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The Honourable Shane Thompson, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

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REPORT OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE668

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YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**Thursday, May 30, 2024****Members Present**

Hon. Caitlin Cleveland, Mr. Edjericon, Mr. Hawkins, Hon. Lucy Kuptana, Hon. Jay Macdonald, Hon. Vince McKay, Mr. McNeely, Ms. Morgan, Mr. Morse, Mr. Nerysoo, Ms. Reid, Mr. Rodgers, Hon. Lesa Semmler, Hon. R.J. Simpson, Mr. Testart, Mr. Thompson, Mrs. Weyallon Armstrong, Hon. Caroline Wawzonek, Mrs. Yakeleya

The House met at 1:31 p.m.

Prayer

---Prayer

SPEAKER (Hon. Shane Thompson): Colleagues, I'd like to thank Mary Jane Cazon for the guiding words here today. She's also a constituent of mine from the Nahendeh region. So I'd like to thank her very much.

Colleagues, before we get started I'd like to recognize a special guest in the House today, the former Member from the Sahtu who was the Minister -- I'll get this right -- Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs and Minister responsible for housing, Minister responsible for Public Utilities Board, and the Minister responsible for Worker's Safety and Compensation Commission. There we go. Welcome, Paulie Chinna.

Now, let's see if I can get this thing back into order. Ministers' statements. Minister of Finance.

Ministers' Statements

**MINISTER'S STATEMENT 39-20(1):
INDIGENOUS RECRUITMENT AND
RETENTION FRAMEWORK AND
INDIGENOUS EMPLOYMENT**

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Mr. Speaker, increasing Indigenous representation in the public service has long been a goal of the Legislative Assembly. Indigenous under-representation within the public service is a complex and multi-dimensional issue and requires a variety of actions to address, from changes to policy and programming, to increasing resources and training opportunities. Historically, Mr. Speaker, the efforts to achieve this goal were championed by Human Resources. We now know we need a more collaborative approach that provides departments with the flexibility they need so they can address barriers that may be unique to them. We know, for example, that recruiting barriers for the Department of Education, Culture and Employment differ from those

faced by the Department of Environment and Climate Change. We cannot, and should not, use a one-size-fits-all approach.

Mr. Speaker, the GNWT Indigenous Recruitment and Retention Framework and Action Plan directs all departments and agencies to develop departmental Indigenous employment plans to increase, develop and maintain the number of Indigenous persons they employ. These plans include short, medium, and long-term targets. Later today, I will table a report on the results of departmental Indigenous employment plans for the 2022-2023 fiscal year. This report outlines each department and agency's efforts to meet their targets and their unique approaches to address the challenges and opportunities related to Indigenous recruitment and retention.

During this reporting period, a job description review guide was launched to help departments set appropriate positional education and experience requirements and include Indigenous cultural and social factors into job descriptions. There was also a review of job descriptions by every department, with GNWT-wide reviews exceeding 2022-2023 targets. We launched mandatory training for managers on the staffing process and recruitment programs, as well as adding training on mitigating and unconscious bias. Indigenous-focused mental health support programming called A New Dawn, a New Light was also made available, with supports offered through app-based programs rooted in diverse Indigenous cultural and healing practices. We also released a GNWT-wide succession planning guide that aligns with the goal of increasing Indigenous representation in the territorial public service.

Mr. Speaker, over the last year, the framework has positively impacted the use of related GNWT programs. For example, both the Indigenous Career Gateway Program and the Building Capacity with Indigenous Governments Program have been fully utilized.

Departmental Indigenous employment plans support continual improvement of our recruitment and retention practices. As we move forward and achieve new levels of

Indigenous leadership and representation at all levels of government, they will provide the GNWT with opportunities to celebrate our successes in the years ahead. As we reflect on the successes of the first year of Indigenous employment plans, I want to close by thanking each department and agency for their attention and efforts related to Indigenous recruitment and retention. In many cases, GNWT departments have either met or exceeded the targets they have set to date. All departmental Indigenous employment plans are publicly available on the Department of Finance's website, and I encourage everyone to review the progress to date and upcoming actions that our departments will achieve. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 40-20(1):
OPENING OF LIWEGOATI BUILDING

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Mr. Speaker, the 20th Legislative Assembly has made access to health care one of the top priorities. I am happy to share that as of today, May 30th, the Liwegoati Building is open to the public. Quality health and social services for patients and clients from this building supports the new campus of care model through the co-location of services. This includes integrated teams for primary care, outpatient rehabilitation services, extended care, and long-term care.

The important work of primary care reform is advancing in this new facility with improvements to integrated care teams that will lead to more equitable access to services for residents. This work, guided by our core principle of cultural safety, is foundational and will help to inform changes throughout the system to build the best care and service for a better future for residents.

Mr. Speaker, to minimize any disruption to service, programs are being relocated to the Liwegoati Building in a phased approach. Operational readiness activities have been underway for months, coordinating the moves of primary care and outpatient rehabilitation services into the building's first floor, which is now operational. For now, appointments for same-day services, the diabetes clinic, and tobacco cessation will remain at the primary care clinic in downtown Yellowknife.

The next phase of the move will see the extended care unit, currently located in Stanton Territorial Hospital, relocate into the building. It is expected that this will take place over the course of the summer. Ten of the 16 extended

care beds will be occupied to start, with the extra capacity on reserve for those who need these services.

The final phase, opening long-term care beds, will take place later this year. Seventeen beds will be open during this phase and will involve working through the territorial admissions committee waiting list. We will add additional beds as needed, based on regular assessments of residents' needs, current capacity, and available staffing and funding levels.

