites. But that environmental liabilities fund is where, for example, ENR would go to look for additional funding for Canol Trail, for example, or other sites that we're looking at. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Yeah, the reason why I ask about that is because there's a lot of contaminated sites in the NWT and there are still -- you know, a lot of people are still concerned, you know, especially if it's in their backyard. We have oil and gas. We have uranium. We have the Giant Mine. Now with mining that's expected to close. So I'm just wondering if this was enough. The money that you're -- you know, it's for remediation, you said that. So how much of that is going to be for, like -- for the employment and for -- or is it for positions more? Is more going for the position or for the cleanup?

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

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

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

**DR. KELLY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. So there's a variety of types of contaminated sites in the NWT. Some of them are still the federal government's responsibility, and they're paying to do the remediation of those sites. Some of them, it's a partnership between the GNWT and the federal government, like the Giant Mine Remediation Project that you spoke of. Some of them are sites that are the responsibility of different GNWT departments, and those departments would have budget to remediate those sites. At ENR, some of them would be related to fire activity, for example, firefighting activity. That would be one example. We also have some other contaminated sites that we're responsible for. The money that you would see here is people who are doing work on contaminated sites mostly at the policy level and also who are running some of the contracts to hire people to go and do the contaminated sites work. And often those would be funded through the environmental liabilities fund that I mentioned.

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

**MS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Thank you. Yeah, for the position, I see here -- because we're still on the environmental management and monitoring climate, and for the active position, there's nothing in Tlicho region on page 85, but North Slave has two, and headquarters they have 66. So why there is nothing allocated in Tlicho region?

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



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

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

**DR. KELLY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. So this is -- these are position listings for all of the folks that do water and environmental protection work in the -- and climate change and cumulative impacts in the department. And if you can see there's the two in the North Slave, those are folks that are doing it for the North Slave region and that includes the Tlicho, the way that the North Slave region is set up. So there are two folks that are doing that work regionally, and then the headquarters staff are also supporting work all over the territory. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** So this North Slave position, it's located in Yellowknife or in Tlicho region?

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

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** For that detail, deputy minister.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Deputy minister Kelly.

**DR. KELLY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. The positions are located in Yellowknife.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Member for Monfwi.

**MS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Yeah, those are important positions for our community because for in our regions, we have a lot of contaminated sites. We have a lot of issues. So it would be nice if we can have -- will the Minister commit to transferring these two positions to Tlicho region? Thank you.

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

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** Thank you. No, that's for all of the North Slave. Thank you.

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

**MS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Did he say it's for all of the Northwest Territories or North Slave, the two position that I'm talking about?

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

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** It's for the North Slave, and it's the water resource officers. Thank you.

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

**MS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Yeah, North Slave consists of Yellowknife and Lutselk'e consists -- Fort Resolution, Dettah, N'dilo, and Tlicho regions. So what I would like to see is something specifically for Tlicho because we're not part of Yellowknife, and I keep saying that. So I just wanted to know if in the future, you know -- I know people do change all the time, so I would like to see more position transferred to Tlicho region. Thank you.

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

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** Thank you. So right now we are not looking at relocating those positions specifically to the Tlicho. It's the North Slave, and that's where those positions are based right now in Yellowknife. Thank you.

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

**MS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Thank you. Well, I mean, you know, it's -- it's doable; we can do something about that. So, yeah, that's -- I was really concerned about that because contaminated sites, people are still talking about. Still talking about the effects of the Rayrock that's in our backyard. Now there's other -- there the Fortune Minerals too as well, so. And with the diamond mine expected to close, so this funding, it would be nice if there were more positions in the small communities who are impacted by the -- who are affected more by the contaminated sites. So that's what I would like to see is that more be invested in the small communities to monitor these contaminated sites by bringing in more jobs to the small communities. Thank you.

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

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** Yes, I think we need to -- I'll ask the deputy minister to explain what these positions are. Thank you.

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

**DR. KELLY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. So the regional positions that you're seeing here are water resource officers. They're not people that are working specifically on contaminated sites. So their role is to go around and do inspections at industrial sites, and they're housed in Yellowknife. Two of them are housed in

Yellowknife right now, and they're in the middle of where the sites are to go and do this work.

The other -- there's a couple other regional positions in here that are environmental protection officers. None of them are directly related to contaminated sites although they do contribute to contaminated sites work. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** I would think they are related to, you know, to those specifics. But it would be nice to have more of those positions transferred to the regions. Even like with here, there's five assistant deputy ministers on page 70, and there's a superintendent for North Slave. Is that position in Yellowknife, or is it -- where is this job located at? And there's -- you know, a lot of these positions here as identified -- there's five assistant deputy ministers. A lot of these -- in the small communities where they settled land claims, these positions will be beneficial to help our land claim groups. That's why I'm asking that, you know, it -- what this department should do is that -- so they keep talking about having a good working relationship with Indigenous government. They should transfer some of these jobs where the Indigenous government or those with the settled land claims can really benefit from these positions. Thank you.

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

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** I'll start, and then I'll turn to the deputy minister. So 60 percent of our jobs are in the regional and 40 percent are in headquarters. So I'm very happy with our numbers. We got 60 percent. I need to stress to the Member 60 percent is there. But for further detail, I'll turn to the deputy minister. Thank you.

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

**DR. KELLY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. So we certainly look at positions -- at putting positions into regions. There's a renewable resource officer in Whati that's looking after the Tlicho All-Season Road. We have a position for an officer that's in Behchoko for Dinaga We'ehodi as well. And I think that I expressed earlier there's an ADM position that we're -- the new ADM position that will be a regional position and will be wherever there is someone who has those skills in the region. We're certainly looking at opportunities to ensure that there's opportunities in regions for these positions. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** Yes, and there's nine positions in Behchoko. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MS. MARTSELOS:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I just want to clarify the protocol for notification of spills. What is the process for notification, and who is the first person that the Minister should be contacting when it comes to a spill?

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

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** Thank you. Could the Member -- is it territorial or is it Alberta with the trans-boundary? Who is our contact; what's the question? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MR. ROCKY SIMPSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, you know, I guess the topic of water is very important. You know, the Mackenzie River basin I think counts for about -- has a drainage area of about 1.8 million square miles, which is about 20 percent of Canada's land mass. And you know, it all comes down, you know, funneling through this area. And, you know, as we see more development in south, the bigger the impact could be. And, you know, with the Kearl spill, for some reason we missed it. Partly because, I guess, we weren't informed by the Alberta government. And secondly, I'm not sure if anybody was monitoring, you know, the media or as well the Alberta regulator's pages as well, web pages or whatever. And, you know, I think that it's important that we do that. But anyways, we missed it and now it's big news all over. But one thing that I guess I'm interested in is that we do have these trans-boundary water agreements. And how many do we have, I guess, with respect to, you know, the Mackenzie River basin? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON:** Thank you. Minister.

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** So we have three. One with the Yukon government, one with BC, and one with the Alberta government.

**CHAIRPERSON:** Thank you.

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** Sorry, and we're negotiating with Saskatchewan.

**CHAIRPERSON:** Thank you. Member for Hay River South.

**MR. ROCKY SIMPSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. And the minister in -- I think in the media there had indicated that they would be using a dispute mechanism. And I'm just wondering, you know, how -- or if that mechanism has been used and how it will be used in this instance with the Kearn spill. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON:** Thank you. Minister.

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** So this is the first time it's being used. We've tried to do the other process of reaching out to the Alberta government and getting the information this way. But because of the severity of this spill and them not telling us information that we needed, we've implemented this. And for the detail on how the process works, I'm going to, with your permission, turn to the deputy minister. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON:** Thank you. Deputy minister.

**DR. KELLY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. So there's a number of things that can be done under the dispute resolution mechanism, and we're working with Alberta right now on what this will look like for this one. So there's a discussion of where we would like to go with this.

The GNWT's perspective is that we would like an independent look to come back to the bilateral management committee and tell them what their thoughts are on this. It is under the agreement that Alberta government's responsibility to notify us of spills. That's one of the reasons that we signed the agreement. And part of it was because we were learning about things in the media in the past. And I will say again that, in general, Alberta has let us know about spills in the past. But in this case, we were not alerted to it. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON:** Thank you. Member for Hay River South.