Mr. Speaker, overhauling the delivery of service to better serve the people of the Northwest Territories is a massive undertaking, and this work is not complete. We have made significant progress, especially considering the challenges related to the pandemic and recent wildfire evacuations. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank everyone involved in this work since this project began. From the earliest planning and design stages, to the construction and retrofitting of the old Stanton Hospital building, to the staff working so hard to establish services in the Liwegoati Building.

I would also like to thank the Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority, Liwegoati Project Management Office. They have been working with the Yellowknife region to ensure continuity of service while coordinating the move of primary care and outpatient rehab services from their current locations.

I know a great deal of work has gone into this, and I am sure the teams are eager to get to know their new workspaces and see patients and clients. I would also like to thank the NWT residents in advance for your patience and understanding as we complete this move and refine our processes over the next few months. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Health and Social Services. Ministers' statements. Members' statements. Member from Frame Lake.

Members' Statements

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 212-20(1):
AMENDMENTS TO WATERS
REGULATIONS

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in the previous sitting of this Assembly, I spoke to the problem of lack of clarity in the NWT waters regulations and the issues this problem is causing in our regulatory system. I spoke to arguments which had been made during a review of this issue which noted

that amendments to the regs could help to alleviate some longstanding issues with relation to predictability, expediency, and fairness in the system.

On February 28th, I questioned the Minister on this, and he suggested these issues could be solved through interpretation of the regulations as opposed to targeted amendments. Since that exchange occurred, the land and water boards of the Mackenzie Valley issued a reference bulletin which seeks to better interpret the regs but because the regs do not clearly spell out intent and meaning, even a detailed and highly informed interpretation does not bring much clarity. As argued by the Tlicho government in their response to the board's reviews, the review process on the regs, the ultimate solution is targeted amendments to the regs to resolve this problem.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday the boards wrote the Ministers responsible for the MVRMA and Waters Act recommending parties come together to make targeted amendments to the waters regulations to resolve these longstanding problems. The boards argued that the regulations are outdated and a source of uncertainty in the regulatory process, noting that there have been no substantive updates made since they were originally enacted in 1993 despite significant changes in the NWT's operating environment since that time. They further argued that focused amendments to the regulations should be prioritized over updates to the Waters Act recognizing that changing the regs will not only be easier and faster but that the regs are currently causing the greatest number of challenges in the board's processes.

Finally, the boards emphasized that there is support for many proponents and some co-management partners for making these changes.

Mr. Speaker, I think this is a great opportunity for the department to take a collaborative approach to their role in the co-management system and come to the table to discuss changes that the boards and many stakeholders in this system have been advocating for. To that end, I'll have questions for the Minister of ECC later today. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Frame Lake. Members' statements. Member from Range Lake.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 213-20(1):
WORLD NO-TOBACCO DAY

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, tomorrow is World No-Tobacco Day. And this year, it will be special for me - it's been

11 weeks since my last cigarette. It's not the first time I've quit but hopefully it'll be the last.

Mr. Speaker, nicotine is more addictive than alcohol, heroin, or cocaine. So days like World No-Tobacco Day are truly important to raise awareness about the dangers of smoking tobacco.

Created by the World Health Organization in 1987, the yearly celebration informs the public on the dangers of using tobacco, the business practices of tobacco companies, what the WHO is doing to fight the tobacco epidemic, and what people around the world can do to claim their right to health and healthy living and to protect future generations.

This year's theme is Youth Step In and Speak Out, and young people are being given a platform to urge governments, like ours, to shield them from predatory tobacco marketing tactics. Children use E-cigarettes and vapes at a higher rate than adults with an estimated 37 million youths aged 13 to 15 using tobacco. The industry is well aware of this and knows that if it can get kids hooked, they will continue to smoke for life.

British American Tobacco and Philip Morris International are exploiting social media to market these addictive products to young people. Three products between these two companies, Vuse E-cigarettes, VELO nicotine pouches, and Iqos heated tobacco, have been viewed more than 3.4 billion times on social media. Marketing for just these three brands has reached more than 385 million people, and approximately 40 percent of this audience are children under the age of 25. Even so, most youth and adult smokers want to quit, and more than half have attempted to in the past year. But fewer than one in ten smokers actually succeed. This isn't a matter of willpower; this is a matter of providing the proper supports and encouragement in the health system and communities to ensure they succeed.

Mr. Speaker, I know that the Minister cares about this. I know that our government cares about this. Our Members care about this. We have terrible rates of addiction to cigarettes. I can attest to that. And I hope that my colleagues here will join me in raising awareness for No Tobacco Day tomorrow and wish me luck in kicking smoking once and for all. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Range Lake. Members' statements. Member from Inuvik Boot Lake.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 214-20(1):
GWICH'IN WELLNESS CAMP

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, all my colleagues are aware of the impact of a range of mental health and substance abuse challenges occurring in our NWT communities. The affects that toxic drugs are having as well as addressing the affects of trauma on our residents are well known.

Mr. Speaker, I want to share a good news story from my home community on an Indigenous government led initiative to provide support for people.

Mr. Speaker, I'm speaking of the Gwich'in Wellness Camp. For years, the camp was operated to provide on-the-land programming. Well over a decade ago, the operating costs of the camp were overwhelming, and the camp was shut down. The Gwich'in Tribal Council, under the leadership of grand chief at the time Bobby Joe Greenland, decided to revive the camp with the idea of, again, hosting an on-the-land program. Federal funding was received to renovate the camp and increased the amount of cultural spaces. The federal funding provided help to GTC renovate the interior/exterior of the camp, build five yurts, create walkways, and purchase equipment such as snowmobiles, quads, side-by-sides, and landing craft for passengers. As well, Mr. Speaker, a Kingfisher boat and a shure for emergency use.