**MR. ROCKY SIMPSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Yeah, I guess on the news the premier said -- of Alberta said it wasn't, you know, their responsibility, and it was up to Imperial to notify the parties that might be -- you know, that are looking at damages. But the one thing I guess with this dispute mechanism, you know, we're doing extra probably testing hopefully. Is there a cost -- an extra cost related to this now, and would that dispute mechanism allow for those costs to be picked up by the Alberta government or Imperial? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON:** Thank you. Minister.

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** I'll start, and then I'll turn to the deputy minister. So I know what the premier of Alberta said. We don't have an

agreement with the industry. We have an agreement with the Government of Alberta. And I've made that very clear it is with them that they need to be sharing this information. So I need to make that very clear. I've had that conversation today. And so sharing it here today but for further detail on the process, I'll turn to the deputy minister. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON:** Thank you. Deputy minister.

**DR. KELLY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. So for the dispute resolution mechanism, we'll have to see what additional costs are related to that. The monitoring costs that we're incurring could be brought forward to the bilateral management committee as part of this, and I'm -- we can definitely do that. The cost for the BMC are shared between the NWT and Alberta as per the agreement itself. So the dispute resolution mechanism cost would be part of that shared expense. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON:** Thank you. Member for Hay River South.

**MR. ROCKY SIMPSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. One thing I haven't really heard, I guess, in the news or from the department is the involvement of the Indigenous governments in the territories who -- you know, who have comprehensive agreements signed. And in those agreements, you know, they have some, you know, water rights and, you know, the right to, you know, quantity and quality of water as well. So what discussions have been taking place with Indigenous governments within the Northwest Territories? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON:** Thank you. Minister.

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** So as soon as we hit the send button to tell you guys what was going on, two seconds later we reached out to our Indigenous governments and gave them the same information. But that's the process. For further detail on what the staff have done, I'll turn to the deputy minister. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON:** Thank you. Deputy minister.

**DR. KELLY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. So we sent out information, as the Minister mentioned, to Indigenous governments, also to community governments because we know that they have concerns as well. We're working with the community government in Fort Smith as well as the Indigenous governments on the monitoring, the additional monitoring that is to take place. And we do have, as I mentioned earlier, the Indigenous steering committee that -- that group, as I mentioned, they nominate the Mackenzie River basin board member but they also nominate the bilateral management

committee member that takes part in the bilateral management meetings with Alberta and Northwest Territories. That was done purposefully so that the Indigenous members have links back to all of the Indigenous members of the Indigenous steering committee so there will be a way of sharing information that way as well, including through the dispute resolution mechanism. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON:** Thank you. Member for Hay River South.

**MR. ROCKY SIMPSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I just want to talk a bit about the, I guess, water research and monitoring. And, you know, after a couple years of flooding here, how much additional work is going into that to monitor, like, especially for Hay River and the Hay River watershed, are we doing any extra work so that we can, you know, get some idea whether -- and somewhat predict, I guess, whether we may see flooding? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON:** Thank you. Minister.

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

**CHAIRPERSON:** Thank you. Deputy Minister.

**DR. KELLY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. So we have a staff of several hydrologists that work diligently on looking at and creating outlooks. They do not have predictive capacity. They do work with their colleagues in the federal government and upstream with other governments. Predictive capacity on rivers that are subject to ice jam flooding is very, very challenging work. What we can do and what we continue to do is look at the snow survey data that is collected and make sure that gets out to the communities. Our hydrologists work with MACA and with communities themselves during these times where the -- and we do put out public announcements, as you've seen, when there is the potential for flooding. And then there's -- during flooding, there's daily information that's posted and sent out to folks who are part of a distribution list. And when it's not flood time, there's monthly outlook emails that are sent out that express what's going on with respect to water levels, water levels and snow pack throughout the territory. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON:** Thank you. Member for Hay River South.

**MR. ROCKY SIMPSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Can you -- I guess, you've identified some criteria there, but I -- can you expand on that bit because, you know, we talk about, you

know, volume of snow; we may have some rain down south; we have cold weather possibly that could impact it; we might have -- you know, you say that with ice we -- you know, it makes it difficult to predict as well but, you know, if it -- it just depends what the weather's like we could have thicker ice. If we don't have a lot of snow, that could cause that as well. We have, you know, in the Hay River for instance, we got the mouth of the river and the -- you know, the channel and that's getting, you know -- I guess basically the silt is increasing, the amount of silt that's in there. Does that have -- you know, what kind of impact does that have. We've got two channels there. We've got the west channel and the east channel. And so I'm just trying to get an idea, you know, what we're looking at when we look at flooding aspects. Thank you.

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

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

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

**DR. KELLY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair -- Madam Chair, my apologies again. Not having a good day with that; I'm sorry.

So all of the factors that the Member mentioned are things that are considered and all of those things, including the existing water level from the -- like, from the previous year, if it's high, are all things that are challenging with respect to predicting if flooding is going to occur. Our department works with the federal government, Natural Resources Canada and Environment and Climate Change Canada, to refine methods to create inundation hazard and risk floodplain maps in locations that experience ice jam flooding. So this will result in preliminary inundation maps for Hay River, Aklavik, and Fort Simpson. They also monitor and evaluate water, snow, and climate conditions prior to ice breakup. They share those snow surveys that I mentioned as well as a spring water outlook. And I also spoke about those daily updates during critical flood times. And then there's a monthly water monitoring bulletin to the public. Our scientists have written initial reports for MACA on the recent flooding events that describe the factors that contributed to the flooding as well as the uncertainty of direct linkages to climate change. I guess those are the types of things I think that the Member is looking for. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Madam Chair. I want to thank my colleague from Hay River South for asking a number of the questions I was going to ask, and I want to thank the Minister for pointing out to the premier of Alberta that we signed a trans-boundary agreement with their government, not Imperial Oil. So maybe educating the minister when you're meeting with her tomorrow, getting the premier to actually read the trans-boundary agreement might be helpful.

But I guess I want to get some assurance that there's -- if we enter into this dispute resolution process, that if there is like an independent third party review, extra monitoring costs, work that we have to do, that there's the ability to recover some or all of those costs through the dispute resolution process. So that's my question to the Minister. Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** So first and foremost, the meeting's on Thursday, not tomorrow, and I apologize if I gave the misinformation. We would try to get the money back through the process. So we do have a process, and costs are a part of that process. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks for that. Yeah, and I look forward to the letters the Minister's going to table. But I guess I want to go back to, you know, where we started with some of this stuff, and this was the move on the part of maybe the Alberta and federal governments to have some sort of control discharge from these humongous tailings ponds. And, look, I'd rather have a controlled discharge if the water's treated properly than this kind of stuff happening because this kind of stuff is going to happen; it's going to continue to happen until -- it's inevitable. So where are we at with this process to look at whether and how discharges might be allowed from those tailings ponds? As I understood it, Alberta was supposed to do some kind of modeling, some sort of health impact, maybe ecosystem impact work; where is all of that at and what level of engagement and involvement do we have? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, with the process, six information gaps have been identified by oil sands, mine monitoring science team,

modeling environmental concentration and effect, human and ecological health risk assessments, technical -- technology-based effluent limits assessment, toxicity testing, enhanced baseline environmental monitoring, and local and regional scale environmental monitoring. And as I stressed to the minister from Alberta, until we see the science we do not want to see water flowing -- treated effluent put in there. But for further detail, with your permission, I would ask the deputy minister to enhance the answer. Thank you.

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

**DR. KELLY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. So both Alberta and the federal government are looking at regulations for this. Alberta has told us that they're doing this assessment of information gaps to determine if this is the approach that they want to take. They have -- they're saying that they have not made a decision on treated -- release of treated effluent yet. We have received four of the six reports on the information gaps. We are in the process of reviewing them. We have external experts that are reviewing them with us who have experience in all of these fields. There has been one that we have responded to, and there's been technical meetings on a couple of the other ones but we have not responded to the other three that we have at this point, and we expect to get the other two as they complete their work. So the water experts at the GNWT, combined with expertise outside that we've contracted, are reviewing these and bringing forward any concerns, and then they are being brought forward through the bilateral management committee to Alberta government. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** Great, thanks, Madam Chair. I appreciate that level of detail. And I support the department getting the expertise that's necessary to do this work, and I know you got -- you went out for two RFPs. I think you got another one out there now, so that's good. Is any of this stuff public, and where would you find it? Do we publish, or do we make any of this information, these peer reviews that we're doing, is any of this stuff available for people here to see what's going on? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

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

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

**DR. KELLY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. We have, on many, many occasions, at the DMC, after meetings with ADMs and the deputies, relayed to Alberta how important this is to the residents of the Northwest Territories and, in particular, Indigenous governments in the Northwest Territories. We have asked them to engage with Indigenous governments and with the public on this approach. They have not finalized their engagement process that they're going to use for this. The federal government has said that they will engage with Indigenous governments in the Northwest Territories on their process.

We have also brought forward that we would like them to provide us with some messaging that they feel comfortable with that we can make public because they have asked us at this point to keep our responses technical and government to government right now, and we've expressed that there will need to be information provided on what this looks like. And they have said that they will work with us and understand that needs to happen once the review process has occurred. So I'll just reiterate we have asked them that when they -- if they decide to go forward with the regulatory process after they've completed this that it involves public and engagement with Indigenous peoples in the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** Yeah, thanks for that. Look, I think I understand a little bit of the complexity of all this stuff. But if we're submitting stuff, why can't we post that to an ENR web page and let the public know what we're doing. The other guys, they can do whatever they want; they can keep secrets; they can, you know, have misunderstandings about what information they share with us. But why can't we post the submissions, these peer reviews that are being done, on an ENR web page so the public and Indigenous governments know what we're doing? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** I would turn to the deputy minister so she can give you the correct answer. Thank you.

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

**DR. KELLY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. These reports are confidential, and the only way that they would share them with us was that our responses were confidential until the report is completed and they've been able to do the analysis. So they're science-based reports and they're confidential reports. We were able to access them through the trans-boundary agreement and have the ability to provide comments. And at this point in time, Alberta's keeping that confidential. And as I mentioned, we've expressed to them the need to make sure that this information becomes public and that Indigenous governments are aware of the findings. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** Okay, thanks, Madam Chair. If I wasn't concerned before, now I'm really worried that all of this stuff is happening in secret behind closed doors. This is not good. And I'm not sure we should even be participating in that kind of process. That is very upsetting that -- look, good that we're getting experts; we're doing our homework to look at this. But if all of this stuff is happening behind closed doors and is being kept secret and we're only going to find out about it if Alberta decides they're going to do a regulation, that's not a good place to be. So I don't know, Minister -- or sorry, Madam Chair, I think the Minister needs to raise this on Thursday with the Alberta environment minister that this is just a totally unacceptable process, for us spending taxpayers' money doing all of this stuff in secret, not telling our people what we're doing. This is wrong. Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** I'll start, and then I'll turn to the deputy minister. So we will have the conversation. I can guarantee that Alberta government is listening to what's happening and has been listening to it. I can -- because soon as we reached out to the minister's office, the staff were reaching out to our staff right away. But for the process, I know the Member's not happy with the process but at least we're getting the information. But for detail, I'll turn to the deputy minister. Thank you.

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

**DR. KELLY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. This is Alberta's engagement process, and they're engaging internally within Alberta on whether they're going to do regs or not. And through our trans-boundary process, we were able to get access and have the opportunity to provide

input. Their process at this time is confidential and from our standpoint, we most certainly want to take part in this process because we're able to see these reports as they're being drafted; we get to provide input from an NWT perspective and be clear right from the get-go what the NWT's perspective is. Once the regulations are being contemplated, if the regulations are being contemplated, because Alberta's been clear with us that they haven't made that decision yet, we have been very clear at multiple levels that there needs to be public and Indigenous engagement on this issue in the NWT. They are committed to doing that in Alberta. And as I mentioned, the federal government will be engaging with Indigenous governments in the Northwest Territories and Alberta. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Thank you. Thank you, Madam Chair. Here I know that with the contaminated site it's under the environment protection and waste management. So last year it was near budgeted 344. I just -- I want to know how much is allocated for the contaminated sites this year?

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

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

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

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** Madam Chair.

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

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** Can the Member tell us what page she's on. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** 83.

**MS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Thank you.

**DR. KELLY:** All of the funding that ENR has for contaminated sites would be under environmental protection and waste management. But it should be noted that the Government of the Northwest Territories has an environmental liability fund, and so when there's remediation work that is being done, that's where the money to do some of the remediation work comes from. So it's not just in this place where you would see the contaminated sites budget. Other departments also have funding to do work on their own contaminated sites. But that environmental liabilities fund is where, for example, ENR

would go to look for additional funding for Canol Trail, for example, or other sites that we're looking at. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Yeah, the reason why I ask about that is because there's a lot of contaminated sites in the NWT and there are still -- you know, a lot of people are still concerned, you know, especially if it's in their backyard. We have oil and gas. We have uranium. We have the Giant Mine. Now with mining that's expected to close. So I'm just wondering if this was enough. The money that you're -- you know, it's for remediation, you said that. So how much of that is going to be for, like -- for the employment and for -- or is it for positions more? Is more going for the position or for the clean up?

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

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

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

**DR. KELLY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. So there's a variety of types of contaminated sites in the NWT. Some of them are still the federal government's responsibility, and they're paying to do the remediation of those sites. Some of them, it's a partnership between the GNWT and the federal government, like the Giant Mine Remediation Project that you spoke of. Some of them are sites that are the responsibility of different GNWT departments, and those departments would have budget to remediate those sites. At ENR, some of them would be related to fire activity, for example, firefighting activity. That would be one example. We also have some other contaminated sites that we're responsible for. The money that you would see here is people who are doing work on contaminated sites mostly at the policy level and also who are running some of the contracts to hire people to go and do the contaminated sites work. And often those would be funded through the environmental liabilities fund that I mentioned.

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

**MS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Thank you. Yeah, for the position, I see here -- because we're still on the environmental management and monitoring climate, and for the active position, there's nothing in Tlicho region on page 85, but North Slave has two, and

headquarters they have 66. So why there is nothing allocated in Tlicho region?

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

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

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

**DR. KELLY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. So this is -- these are position listings for all of the folks that do water and environmental protection work in the -- and climate change and cumulative impacts in the department. And if you can see there's the two in the North Slave, those are folks that are doing it for the North Slave region and that includes the Tlicho, the way that the North Slave region is set up. So there are two folks that are doing that work regionally, and then the headquarters staff are also supporting work all over the territory. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** So this North Slave position, it's located in Yellowknife or in Tlicho region?

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

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** For that detail, deputy minister.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Deputy minister Kelly.

**DR. KELLY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. The positions are located in Yellowknife.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Member for Monfwi.

**MS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Yeah, those are important positions for our community because for in our regions, we have a lot of contaminated sites. We have a lot of issues. So it would be nice if we can have -- will the Minister commit to transferring these two positions to Tlicho region? Thank you.

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

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** Thank you. No, that's for all of the North Slave. Thank you.

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

**MS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Did he say it's for all of the Northwest Territories or North Slave, the two position that I'm talking about?

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

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** It's for the North Slave, and it's the water resource officers. Thank you.

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

**MS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Yeah, North Slave consists of Yellowknife and Lutselk'e consists -- Fort Resolution, Dettah, N'dilo, and Tlicho regions. So what I would like to see is something specifically for Tlicho because we're not part of Yellowknife, and I keep saying that. So I just wanted to know if in the future, you know -- I know people do change all the time, so I would like to see more position transferred to Tlicho region. Thank you.

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

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** Thank you. So right now we are not looking at relocating those positions specifically to the Tlicho. It's the North Slave, and that's where those positions are based right now in Yellowknife. Thank you.