Mr. Speaker, the funding also helped create a solar farm to help with the high cost of the diesel and lower the overall carbon footprint. All of these renovations, cultural spaces, and equipment will be so vital when the on-the-land program is occurring at the camp.

Mr. Speaker, operations officially began in August 2023 with a rental to an American television provider to film the show called Survival. The show will be airing on the History Channel starting in mid June and showcasing our beautiful back yard. Sorry, Mr. Speaker, but I can't provide any spoilers right now for the show.

The rental property provided an opportunity to continue to monitor, upgrade, and repair equipment. It's also provided an opportunity to identify the cost of operations such as fuel usage, food, and operational staff. Now that the camp is operational, the Gwich'in have began using it to provide skills training to their Gwich'in participants and other residents. So far, people have been training with snowmobile operations, ice safety, firearms, spill response, chainsaw operations, and so forth, Mr. Speaker.

Over the past year, under the leadership of grand chief Ken Kyikavichik, the Gwich'in Tribal Council has been planning to begin holding

health and wellness programming at the camp. The vision of this programming is to provide an intergenerational place for comprehensive wellness programming that can address needs of Gwich'in participants and NWT residents living with mental health or substance use challenges, trauma, and disconnection. Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

---Unanimous consent granted

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you, colleagues. This means, Mr. Speaker, that the camp will provide not only much needed aftercare treatment but also provide support and counselling for a range of mental health challenges and doing all that is right here in the Northwest Territories.

My colleagues from the Standing Committee on Social Development had an opportunity to tour the camp in early April, and I'm sure they will also tell you the potential for this initiative project being undertaken by the Gwich'in Tribal Council.

Mr. Speaker, the federal government was key in this revival of this wellness camp and soon will be offering critical additions and mental support. Mr. Speaker, I have a history of the camp here as well. I would like to request that I have it deemed as well, and I'll submit it for Hansard. Thank you.

History

- The Gwich'in Wellness Camp has been traditionally referred to as Rachel Reinder Camp.
- Rachel (nee Koe) Reindeer was born in September of 1920 in the Fort McPherson area to Andrew and Talitha Koe.
- Rachel married at a young age to Johnny Reindeer. Johnny was a woodcutter who came up on the Steamboat and fell madly in love with Rachel. They settled in Fort McPherson and adopted three children: Louise, Wayne and Esther.
- In 1968 they moved to Inuvik. Rachel and Johnny decided to build a camp and found and liked an area on the East Branch - it was a good area for fishing, the hill above has many good berry patches and the willows below were good for setting rabbit snares and was only a one-day boat ride to Inuvik; Johnny had a full-time job and could only visit his family on his days off.
- Lucy Moore and Florence Carpenter and their children spent many summers with Rachel and her family. There were many visitors to Rachel's camp; when they stop by Rachel

would share dry fish and berries and would give some to take home.

- Rachel shared her knowledge and taught people to work with fish and properly dry it. Rachel only spoke Gwich'in to everyone so they could keep the language today.

- "Jijuu" was a very loving, kind-hearted person who was always laughing and loved the children around her. Rachel told all her stories in the Gwich'in language."

Rachel died in September 1973. (Her burial was September 10th in church records, no mention of the date of her death}.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Inuvik Boot Lake. Members' statements. Member from Great Slave.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 215-20(1):
YELLOWKNIFE PRIDE CELEBRATIONS

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Happy Pride Season. Today is Inuvik Pride parade and barbeque, as well as an epic performance from the iconic Iceis Rain. This Sunday, Yellowknife has its very own Pride parade and barbeque, and I have extended the invitation to all MLAs to join me in sharing in the celebration.

Mr. Speaker, Pride started as a protest, and those roots run deep. Learning Queer history is also how we learn how much further we have to go. Here in Yellowknife, we have had celebrations on and off since the late 1990s through different Pride organizations.

Mr. Speaker, 2023 was the first full scale parade here in Yellowknife, and it's not lost on me how powerful that parade was for many, many folks. The Yellowknife of just 30 years ago was not nowhere as near as welcoming of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community as we are today. It's also important that the GNWT continues to make strides to ensure folks of all genders are included in all programs and services that we offer to our residents, and preliminary conversations with this Cabinet have me very excited, indeed, around how we continually do better as a government. I would like to encourage all Members to take as -- part in as many Pride events as they can throughout this summer in their own communities and here in the capital. I'd also encourage all allies throughout Yellowknife to sign up to volunteer with Pride events as we want all members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community to participate in celebrations instead of running them wherever possible. Please check out the Northern Mosaic Network's social media to see the full schedule of events for the 2024 Summer of Pride,

culminating in the always popular Pride weekend at the Folk on the Rocks site this August 9th to 11th.

Mr. Speaker, Pride is important because somebody out there still believes they're better off dead than being gay. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Great Slave. Members' statements. Member from the Sahtu.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 216-20(1):
PUBLIC LANDS ACT REGULATIONS

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Public Lands Act Regulations. Today, Mr. Speaker, I want to speak about the status on implementation of Public Lands Act.

Mr. Speaker, the work on the development of the Public Lands Act began in 2017 during the 18th Assembly by the former Department of Lands. The Act was later introduced and eventually passed at the end of the 18th Assembly in August of 2019. Based on this, a person would probably think the Public Lands Act has been in force for about five years now; however, Mr. Speaker, this is not the case.