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

**MS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Thank you. Well, I mean, you know, it's -- it's doable; we can do something about that. So, yeah, that's -- I was really concerned about that because contaminated sites, people are still talking about. Still talking about the effects of the Rayrock that's in our backyard. Now there's other -- there the Fortune Minerals too as well, so. And with the diamond mine expected to close, so this funding, it would be nice if there were more positions in the small communities who are impacted by the -- who are affected more by the contaminated sites. So that's what I would like to see is that more be invested in the small communities to monitor these contaminated sites by bringing in more jobs to the small communities. Thank you.

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

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** Yes, I think we need to -- I'll ask the deputy minister to explain what these positions are. Thank you.

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



**DR. KELLY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. So the regional positions that you're seeing here are water resource officers. They're not people that are working specifically on contaminated sites. So their role is to go around and do inspections at industrial sites, and they're housed in Yellowknife. Two of them are housed in Yellowknife right now, and they're in the middle of where the sites are to go and do this work.

The other -- there's a couple other regional positions in here that are environmental protection officers. None of them are directly related to contaminated sites although they do contribute to contaminated sites work. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** I would think they are related to, you know, to those specifics. But it would be nice to have more of those positions transferred to the regions. Even like with here, there's five assistant deputy ministers on page 70, and there's a superintendent for North Slave. Is that position in Yellowknife, or is it -- where is this job located at? And there's -- you know, a lot of these positions here as identified, there's five assistant deputy minister. A lot of these -- in the small communities where they settled land claims, these positions will be beneficial to help our land claim groups. That's why I'm asking that, you know, it -- what this department should do is that -- so they keep talking about having a good working relationship with Indigenous government. They should transfer some of these jobs where the Indigenous government or those with the settled land claims can really benefit from these positions. Thank you.

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

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** I'll start, and then I'll turn to the deputy minister. So 60 percent of our jobs are in the regional and 40 percent are in headquarters. So I'm very happy with our numbers. We got 60 percent. I need to stress to the Member 60 percent is there. But for further detail, I'll turn to the deputy minister. Thank you.

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

**DR. KELLY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. So we certainly look at positions -- at putting positions into regions. There's a renewable resource officer in Whati that's looking after the Tlicho All-Season Road. We have a position for an officer that's in Behchoko for Dinaga We'ehodi as well. And I think that I expressed earlier there's an ADM position that we're -- the new

ADM position that will be a regional position and will be wherever there is someone who has those skills in the region. We're certainly looking at opportunities to ensure that there's opportunities in regions for these positions. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** Yes, and there's nine positions in Behchoko. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MS. MARTSELOS:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I just want to clarify the protocol for notification of spills. What is the process for notification, and who is the first person that the Minister should be contacting when it comes to a spill?

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

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** Thank you. Could the Member -- is it territorial or is it Alberta with the trans-boundary? Who is our contact; what's the question? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MS. MARTSELOS:** Thank you, Madam Chair. When the spill happened, it was kind of a surprise to everybody. Everybody was kind of running around and watching the media thing out there and doing all these other things. I'm just wondering what the protocol is with regards to who is the first person that the Minister called in the territories with regards to this spill?

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

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** Yes. I guess the first person I called once I found out was I reached out to the Premier. I reached out to her. And then the rest of Cabinet. And then we put something together, and we reached out to the MLAs as well as our Indigenous governments and the community impacted down in the south part. But for the whole process, I'll turn to the deputy minister. Thank you.

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

**DR. KELLY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. So in this particular spill, the community was already aware of it. So we knew that the Town of Fort Smith had been alerted by an Indigenous government who sent an email to them, and we were aware that they had been -- were already aware. Usually at the time where the Minister

would find out if this was a BMC announcement where we were -- or notification, pardon me, where we were told. At the time that we were speaking with the Minister, we would also be in communication with the communities and the Indigenous governments through the Indigenous steering committee to make sure that they were aware and that we were starting to plan the additional monitoring while the Minister's office went about the letting the Premier and others know. In this particular case, the community was already aware of the spill and it was the regional superintendent of the South Slave who alerted Headquarters ENR because he became aware of it, which is not how the process is supposed to work. Alberta's supposed to let us know and notify us through the bilateral management committee. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MS. MARTSELOS:** So, Madam Chair, you know, I'm of the belief that water is life. I -- being in leadership for 14 years as the chief for the Salt River First Nation and also having been involved with the Dene Nation and the Akaitcho territory, water is very significant to life. And I'm just wondering who did you contact at the Town of Fort Smith? Who is the person that was contacted at the Town of Fort Smith. Thank you.

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

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

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

**DR. KELLY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. So the email had gone to the mayor of Fort Smith. We were sent that by the regional superintendent. Because we have done monitoring with the community before and the Indigenous governments, we contacted the folks that work at the water treatment plant because that's where we put sampling equipment in the wintertime. So it was very similar to when Obed spill happened, and we worked with the community to put additional monitoring equipment in. We knew who to contact from that previous work. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MS. MARTSELOS:** So, Madam Chair, so it was done by email and that's the way the email went out to the Indigenous governments also, or? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

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

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

**DR. KELLY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. The communication with the Indigenous governments and the community was done by telephone. One of our water researchers who worked on the Obed work and knew the contacts communicated with them so that we could as quickly as possible get monitoring equipment installed. We also have a water quality monitoring expert that works at ENR in Fort Smith who was instantly engaged to go and meet and start talking to people about how we could get the monitoring equipment in. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MS. MARTSELOS:** I guess I have a concern about the way the protocol went because I've never been -- you know, I -- I'm not a computer person, and I knew that it had happened through hearsay but I was never approached by the Minister to tell me this actually happened. And I've never been -- he's never come down the hall to even explain to me exactly what happened even though I knew what happened. And I'm also concerned that I contacted one of the Indigenous governments, and they have not had no contact with -- with this whole water spill. And, you know, I'm of the -- you know, when we -- I think that it's extremely important that the protocol is followed. You know, I have a lot of respect for this department. Always did. Always supported it. And we used to take part in the monitoring program ourselves at the Salt River First Nation with people from both the federal and the territorial level people that come in to do the monitoring. And it amazes me that, you know, there's no contact with myself. Not once has anybody come to my office and said this is what's happening now, or anything. I mean, I expect that same respect that I give the Minister. And how hard is it? He's passing by my office every single morning. And, you know, I just want to make sure that the right protocol is followed. I love my community. I sit here and talk about all these different aspects of the community all the time, especially when it affects Indigenous livelihood and especially when it is part of the food security that we are all talking about now because of inflation, because of all the different things that I believe in. And I'm quite -- I'm quite disturbed that the Minister could sit there and say that, and he has not come to my office once in this last week. So

there you go. So how much contact is really happening with the actual mayor, the acting chief of the Salt River, and the president of the Fort Smith local Metis Nation. That's what I'd like to know. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** So first and foremost, I'll take responsibility that I didn't reach out to the MLA. We sent an email. I was dealing with the Alberta government and that there. So I'll take ownership I haven't gone to her. But we did send an email. We sent it to all the Indigenous governments and the municipalities. I'll take the ownership, I haven't gone to her office. I will make sure it happens in the future. But for the other detail, I'll turn to the deputy minister. Thank you.

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

**DR. KELLY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. So the way that ENR found out was we were sent an email where the Town of Fort Smith and Indigenous governments were alerted to this. We did, as the Minister mentioned, send another email that provided more information to the Indigenous governments. We have local staff who have been working with the Indigenous governments and the town to do the additional monitoring. And most certainly if we didn't -- if we knew that the Indigenous government and the town were not aware, we would most certainly have gone and have spoken to them in greater detail but we knew that they were already aware of the spill. And the first priority was to get the monitoring equipment in as soon as possible, working with the community and the Indigenous governments to make sure that we were collecting samples as soon as possible. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MS. MARTSELOS:** I don't have any other questions.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Are there any other Members wishing to speak to environmental management monitoring and climate change?

Seeing none, please turn to page 83. Environment and Climate Change, environmental management monitoring and climate change, operations expenditure summary, 2023-2024 Main Estimates, \$20,388,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

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

---SHORT RECESS

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Committee, we will continue on with Environment and Climate Change, policy and strategic planning, beginning on page 87 with information items on page 88 and 90. Questions. Member for Frame Lake.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Madam Chair. I want to turn to page 88, the nature fund protected areas. It's showing zero for 2023-2024. Can I get an explanation? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** Thank you. So we didn't have any money in our budget but we're working with the federal government to be able to get that funding backs. Thank you.

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Madam Chair. And I do want to compliment the Minister and his staff because I know that they're pretty good at leveraging money. But how confident are we that we're going to get any money for this? Because as I understand it, this is the funding that goes to support, you know -- I'm not even going to pronounce all the names right here, but Thaidene Nene and then a couple of other protected areas. These have gone through extensive consultation with Indigenous governments. It's a great kind of co-management approach. There's guardianship, you know, projects and things happening there, some really great stuff. This is about economic diversification, Madam Chair. So how confident are we that we're going to get money because if we don't get federal money, we're going to need to spend some money to continue to do this really good work. And I'm not opposed to that but if we can have the feds do it, that would be helpful. Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** I'll start, and then I'll turn to the deputy minister. How confident I am about the money from the federal government? I would say 99.99 percent that we're going to get it. But for that detail, maybe I'll turn to the deputy minister. Thank you.

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

**DR. KELLY:** Madam Chair, we have a letter of agreement with ECCC for bridge funding for two years with the possibility for extending another year. But our hope is that in the interim we'll be able to agree to Project Finance for Permanence, or PFP, which we're working on with Indigenous governments at this time that would provide a mechanism for long-term funding for protected areas and conservation areas in the NWT. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks. 99.99, that's pretty good so I'll take it. Yeah, I'll just try to continue the roll here.

So the contributions for supporting sustainable land use management are declining from 142 to 90. Can I get an explanation, please.

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

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

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

**DR. KELLY:** This is due to a sunset of the funding for the approach to unauthorized and right-spaced occupancy initiative. And we're able to do this work at the level that it's at right now in-house. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** Okay, thanks, Madam Chair. On the same page, sustainable livelihoods; we seem to be on a downward slide there. Can I get an explanation, please?

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

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

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

**DR. KELLY:** This is due to a sunset of some sustainable livelihoods funding that we had to develop the sustainable livelihood and implement the sustainable livelihood's action plan, and we've done the work that was required for that money. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Madam Chair. So if the strategy and an action plan has been done, when can we expect this funding to actually be increased? You know, we're losing quite a bit just due to CPI, and I don't think things like the community harvester assistance program have been increased for probably decades. So when can we expect to see some more money there. And maybe the Regular MLAs, we're going to work to maybe get some more money there but what's the Minister's thinking on this? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** Turn to the deputy minister. Thank you.

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

**DR. KELLY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. We have done a review of the community harvester assistance program and through that review, we've come up with a new funding formula. There were some concerns that were brought forward about the program, and we have been working to address them. We'd like to implement the new funding formula for a couple of years to see if there's oversubscription. At this particular moment in time, the way the program works is that the money is given to Indigenous governments and Indigenous organizations, and we need to improve the tracking information so that we can understand whether there is that need for additional funding. In the meantime, we've developed a number of other programs that we're putting funding to that were part of the engagement. So for example, trapper training where people in communities said that they need that training, and Take a Family on the Land where folks are mentioning that they want to have that ability to go out on the land and support healing and language transfer at the same time as doing on-the-land activities. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** Yeah, no, thanks for that. Yeah, I know this has been the subject of some ongoing debate and negotiation I guess. I'd say I'm quite confident that this money, at least in sustainable livelihoods, is well used and it actually helps support food security and particularly in our smaller communities. So I'm -- I think we're going to find a way to work together to get that increased. I think that's all I've got on this activity, Madam Chair. Thanks.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Okay, thank you. Are there any further questions from Members under policy and strategic planning? Member for Nunakput.

**MR. JACOBSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Just a couple of quick ones. The fur price program, how is that working out because, you know, the fur pricing across the territory and how are they -- are they getting it down? I guess is it still North Bay? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

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

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

**DR. KELLY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. So one of the things that we have noticed, and especially post-COVID, is there's been a reduction of the number of furs that are being brought in to ENR and going to market. We have a fur forum that will be happening this month where we're bringing in folks from across the territory to have conversations about how we can better support trappers in communities. And there will be some folks there that will be helping us. We're also doing a review of the Genuine Mackenzie Valley Fur Program that should also help with this situation. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MR. JACOBSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. No, that sustainable -- like my colleague, Mr. O'Reilly, said that sustainable livelihood, anything that you could do to help, I guess, our on the land, the trappers, take a KID trapping and family initiatives that you could do, and we're hoping to get that increased in this. So no, just hats off to you guys in regards to what you're trying to do and that because this helps a lot of people. You don't realize how much help we're doing on this -- for the fur program. So thank you very much. That's a comment. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Are there any -- Member for Great Slave.

**MS. NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Just my colleague's questions prompted another question for me. As part of that fur forum, are artisans and artists involved in this discussion, or is it just solely trappers and hunters? Thank you.

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

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

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Deputy minister Dr. Kelly.

**DR. KELLY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. So my understanding is that there's a focus on harvesting but there is a conversation about value added. So what could be done with the furs so that there would be the ability to sell them in the Northwest Territories and have a market here, not just having to go to the bigger fur market sales. And we do engage in conversations with ITI about this. They are working on the fur forum with us as well. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MS. NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. And I'm really glad to hear that and hear that there's the cross-departmental collaboration because I'm assuming that, you know, furs that potentially are not of quality enough to be, say, sold down south would then have an artisan or market value here like you mentioned -- or the department mentioned, regarding just for, like, making earrings and such. So I'm just really happy to hear that.

Is there going to be as part of this forum the discussion around the hide tanning conversation that keeps happening, and I may be sort of somewhat in the wrong location. But, again, it still seems to be all part and parcel of the same thing, and I know that a lot of artisans are talking about having the natural tanned hide. And I'm just wondering if there's a place in this area, or sustainable livelihoods even, where we could potentially be looking again at that natural tanning and promoting that. Thank you.

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

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** Thank you. Yes, it's a separate conversation but it's with ITI, and we're having that conversation and working with them. Thank you.

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

**MS. NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. And I apologize if this has already been asked. Just in the conservation planning piece, and noting that we are seeing money kind of returning but I'm assuming, again, probably the 2021-2022 had to do with COVID, are we looking to create newer or more protected areas? Is that what this work is being done for? Are we looking to

see new parks coming in the future such as Thaidene Nene? Thank you.

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

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** So that there is part of our Healthy Lands, Healthy People part two. So there is other protected areas that we're talking about. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MS. NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Can the Minister or the department give me an idea of which areas those are in. Is that something that there's maybe one in one area, or is it sort of spread across the territory? I guess I'm just trying to get a feel for how much is happening in this area. Thank you.

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

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

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

**DR. KELLY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. So a lot of those that are in there are carryovers from the previous version. So Dinaga Wek'ehodi, some of the areas in the Deh Cho for example. There are -- through the PFP conversations, there are conversations about areas of interest that we're committing to engage and talk to folks about. And the creation of Indigenous protected and conserved areas, which are not the same as protected areas and other conservation type designations but they're not all protected areas. Many are Indigenous protected and conserved areas that Indigenous governments are interested in. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MS. NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. So then the deputy minister did answer a bit of my next question, but just to confirm then. If they're in an Indigenous protected area, that still allows for Indigenous people to explore and look for mineral development in those areas as well or whatever economic future they would like to see; is that correct, Madam Chair?

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

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** Yes.

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

**MS. NOKLEBY:** Thank you. And perhaps I should have just done one of those. They all seem to be nodding so I think I'm right in that one. So, again, I'll just reiterate what my colleague said around more money in this area would be great. I know we have lots of conversations going on between committee and Cabinet around this. But, yes, anything where we can put more money into the hands of people to go out and be on the land in whatever form or shape they want to be, I think that's great. So more of a comment. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Are there any further comments, questions under policy and strategic planning? Seeing none, please turn to page 87. Environment and Climate Change, policy and strategic planning, operation expenditure summary, 2023-2024 Main Estimates, \$13,058,000. Does committee agree? Thank you. Minister.