According to the text of the Act, Mr. Speaker, this Act, or any section of this Act, comes into force on a day or days to be fixed by order of the Commissioner. That is vague language, Mr. Speaker, which doesn't provide clarity for when the Act will come into force at all. Based on this, it seems that the decision for when the Land Act will come into force will be when Cabinet wants it to. And eventually, based on questions Members asked in the previous Assembly, the Act would only come into force when regulations are developed.

Mr. Speaker, the purpose of the Public Lands Act was to amalgamate former NWT Lands Act and the Commissioner's Land Act in order to create a newer, more efficient model of administering land in the NWT. This new process would minimize land access confusion and establish a one-stop shop to land clients. The Act, and its accompanying regulations, would bring greater certainty and comfort to industry, particularly the mining community, and to the public, general public, and Indigenous governments. Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

---Unanimous consent granted

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, colleagues. Mr. Speaker, public lands engagement on the development of the Public Land Act regulations have been ongoing for five

years now. Why is the process taking so long? What is holding it up? Now, it's now been two Assemblies since the Act was passed, and there are no regulations in sight. I understand that the government is trying to do their due diligence and engage with the Intergovernmental Council and to take this long to introduce these regulations.

MR. SPEAKER: Member from the Sahtu, your time is up. Members' statements. Member from Mackenzie Delta.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 217-20(1):
DEMPSTER HIGHWAY

MR. NERYSOO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, before my Member's statement, I just would like to wish my granddaughter Shannon Feliah a Happy Birthday for today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Dempster Highway is a two-lane gravel-surfaced all-weather road that follows our route traditional used by the Indigenous people for thousands of years. It passes through the territories of the Han, Gwich'in, and Inuvialuit people starting near Dawson and finishes in Inuvik. Construction of the highway began in 1959 as part of the Road to Resources Program and was completed 20 years later, with some delays, at a cost of \$132 million.

Mr. Speaker, the Dempster Highway passes through some of the most spectacular scenery one will ever see. This is one reason the Beaufort Delta region attracts visitors from all over the world. The highway passes through the migration route of the Porcupine Caribou Herd, the spectacular Richardson Mountains, and your travels will soon take you to the Arctic Circle. This is the only road in Canada which crosses the Arctic Circle. Whenever you are visiting a Beaufort Delta region, you will be welcomed by some of the most hospitable people of the North.

Mr. Speaker, although the boom of the oil and gas industry is not as vibrant as it used to be in the past, the Road to Resources still serves as a vital link for the delivery of goods and services for the people of the Beaufort Delta region.

I have painted a rosy picture that the Dempster Highway winds through. The highway still requires the government to keep up with maintenance for the safety of all users. It is important that daily inspections be conducted and repaired whenever needed. Mr. Speaker, I have experienced the deterioration of the road mainly due to climate change, and we must learn to adapt to these changes to keep our road safe for our local people and visitors from all over the world so that they can continue to

visit the spectacular Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will have questions for the Minister responsible for Infrastructure.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Mackenzie Delta. Members' statements. Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 218-20(1):
ACCESS TO QUALITY EDUCATION IN
LUTSELK'E

MR. EDJERICON: Mr. Speaker, access to quality education is a treaty right for Dene people across the Northwest Territories, and all treaty rights must be consistently upheld. That means providing trained professional educators and well-resourced schools in every community. Unfortunately, however, in my community of Lutselk'e, this treaty right is at risk because in March of this year, the high school teacher submitted a letter of resignation and left shortly thereafter, and the school has yet to find someone to replace them. This abrupt resignation severely impacted the school year for high school students in Lutselk'e and substitute teachers were needed to fill the gap, and this took time as they had to relocate and properly prepared to take up the task of finishing the school year. Substitute teachers provide an excellent service that I'm not in no way criticizing and I don't want to fault the outgoing high school teacher for their decision either, but the fact remains that the community still needs a dedicated high school teacher for the long term, and that responsibility falls on the territorial government.

I have heard from my constituents in Lutselk'e, who are now greatly concerned about their children's education and has some seeking to move to -- their students to Yellowknife to pursue their high school education here. I don't want to see families driven out of their communities so their children can have access to education. The GNWT needs to find a solution soon and get the dedicated high school into Lutselk'e before the next school year this fall, or else the youth of Lutselk'e will suffer. I am calling upon the Department of ECE to rectify this situation and uphold the treaty rights to education and will have questions for the Minister at the appropriate time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh. Members' statements. Member from the Deh Cho.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 219-20(1):
CONSTITUENT'S MEDICAL TRAVEL
ISSUES

MRS. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I want to discuss a constituent issue that was brought to my attention pertaining to medical travel.

Mr. Speaker, one of my constituents had recently gone to Edmonton on a weekend vacation and while he was away, he ended up getting hurt and had to go to the hospital because of his injuries. After this happened, the constituent contacted medical travel to inform them of his situation to seek support in returning home. However, medical travel has decided they will not provide him with any support to help him with his return travels to the NWT.

Mr. Speaker, the individual in question here is an Indigenous lifelong Northerner who was born and raised in Fort Providence. He's paid his taxes in the NWT all his life and has been working at one of the mines for many years. This constituent feels abandoned, ignored, and totally unsupported by this government during his time of need, which is not right. Something must be done by our government to help improve his situation and give him the proper supports that he needs. Moreover, Mr. Speaker, this constituent's injury is significant enough that his family has also had to travel to Edmonton to be with him while he is hospitalized in the city. This situation is costing this constituent and his family a lot of unforeseen out-of-pocket expenses that are only increasing with each passing day which, as a result, is creating a lot of unnecessary added stress that he should not have to deal with. This stress is causing his health to take a turn for the worse, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from the Deh Cho. Members' statements. Member from Monfwi.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 220-20(1):
GOOD GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I want to speak about good governance and leadership that I believe we, as MLAs, and we, as the government, should demonstrate. This is my thought on some of the things when I first came on, okay.