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I'd like to switch. Bring in Dr. Brett Elkin. Or sorry, Blair Chapman.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Sergeant-at-arms, please escort the witness from the Chamber and bring in the new witness.

Thank you. Minister, will you please introduce your witness for the record.

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** Thank you. Blair Chapman. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. All right, so committee, we will now look at regional operations beginning on page 92, with information items on page 93. Questions. Member for Frame Lake.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Madam Chair. So is this just kind of moving over the regional operations that used to be in the Department of Lands and creating a division, or whatever, within the new department; no other changes, is that's what's happening here? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** For that detail, I'll turn to the deputy minister because there's a little bit more to the answer. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Deputy minister Dr. Kelly.

**DR. KELLY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. So I mentioned a little bit earlier that Lands and ENR dealt with regional funds differently. This right now is regional operations, and it will have the ENR regional operations in it. But the way that ENR did their main estimates before the regional piece was part of, for example water, or part of wildlife, and we need to do the work through optimization to pull out the funding that is going specifically to the regions and put it in here. So this will ultimately become regional operations for the whole new department but right now for this main estimates, it's the Lands funding and we need to do the work through optimization to add in the ENR regional ops funding, which currently is in the individual sections that we've already been going through. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** Okay. Thanks, Madam Chair. So that shuffling around of money, is that going to be done then through a supplementary appropriation, or do we get like one of these interactivity fund transfer letters? How is this going to be done as the department and the staff work through this optimization process. Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** So it'll be through internal transfers. Thank you.

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** Okay, thanks. And are those -- you know, we get these letters about interfund transfers from some Ministers usually kind of on the capital side, if I remember this correctly. So is there any kind of heads up to Regular MLAs about when it's on the O and M side, and how does the Minister tend to communicate that to the Regular MLAs? And I'm not saying every time you shift a dollar around, but having some kind of plan or, you know, when you figured it out, some communications with us, I think that would be helpful. Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** So right now the process would be through the business plans, realizing that this is probably the last time that we're dealing with the budget this Assembly. But it's usually done through the business plan process and then mains. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** Okay, thanks for that. Can I go get some kind of a commitment, though, from the Minister that when the department has figured this stuff out, this optimization stuff, you got some better org chart, you got figured out how you're going to realign some of this stuff, that there could be something wrapped up and sent to the Regular MLAs so we know what happened? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** So the process right now is we are looking at just transferring the money into that from the internal transfers. So as we move, we're transferring the money. So we can do a committee briefing should the Member wish. Thank you.

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** Okay, thanks, Madam Chair. I think we'll have to put that one in the hopper.

So I understand, like lands has lands use inspectors; water has some water inspectors. Is everybody going to be like one happy family now and cross-appointed, or how is all of this inspection stuff going to happen? Thanks, Madam Chair. And be coordinated. Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

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

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

**DR. KELLY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. There's ongoing discussions. There will be cross-appointment most likely with the water resource officers, the lands inspectors, and environmental protection officers. But one of the concerns that has been brought forward by those folks is that we don't want super inspectors or those that also have wildlife forest management, other appointments. We want to make sure that the people are doing things that are related to the jobs that they're doing now. So we are still looking at that, and for sure there will be appointments that make sense for the inspectors and the water resource officers and the lands inspectors will be working very closely together. As for the additional appointments, we'll look at those on a case-by-case basis depending on interest and also needs in the regions. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks. Yeah, it would probably be covered in the briefing I guess, but I'm interested in that area.

So I look at the, you know, budget line here on page 92, land regional operations, and there is a little bit of a decline there. It's increased from what was spent in 2021-2022. But I'm also cognisant that, you know, at least one diamond mine's going to start closing down. We've got another one that is in closure, Snap Lake. There's a lot at stake for our government because if anything goes off the rails, we're totally liable for that. I just want to get on the record that the Minister believes that we have sufficient resources to properly inspect these diamond mines as they're starting to close so that we don't incur any liabilities? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** Yes, we do.

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** Well, I didn't expect such a short answer. Okay, great. I don't think I have anything further. Thanks, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Are there any further questions under regional operations? Seeing none, please turn to page 92.

Environment and Climate Change, regional operations, operations expenditure summary, 2023-2024 Main Estimates, \$7,708,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. We'll now turn to the regulatory assessment and authorizations, beginning on page 95 with information items on page 96 and 97. Questions. Seeing no -- oh, Member for Frame Lake.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Okay, thanks, Madam Chair. So we covered some of this, I guess, in the Member's statement and questions earlier today. But where are we at with having any kind of policy work with regard to prevention of public liabilities? I know committees, you know, tabled a report in the House about that, motions were passed. But -- and I guess some regulations may be developed under the Public Land Act but we're still operating under a reclamation policy that was developed by the

old Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development that was endorsed by our government at the time of devolution. But, you know -- and I understand this is an area with perhaps some shared jurisdiction with the land and water boards as well, and we had some input into the stuff they'd done, but is there actually ever going to be a policy statement or something from this government about how we try to prevent public liabilities? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

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

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

**DR. KELLY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. There's quite a lot of work that's going on right now working with the land and water boards but also internally. The Public Land Act regulations are ongoing, and there's drafting occurring of those at this particular moment in time. We're fully secured, and there's a guidance document that's being drafted based on some advice that's been provided by EY. There's also a risk-based evaluation tool. And I would also point out that in the contaminated sites work plan we've spoken about previously, there's a number of deliverables within that will assist with that issue and concern. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** Yeah, thanks. I don't want to get into a debate here but we're not fully secured on some of these sites. You know, Prairie Creek being an example. We don't hold full financial security because a crazy arrangement that the federal government got into with the company and that it still hasn't been sorted out as far as I know.

All right, I'll ask a more pointed question. Reclaim is a model. It's almost like proprietary developed by some consultants but it's a methodology of calculating reclamation liability based on a whole bunch of rather complicated spreadsheets, unit costs, and so on. That hasn't been updated since 2017, at least that's the model that's on the ENR website and it seems to be publicly available. What work and with escalating, you know, engineering, construction costs, and so on maybe even some of the unit prices might -- we might have some more accurate stuff. But is any work being done to actually update the 2017 model. Thanks, Madam Chair.



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

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

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

**DR. KELLY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. So we have worked recently with a consultant to -- on unit costs due to inflation. And my understanding is that this tool was originally a federal tool that came over with devolution, and the federal government is doing some work on it in Nunavut where they use it and we will definitely be involved and hopefully be able to use the amendments that are made to the tool there. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** Yeah, okay, thanks for that. I'd just rather not have to wait for the feds to do something that may not happen. But I want to turn to the integrated resource management assistance program. It's contribution money found on page 96, and it's totally flat-lined, actually for everything here. Maybe it went up in 2022-2023 a little bit. But, you know, I guess this government had some sort of a policy or approach where agencies or departments could go to FMB for forced growth and clearly ENR either didn't go or wasn't successful. And I'm not going to ask them which one. But there's no increases here, particularly for ERMA. This is, you know, important stuff where those governments that don't have land rights agreements can actually access funding to allow them to participate in environmental management, decision-making, co-management stuff. So when was the last time this was increased, and why was it -- is it not increased in 2023-2024? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

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

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

**DR. KELLY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. This is federal funding that comes with the SIMP and audit funding, and we will be engaging with them in a discussion about the next ten years of funding. We had evaluated the program and updated it based on recommendations. And a change that you see here is due to unprocessed contribution agreements and a

workshop that was not requiring funding as it was held virtually. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** Yeah, okay, I guess I look forward to successful negotiations with the federal government then to increase this because I think it's really essential work that some of these folks do. So I don't think I have anything else, Madam Chair. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Are there any further questions under the regulatory assessment and authorizations? Member for Great Slave.

**MS. NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. And I promise my colleague I just have one short question. Given that the -- oh, and I'm not going to get the terminology right but the Tlicho had asked for the all-season road -- or the road to have the big environmental assessment done on it for the Slave Geologic road. And I'm just wondering -- I know this is a little bit far out. But how -- would something like that, a scale of environmental assessment that size, would that cause us to then need more resources in this area of the department, or does it just -- because it would be sort of federal with the Mackenzie Valley Land and Water Board and whoever would be sort of doing it from the Nunavut side, does that not then -- does that incur any further cost to us as a government? Thank you.

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

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** Yes, so we don't know -- like, we don't know right yet. But for the participation, I'll turn to the deputy minister. Thank you.

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

**DR. KELLY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. So the departments are all participating right now with existing resources and -- but they're just at the stage where they're starting so we'll -- we can't answer the question about any additional funding. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MS. NOKLEBY:** Thank you. I'm just going to reach a little bit further and ask then, in a normal process like this, does the federal government kick in extra money for such an important sort of nation building and critical mineral project? Do we anticipate that perhaps there would be federal funding that would be coming towards

us given that it is quite important to Canada's critical mineral strategy. Thank you.

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

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** Thank you. So this is a new process, but we've been encouraging the federal government to give money to the Indigenous governments to do this. Thank you.

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

**MS. NOKLEBY:** Thank you. And now I have a whole bunch of questions but I think I'm outside of the scope of what this budget item is about so I will stop there. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Are there any further questions from Members under regulatory assessment and authorizations? Seeing none, please turn to page 95.

Environment and Climate Change, regulatory assessment and authorizations, operations expenditure summary, 2023-2024 Main Estimates, \$10,758,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. We will now go to wildlife and forest management on page 99 with information items on page 100 to 102. Minister.

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** Thank you. I'd like to switch up our witnesses, please. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Sergeant-at-arms, please escort the witness from the Chamber and bring in our new witness. Minister, please introduce your witness.

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** This time I'll get it right. Dr. Brett Elkin. Thank you.

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

**MS. CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I'm looking at the forest management line item which has about a \$5 million decrease in that line item. I'm wondering if the Minister can speak to what areas of forest management are receiving that decrease given that it's got kind of the forest and trees and all that side of it and it also has the fire side. Thank you.

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

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** So, again, it depends on the fire year how we allocate or use the money. But for further detail, I'll turn to the deputy minister. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Okay. Deputy minister, Dr. Kelly.

**DR. KELLY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. So we have a base budget for fighting fire in the NWT, and then we need -- if we have to go over that budget, we have to get supplementary funding for it. So depending on the fire year, the cost for things like aircraft or for fire crews -- and last year, for example, extending the fire season, you'll see that those numbers fluctuate. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MS. CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I'm wondering if -- I understand the piece about coming back for a sup, but I'm wondering what is -- is this kind of the standard base because it is different from the main estimates from last year even, and if we know that we are having more fires and a longer season why that wouldn't be maintained? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

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

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

**DR. KELLY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. There was a forced growth submission that provides additional funding to the base budget for the main estimates which is why it looks a little bit different. But the actuals and the revised estimates are showing those changes due to sups or additional fire expenses. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MS. CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I'm wondering if the Minister can inform the House where the \$2 million in chargebacks is coming from further down the page. Thank you.

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

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** So thank you. It's a mutual -- I guess it's called MARS, and it's a mutual agreement that we have. It's with other jurisdictions across Canada.

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

**MS. CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, my next question is in regards to both fees and payments for materials and supplies. There's a significant amount of fluctuation in both of those line items, and I'm wondering if there is a theme in either that speaks to what causes this fluctuation and if there's something -- if there's a reason for that? Thank you.

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

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

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

**DR. KELLY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. So for fees and payments, there's increased testing of samples, GIS wildlife tracking, and fire management, membership fees. There's also an increase due to some of the federal funding that we receive from barren-ground caribou.

For the materials and supplies, this is due to a change in accounting treatment and so is the \$2 million that we just talked about with MARS. So previously these things used to be in fund three, and they've been moved to fund one. And that's why you're seeing some of these wonky changes over time for the years. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MS. CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. So would it be since they've been changed to fund three, is that something that we would expect to see stabilize over years to come, or are we still expecting to see quite a bit of fluctuation and movement in those line items? Thank you.

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

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** It should stabilize. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Are there any further questions under wildlife and forest management? Member for Frame Lake.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Madam Chair. So there's some changes to the number of positions found on 102 between last year and -- or the current year and what's proposed for next year. Can I just get a quick summary of

what those changes are? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

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

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

**DR. KELLY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. So there were four positions that we're sunseting due to the section 11 agreement but there's been a year of interim funding that has been provided by the federal government while we come to an agreement for -- a longer term agreement on caribou with the federal government. And then as I mentioned there was a forced growth submission that we were successful for that has allowed us to have a fire technician, a wild land fire crew and two fire crews, as well as a wildfire training technician. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Madam Chair. Is there any new funding in here for implementation of the Forest Act? I know the Minister's -- we got the "what we heard" report tabled in the House earlier today, and there's probably going to be some significant changes. Is there any money in here to implement that new legislation if and when it passes? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** No, we're using the money within but we still need to do the regulations as well. Thank you.

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** Okay. Yeah, I'm a bit worried about that because I think we're going to be taking on some significant new things with that legislation when it's brought forward. And so what would be the process of identifying if there's new needs and would that be brought in through a supplementary appropriation? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** So as we develop our regs, we would find out what it is and it would have to be through a sup. Thank you.

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** Yeah, okay, well I'll just cool my horses until that point. But I want to turn over to the contributions page on 100. There's a bunch of money going out; maybe there's some money coming in as well with regard to work on caribou. And where are we at with habitat protection. You know, we've told harvesters they can't harvest and some of them have done that voluntarily. You know, we've gone out, tried to get more wolves either by, you know, paying harvesters a little more or shooting them from helicopters. I don't know what else we can do for caribou other than protect habitat at this point, which we haven't done. So where are we at with habitat protection and is any of this money in here, in this part of the budget, for identification of key habitat and, more importantly, protection of that habitat? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

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

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

**DR. KELLY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. So we do provide funding support and information to Indigenous governments and Indigenous organizations, and important areas for caribou have been identified by the Tlicho government, the Athabasca Denesuline, North Slave Metis Alliance, and the NWT Metis Nation. We're committed to supporting the Yellowknives Dene First Nation, Lutsel'k'e Dene First Nation, and Deninu Kue to do similar work. Two workshops were held in 2022 to share information on legal tools for protection and a recent technical analysis using barren-ground caribou collar data helped to identify and prioritize water crossings. The workshop also provided an opportunity to discuss next steps, and there is interest in identifying barren-ground caribou habitat protection in Healthy Lands, Healthy People for conservation in the NWT. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Madam Chair. Are we likely to see even one square centimetre actually protected of critical caribou habitat within the lifetime of this Assembly? New habitat protection. Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** Thank you. Yes, so we're working with the Indigenous governments to prioritize the areas that they're talking about. Again, it's a collaborative approach with our Indigenous governments. Thank you.

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Madam Chair. Yeah, look, I recognize that this is complicated with being sure everybody's at the table, but are we likely to see any habitat actually protected, you know, by the end of this Assembly? New habitats identified and, more importantly, protected by the end of this Assembly. Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** Thank you. It'll be dependent on the outcomes of our meetings. Thank you.

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** Yeah, okay, thanks for that. Yeah, I have a funny feeling that this is going to become one of the key issues that's part of the regional study. So I don't think I have anything else. Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

**MS. MARTSELOS:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I just want to express my gratitude for the people at the wildlife and forest management, the capable staff there. And it's a territorial fire centre. The staff there are awesome, and they have really incredible working relationships with the Indigenous governments. And same with the ENR staff that are on the highway and throughout with Lands, I -- you know, I just want to ensure that the Minister knows that I'm very grateful for the staff at the local level, that -- whether they be territorial or at the regional level, it's -- you go into those offices and the help that I got, even when I was chief, with many things that happened in the community with different events and putting up teepees at certain times and everything else, I just want to make sure that he understands that I am very grateful for that, for those departments of his. You know, the only thing we have to work on is a little bit of the protocol when it comes to certain things that happen. And, you know, I love my community and I love the people that are there, and that will never change. And I appreciate his department and I

appreciate the staff that work for him, especially the deputy minister. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Member for Thebacha. Are there any further questions, comments under wildlife and forest management? Seeing none, please turn to page 99.