Mr. Speaker, when I first became an MLA, I thought the way that I was supposed to act was like a boxer getting into a ring for a big fight when I go into session. That's what I thought, okay. I thought I had to always try to get one over the Cabinet or a Minister. I thought that I had to be strong all the time with everything and with everyone I deal with in this place. However, Mr. Speaker, being like that all the time, quite frankly, is exhausting. I'm sure it can be

exhausting for members of the public to hear that all the time too. It's not always effective either. Sometimes there is a peaceful way, and this is what the consensus government is.

Consensus government is built on Indigenous leadership. Sometimes people forget this is a consensus government, not a party politics.

Mr. Speaker, I have discovered over time that there are better, more effective ways to be serving my constituents in serving the people of the NWT and in getting things done. I often think what would our elders, our parents, parent' parents, or our late parents or grandparents would say to us. How would they tell us how to act and how to interact with our colleagues in this House?

I also think about the Dene laws and the importance those teachings are. Things like help each other, be respectful of elders and things around you, be polite, and pass on the teaching. This is how our elders resolve problems, make decisions, and lead our people with kindness and respect for one another.

Mr. Speaker, those are important teachings that we teach our children, and so I believe that it's equally important that we as adults, we as leaders, also demonstrate those teachings and set a good example for the next generations. Mr. Speaker, I know that in this building, there will always be spirited debate. People are passionate about issues. They want to get result for their constituents.

MR. SPEAKER: Member from Monfwi, your time is up.

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Mr. Speaker, can I have unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

---Unanimous consent granted

Okay, there are some of us MLAs that have four to six communities we represent, just like you, Nahendeh. We all came here wanting to make change. I hope that we as AN Assembly can move forward together in a positive way. We don't always need to be at each other's throat or tear each other down or arguing just for the sake of arguing. Both sides of the House must come together in a good way and work as a team for the people we were elected to represent. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 221-20(1):
19TH ANNUAL NORTHWORDS NWT
WRITERS FESTIVAL

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've been speaking a lot about our huge challenges with literacy in the NWT. Today I want to celebrate a wonderful and inspiring initiative, the 19th Annual NorthWords NWT Writers' Festival. It's happening from today until Sunday, June 2nd. It is a literary extravaganza that brings together the magic of words, the power of storytelling, and the warmth of community.

For the next four days, Yellowknife and Hay River will be abuzz with creativity, inspiration, and literary camaraderie as the festival boasts a diverse lineup of readings, panel discussions, and writing workshops. Yellowknife North seems to be blessed with a lot of literary folks as some of the authors being showcased this weekend are from my riding, and they include Amber Henry, Alison McCreash, Stephen Kakfwi, and Marie Wilson.

Amber will be reading some of her children's books as well as hosting some of the events. Alison will be sharing her talents by doing a live illustration event where she will put your ideas on to the page. Marie and Stephen will be down together in Hay River this evening doing readings from their books and having discussions with the public at the Hay River Centennial Library. Marie will also be launching her first book, *North of Nowhere*, *Song of a Truth and Reconciliation Commissioner*, on this Sunday at Yellowknife Books. This book is her personal reflection of the testimony that she heard from across the country providing her unique perspective on the value of the Commission honouring the voices of the survivors.

I wish all the authors well this weekend, and I hope many of you find the time to make it out to the festival. Many of the events are free to attend, like this evening's opening event in Yellowknife, which also takes place in my riding at Sundog Trading Post. It's called *Gather, A Spoken Word Open Mike Night*, starting at 6:30 p.m.

And, Mr. Speaker, in keeping with the power of words and storytelling, later today we'll have questions for the Minister of Health and Social Services on the importance of access to speech therapy. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Yellowknife North. Members' statements. Member from Yellowknife Centre.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 222-20(1):
SUPPORTING CLIENT WELLNESS

MR. HAWKINS: I started to get worried you forgot about me, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, there was a time not so long ago when you mentioned wellness workers. Most people around us would have said wellness what? Wellness is an act of practicing healthy habits on a daily basis to obtain better physical and mental outcomes. So instead of just surviving, we are thriving. Mr. Speaker, fast-forward to today. Wellness, or even well-being, really matters. Times have changed. When we look back, the government has made decisions in the past that may have seen -- or been perceived as efficient but the quality didn't realize -- wasn't realized until much later that we've done more harm to the system than good.

Take, for example, when I look back and I think of social workers that were part of an integral element of income support and at the time they were viewed as data entry jobs and they didn't need to talk to their clients, they just took paper. I also question, not as a fault but as a realization, that when we have our LHOs, we have clients seeing them day to day wondering about their lives. No, no, Mr. Speaker, they're there just to take their paper and move them along.

But, Mr. Speaker, both examples are more than just people working as clerks taking data. They are really an important part, a first contact in many cases, the only contact in a lot of cases, that people have with these real live clients of ours. It's difficult to imagine that people don't need to talk to people. Imagine that, people talking to people? So when I hear clients tell me in both programs that they feel sometimes they're just a number, well as a matter of fact, that's exactly what they are in the way we've set them up. But they're more than that, Mr. Speaker. These are genuine people with real families and real challenges.

These individuals have all had journeys some of them will never fully appreciate, some of them are real tough, real stories, but their journeys with real stories worth being told. Trauma and supports come in different ways and how we support them and recognize them has changed so much more. This government, this Assembly, our MLAs, respect these things and realize how much more time and investment we need to do.