Environment and Climate Change, wildlife and forest management, operations expenditure summary, 2023-2024 Main Estimates, \$60,608,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. There are additional information items on page 103 to 114. Are there any questions from Members on those? Member for Frame Lake.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Madam Chair. The environment fund on page 103 -- and I had some involvement with the waste reduction and recovery advisory committee for a number of years. There was a lot of concerns raised about the need maybe for a second depot in Yellowknife. You folks, I think, went out and looked at this. Where are we at with having a second depot in Yellowknife? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** Thank you. Yes, so we're working with the City of Yellowknife to identify a spot, and there will have to be some zoning changes as well. Thank you.

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** Okay, thanks, Madam Chair. Any sense of timing on this? I think the last time I raised it with the Minister it was like kind of going to be sometime late last year that there might be something happening, and here we are about five or six months later and I don't think anything's happened. Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** Thank you. So we were trying to find the location and that's one of our priorities there, working with the city on that, and we're hoping by the early fall 2023. Thank you.

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Madam Chair. Over on page 106, Inuvialuit Water Board, zero. What's happening? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

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

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

**DR. KELLY:** (audio) before the main estimates so it's not included in here. This was something that committee brought up as being confusing, and we're working with finance to see how we can address it in future main estimates. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Sorry, you started talking before the light, so I couldn't hear the first part that something wasn't approved or?

**DR. KELLY:** Sorry, Madam Chair. The budget has not been approved yet when the main estimates was developed. So the budget is still there but it hadn't been approved so it's not in the document itself. This was something that came up that committee brought up as being confusing, and we're working with finance to see how we can address that for future main estimates. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Madam Chair. Can I assume, then, that we've actually got the money in the bank for this? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** Yes.

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Madam Chair. I love those answers. Over to one of my favourites, the Northwest Territories Surface Rights Board, can I just get confirmation from the Minister that they haven't dealt with any disputes in the last year? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** The Member is correct.

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Madam Chair. These folks haven't dealt with a dispute their entire existence, and this was never really needed. This could have been handled through the existing dispute resolution mechanisms and with the land rights agreements. Look, this is not a co-management approach. The Minister appoints everybody here. I think the Indigenous governments don't get a say in this. This is ancient legislation that we inherited from the federal government. We've reviewed a good part of the other resource management legislation that we have in place. When is the Minister going to review this legislation and the board? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** Thank you. So it meets Canada's obligations and they provide the funding, so we don't have any visions of dealing with it presently. Thank you.

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Madam Chair. It may be federal money but this is our legislation, and I think we -- last time I think I raised this, the Minister said, well -- or maybe it was the former -- or whatever -- deputy minister that raised this, that maybe there might be some opportunity to review this through some other renewal process or government renewal initiative or some other regular renewal or review provisions that the GNWT has. So we're just going to let this thing sit here, continue to spend money, and not do any work. I just don't get it. And there doesn't seem to be any interest on the part of this Cabinet to actually review this even though it's our legislation. Is there any process by which this can be reviewed? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** So presently we have other priorities and that's where we're focusing our energy and time on. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** Yeah, thanks, Madam Chair. I kind of feel like I should be a zombie and I'm going to come back and continue to hammer on this one because this should never have happened in the first place. It's not needed. It doesn't do any work. And it's not a co-management approach. It just doesn't fit with the way that we do other co-management

here in the Northwest Territories. I don't know what else I can say, Madam Chair. This needs to be reviewed. Thanks, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Are there any further questions under the information items from Members? Seeing none, thank you, Members. Please return now to the departmental summary found on page 73. Review -- with information items on page 74. Any questions? Seeing none, committee, I will now call the department summary.

Environment and Climate Change, operations expenditure, total department, 2023-2024 Main Estimates, \$124,309,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Mr. O'Reilly.

COMMITTEE MOTION 372-19(2):  
TABLED DOCUMENT 813-19(2): 2023-2024  
MAIN ESTIMATES – ENVIRONMENT AND  
CLIMATE CHANGE – DEFERRAL OF  
DEPARTMENT (PAGE 73),  
CARRIED

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Madam Chair. I move that this committee defer further consideration of the estimates for the Department of Environment and Climate Change at this time. Mahsi, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. The motion is in order. To the motion?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Question.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried. Consideration of the Department of Environment and Climate Change, 2023-2024 Main Estimates, operating expenditures, total department, is deferred. Thank you, Minister. Minister.

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** Thank you. First of all, I'd like to thank committee for the work they did and questions they asked today. But I'd also very much like to thank the department. I know it's been very challenging as we do the amalgamation, but I have to agree with the Member from Thebacha. Amazing staff are working to better serve the residents of the Northwest Territories, so I'd like to thank the staff that work together to provide this nice little binder and all the work that they have done to this date. So thank you very much.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Minister. And thank you to the witnesses, all the witnesses for appearing before us. And those

are not little binders. I didn't even know they came that big.

Sergeant-at-arms, please escort the witnesses from the Chamber.

What is the wish of committee? Member for Frame Lake.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Merci, Madam la Presidente. I move that the chair rise and report progress. Mahsi, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. There's a motion on the floor to report progress. The motion is in order and non-debatable. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried.

---Carried

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 Tabled Document 813-19(2), 2023-2024 Main Estimates, and I would like to report progress with two motions passed. And, Mr. Speaker, I move that the report of the 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 Nahendeh. All those in favour? All those opposed? Any abstentions? The motion is carried.

---Carried

Third reading of bills. Mr. Clerk, orders of the day.

### Orders of the Day

**CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Tim Mercer):** Orders of the day for Wednesday, March 8th, 2023, 1:30 p.m.

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

- Oral Question 1343-19(2), Impacts of COVID-19 on Education

- Oral Question 1404-19(2), Child Care Funding Supports for Teen Parents

- Oral Question 1411-19(2), Renewable Energy

5. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery

6. Acknowledgements

7. Oral Questions

8. Written Questions

9. Returns to Written Questions

10. Replies to Commissioner Address

11. Petitions

12. Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills

13. Reports of Standing and Special Committees

14. Tabling of Documents

15. Notice of Motions

16. Motions

- Motion 74-19(2), Reconciliatory Review of Housing NWT

17. Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills

18. First Reading of Bills

- Bill 74, Forest Act

- Bill 75, Council of Women and Gender Diversity Act

19. Second Reading of Bills

- Bill 64, An Act to Amend the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act, No. 3

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 60, An Act to Amend the Petroleum products and Carbon Tax Act

- Bill 61, An Act to Amend the Ombud Act

- Bill 63, An Act to Amend the Official Languages Act

- Bill 66, An Act to Amend the Property Assessment and Taxation Act
- Bill 67, An Act to Amend the Fire Prevention Act
- Bill 68, An Act to Amend the Child Day Care Act
- Bill 73, An Act to Amend the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act, No. 4
- Committee Report 40-19(2), Standing Committee on Government Operations Report on Bill 61: An Act to Amend the Ombud Act
- Committee Report 43-19(2), Standing Committee on Government Operations Report on Bill 63: An Act to Amend the Official Languages Act
- Committee Report 44-19(2), Special Committee on Reconciliation and Indigenous Affairs Final Report: A Northwest Territories Approach to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and Negotiating Agreements
- Committee Report 45-19(2), Standing Committee on Government Operations Report on Bill 60: An Act to Amend the Petroleum Products and Carbon Tax Act
- Minister's Statement 264-19(2), Response to the NWT Chief Coroner's Report on Suicide
- Tabled Document 681-19(2), Government of the Northwest Territories Response to Committee Report 26-19(2): Report on the Child and Family Services Act – Lifting Children, Youth and Families: An All of Territory Approach to Keeping Families Together
- Tabled Document 694-19(2), Northwest Territories Coroner Service 2021-2022 Early Release of Data
- Tabled Document 813-19(2), Main Estimates

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 7:24 p.m.

21. Report of Committee of the Whole

22. Third Reading of Bills

23. Orders of the Day

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Clerk. This House stands adjourned until Wednesday, March 8th, 2023 at 1:30 p.m.