Mr. Speaker, I want to leave my colleagues with this thought as I finish my statement: The government program may be a backstop as some people fall down onto troubles, but we're also here to help them up. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Yellowknife Centre. I would never forget you. Members' statements.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 223-20(1):
CELEBRATION OF LIFE FOR LISA KRAUS

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Colleagues, today I am here to speak about Lisa Mary Rose Kraus. She was born on August 6, 1986, to Michael, commonly known as Mickey, Kraus Sr. and Bella, commonly known as Stella, Tsetso. On April 26, 2024, she passed away surrounded by family.

I can tell you she had an amazing service. Betty Bird did her celebration of life and did a great job. I asked her if I can share it with you here today. As Betty was scrolling through Facebook, thinking about what she wanted to say and where to start. She came across this quote: We don't meet people by accident, they are meant to cross our path for a reason. Just like Lisa who was put in each of our path, every person present here today are thinking about her and the impact she had on our life.

As Betty was scrolling Facebook checking out Lisa's page, she came upon her time in Yellowknife where she had lots of time to post. It was interesting to see what was important to her. I can tell you, Lisa loved her family and friends. Almost daily, she would put a post on her page telling her family and friends to have a blessed day and that she loved them. She was loyal to those she loved, and it showed in her many posts. She was also fierce in that love, and she had no problem calling out those that hurt her family and friends. Lisa also had a wicked sense of humour and could be quit entertaining around those that knew her best. She had a quick wit and quick comebacks. Lisa loved to make requests to the Saturday and the Sunday Bannock and Tea Request Show. The weekend after her passed, the host mentioned that one of her faithful listeners from the Deh Cho had got her angel wings and dedicated a song to her.

So many of Lisa's post were of quotes and memes that talked about her faith in God and the power of prayer. She shared many posts that talked about finding the strength to overcome hardship and struggles. Personally, I can tell you I have seen her drive and passion for her and her family. There is more to her celebration of life and in saying this, I would like to the rest of this celebration of life be deemed as read.

Colleagues, she will be sadly missed by her family, friends, and the community of Fort Simpson.

I can tell you that Lisa loved bingo and I am not sure she missed many chances to play. One of my favorite posts she made was, anyone wants to help this little brown Indian play bingo please.

I know she got more than a few bingo cards from me with this post.

The Kraus family are a close-knit family and loyal to each other. No matter what differences they have had and struggles, when push comes to shove, they are there for each other. I admire that unwavering love they have for each other. Family is family no matter what. Hold onto that to help you deal with the loss of your grandmother, mother, sister, aunt, niece, cousin, and friend.

Lisa wanted so much to beat her addiction and get better. There were pages and pages of quotes looking for strength, forgiveness, courage, prayers and learning to love herself. Lisa was more than her addiction and would have given anything to heal. Please remember Lisa and what was in Lisa's heart.

To her children and grandchild, Hayden, meeka, Thomas Jr., Eva, and Etoah, your mother is more present now and in place to be there for you every moment of every day. She will be your shoulder when no one else is around. She is your comfort when you need it the most. And she is there to listen to all the secret thoughts like never before. When you are feeling lost and alone in the middle of the night, she is there to comfort you. For whatever reason, which is beyond our sorrow and pain, Lisa is now in the spirit world and will be there for you and will live in your heart and memories forever.

I wish you well on your journey, Lisa, and I am honoured and humbled to have had you in my life. Fly high and free, my girl. Will love you forever.

Members' statements. Returns to oral questions. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member from Hay River North.

Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to recognize my former colleague and current friend, former Minister Pauline Chinna. She always created a lively atmosphere in Cabinet, and we miss her. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Hay River North. Members' statements. Member from Nunakput.

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize two pages from the Nunakput riding. Natalie Joss and Kianna Bernhardt who are both students at the Helen Kalvak Elihekvik Ulukhaktok. Quyananni, and welcome to Natalie and Kianna for being here today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Replies to Budget Address, Day 5 of 7. Member from the Deh Cho.

Replies to Budget Address

REPLY 3-20(1):
MRS. YAKELEYA

MRS. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, on Friday the 2024-2025 Budget was tabled with a \$2.2 billion operating budget. The Minister is proposing a practical and realistic budget to restore balance and increase our financial means to deal with unexpected events. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that the government needs to plan and budget for emergencies and unexpected natural disasters. In my riding, my constituents know all too well the devastation that can occur. In just a matter of minutes entire communities can be nearly destroyed by wildfire or flooding and, for some residents, the journey of returning home is long and painful.

As I spoke in this House before Mr. Speaker, we already have people leaving the NWT because they lost everything in the wildfires. I would like to see the Government work with communities and Indigenous governments to find creative solutions in the aftermath of natural disasters. And not everyone needs more money. The government has tools available that can support housing development like transferring land to communities to support housing solutions, or working in close partnership with Indigenous partners to leverage federal funding solutions.

Mr. Speaker, I represent four small Indigenous communities established and governed uniquely. But what is common among all of the communities in my riding and throughout the NWT is the inequity between the small communities and regional centres. There is a divide between those who have, who are living in the bigger centres and communities, and those who do not have, who are located in the small communities. So, this is my concern Mr. Speaker, that I don't see enough emphasis on improving the lives of residents in small communities in this budget. I would like to see more emphasis on building the economy in small communities.

The Small Community Employment Program is a program that gives people in small communities a job, it stimulates our local economy, it keeps people busy. This program employs summer students and supports our local governments. I would like to see this program restored. The Community Access Program is also an important funding program

for small communities. It supports the development of infrastructure that improves the quality of life in small communities. This program builds docks and trails and access roads that make communities more accessible and enjoyable for residents. I would like to see this program restored.

I also see great opportunity in our small communities to increase small businesses, entrepreneurship, and tourism. I would like to see more lending, financing, and business services offered through GNWT public agencies. Dene Fur Cloud is a great example of a subsidiary business supported by Prosper NWT in my riding.

Mr. Speaker, we don't need to wait for economic development plans to be developed on how to support local economies. We have successful examples of businesses supported through GNWT public agencies. We have businesses located in small communities that create unique NWT art products, employ local people, and sell these products across the world. We need to replicate these business models in more communities. We have skilled artisans, crafters, sewers, harvesters, and people all over the world who want authentic Indigenous products. We need more focus and support for Prosper NWT to build more subsidiary businesses in small communities. We need more support through Industry, Tourism and Investment to support business development, entrepreneurship, and tourism development.

Tourism is a natural fit for the people in small communities to host tourists from new places, to show them Dene culture, their land and their way of life. We need more support in tourism to help people in small communities to take a business idea and make it a reality.

We also need more hospitality training. Although the Dene way of life is authentic, unique and in demand, tourists also expect customer service standards. How are we working with communities to build hospitality? There needs to be more emphasis on increasing the awareness of tourism, promoting the benefits of tourism and developing tourism training, especially in small communities. People in small communities also need good business advice and guidance to make their idea a reality. Small communities need consistent regular visits from business experts who will work one-on-one with them to develop their concept and to support them through their business development process.

Communities also respect and value regular consistent visits from department heads, that the leadership of departments show

communities support, that they take the time to understand communities in their region and understand their challenges, and that it's followed up with access to expert services, and funding programs.

Mr. Speaker, I know the department has been supporting business development for many years, but how effective are these programs? Are they delivering the results we want to see in small communities? Are these business development programs reducing the reliance on income support? Increasing entrepreneurship helps people pay their bills. The cost of living is a struggle for many residents in small communities, so even a small home-based side business can help people pay their bills. Many residents in my riding are on income support. How are we supporting people on income support to start a small business as a means to becoming financially independent? There needs to be more reporting on the results of business development programs as well as income assistance reporting. What economic development programs or services are helping residents get off income support and participating in the economy?

Mr. Speaker, the government should be putting money towards actions that will improve the lives of residents in small communities and improve the capacity of local communities because this strengthens the territory overall.

An unfortunate reality facing my community and the territory, Mr. Speaker, is homelessness. There are many people in my riding who do not have a home to live in. They may be couch surfing or bouncing between friends and family. I do not support a decrease to the housing budget. As I have stated in this House before, housing is a human right, and we need to be making progress to uphold the right for everyone in the territories to be housed. We have too many challenges to address in small communities especially between homes in desperate need of repair to the lack of housing options and the need to address homelessness, I would like to see an increase in the housing budget.

I also am encouraged by the housing Minister's efforts to work in partnership with Indigenous governments to address housing. The GNWT needs to continue to work in new ways to support new solutions in partnership with Indigenous governments to make progress on the NWT's housing crisis.

Mr. Speaker, the old way of delivering housing isn't working. I encourage the GNWT to support Indigenous governments to identify new pilot projects to improve housing in small communities. I encourage the GNWT to not be

an obstacle or to stand in the way of new ideas. Everyone has a right to be housed and we need to make progress on this.

And on education, Mr. Speaker, I am concerned about education in the small communities. Our students are shuffled along in school until they graduate and after they graduate, Mr. Speaker, the road gets rough. Many students in my riding can't keep up with post-secondary education. They return home deflated and some end up on income assistance. Mr. Speaker, we need to improve basic numeracy and literacy skills for students from junior kindergarten to grade 12 so they are prepared for the real world. We need to ensure that when students are graduated school in the NWT, they are ready and capable of pursuing what they dream of.

And finally, Mr. Speaker, I want to see an increase in health promotion and reporting. As we know, our small communities are fighting against an increase in violence, drugs and crime. Mr. Speaker, health promotion is a real way to fight back against addictions. If children understood the consequences of smoking, drinking and doing drugs, would they be easily influenced? If we had health and wellness campaigns, activities and information all over the community, it would increase people's awareness on the value of health. I am concerned that public health promotion is not being delivered effectively. I would like to see clear targets and reporting on health promotion activities in the business plan. I believe many elders in our community could better manage their health with increased education and home visits. I believe more youth would choose sports and healthy lifestyles if they understood the consequences of poor lifestyle choices. The health outcomes in our communities is not good and without ones' health, Mr. Speaker, we have nothing. Investing in health promotion is preventative. The money we put into health promotion today will save our health care system over time. Mr. Speaker, our people should be empowered to live the most healthy, active lifestyles they can, free of addictions. Our people are worth the investment. It is an investment that will bring savings over time. And these are my concerns for the 2024-2025 Budget.

Mr. Speaker I want to see small communities empowered to develop infrastructure and labour. I want people in small communities supported to start small businesses, to be provided the expertise and funding to build financial independence. I want to see small businesses develop as one solution to reducing people's dependence on income support. The government already has success stories of businesses based in small communities that hire local people and sell products worldwide.

These are successful business models that the GNWT should move forward to expand elsewhere. The housing crisis in the NWT is real. Mr. Speaker, housing is a human right. I also recognize the GNWT can't be the only solution to the housing crisis. I want to see the GNWT restore the budget for housing and move forward to formalize partnership and relationships with Indigenous governments. In partnership we can find new solutions to old problems. We need to increase the education outcomes for students in the NWT. We need to ensure we provide our students the best opportunity to succeed in life, and that starts with an education. And finally, Mr. Speaker, our health is the most important. There are many challenges to overcome in small communities, and the only way we are going to overcome the economic problems, social problems, the violence and crime, is with healthy people. I want to see an increase in health promotion for the NWT so more Northerners make healthy choices. We need people that care about our health, are informed about their health and live healthy lifestyles. Our people are worth it and deserve it. A healthy territory starts with more investment in health promotion. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from the Deh Cho. Replies to Budget Address. Member from Inuvik Boot Lake.

REPLY 4-20(1):
MR. RODGERS

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I apologize to our amazing interpreters and I try and move slow today.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday I presented the AOC response to the 2024-2025 GNWT budget. These are the items that we generally agreed up and support, and I am proud of the work committee done and the work the committee put in to create this document, Mr. Speaker. But make no mistake, there are areas that I am concerned about that are specific to my region and that may not have been in that document, and I want to present those today, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, several years ago, between 2011 and 2017 to be more precise, we missed the boat on a major gas development opportunity. We had an Indigenous-led pipeline group that were forced to sit helplessly as the regulatory regime slowly choked the life out of what could have been a monumental game changing project for our territory. Of course, I am speaking about the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Project led by the Aboriginal Pipeline Group. Maybe we could have been a have-territory. Communities along that pipeline route missed incredible business opportunities, employment

opportunities, and tourism opportunities. The Mackenzie Valley Highway may have opened, underway, if not completed by now, Mr. Speaker. And Mr. Speaker, as robust industry, as we know, could have provided a huge benefit to our underfunded NGOs. Anyone who has worked or volunteered for any of our many NGOs can attest to the fact that when industry is thriving, they are better equipped to support and provide that important funding source.

Mr. Speaker, in April of 2021, the Government of the Northwest Territories completed a report entitled Mackenzie Delta Liquefied Natural Gas, or MDLNG, Project. In this report, it studied the up to 19 trillion cubic metres of natural gas in the Mackenzie Delta that could be developed for export that would provide economic benefits to the Inuvialuit settlement region, NWT, and Canada. In short, the MDLNG Report stated that project is technically feasible. Natural gas production facilities and associated pipelines have been operating safely in Arctic climates such as Alaska and Russia for over forty years, Mr. Speaker. Russia has shipped LNG in Arctic waters since 2017 using LNG and condensate icebreaking carriers. The icebreaking carrier technology proposed in this pre-feasibility study is based on Russia's operating experience. Mr. Speaker, these are the kind of projects that change the direction of a territory, but I have heard very little about this report since, and I am hopeful that will change in this Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, we have budgeted \$26 million for renewable energy initiatives, and I support that, its important work. I understand that there is a need to move to cleaner energy solutions. But as a territory, are we prepared to rely solely on wind, sun, battery, and other forms of cleaner energy? We have many communities, Mr. Speaker, that are currently 100 percent reliant on diesel. And logistically and cost wise, would developing our own cleaner-burning natural gas not make more sense, Mr. Speaker? Imagine how many social, health, and housing programs we could fund if we were able to take full advantage of our natural resource development. Mr. Speaker, yet we remain resource rich and cash poor.

As for program development, Mr. Speaker, I want to speak once again to the issue of drugs and drug addiction. Our communities are being devastated, and my community of Inuvik has an ongoing drug and addiction crisis. It's destroying families, our workforce, and our future. I am glad to see in the Justice portion of the budget they were increasing our policing and giving more tools to our law enforcement. It's a great start. But, Mr. Speaker, we must also focus on helping our residents get healthy again. Simply sending people out for treatment is not enough. We must have aftercare facilities

in our regions so that when people complete that portion of their healing journey, they have the support they need when they return. A fully funded aftercare program in Inuvik is a must, Mr. Speaker, to serve the Beaufort Delta region.

Mr. Speaker, this Premier and government appear to be taking working with our Indigenous government partners seriously, and for my community that's great and that will be a welcome change, Mr. Speaker. The Inuvialuit Regional Corporation and Gwich'in Tribal Council are once again leading the way in my region. They are not just developing homes, but subdivisions. They are setting up wellness facilities to assist those dealing with trauma, they're building community infrastructure to protect our most vulnerable, and driving the economy with gas projects that will create employment and curtail the high costs of living. They are doing this with or without GNWT, Mr. Speaker, and we need to ensure we are shoulder to shoulder on all projects where we can contribute and increase the scope of these projects and find agreed redundancies where possible, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I spoke earlier this week in my Member's statement the need to think outside the box regarding our MTS barging operation. Logistically, is it time to look at locating a significant portion of our MTS operations in a more northern region of our territory? Mr. Speaker, the base of operations in Inuvik or Tuk could service upriver to Fort Good Hope and of course the communities in the Beaufort Delta region. We can't anticipate the issues with water levels going away anytime soon so we must be proactive in ensuring we are prepared. As I also stated earlier this week, Mr. Speaker, it is my hope that as part of this review, an analysis will be completed on the merits of privatizing this essential service.

Mr. Speaker, Inuvik has a world class satellite receiving station. The Inuvik Satellite Station facility has had millions of dollars poured into it with still more to come. We have antennas up there, Mr. Speaker, from the French space agency, the Swedish space agency, the German space agency, and of course NRCAN - our own Canadian space agency. And there's a significant amount of work going on up there, and Mr. Speaker, I like to call it a hidden gem in our territory. Having said that, Mr. Speaker, the redundancy in our fibre line will be a key component of continued growth of this sector. A full redundancy line, Mr. Speaker, that ensures any issues with the infrastructure interruptions can be mitigated.

The Inuvik runway expansion may be just the tip of the iceberg, Mr. Speaker, for potential defense spending in our region, and we must

be prepared. Regrettably, Mr. Speaker, our government does not seem to be equipped to have a strategy on defense, space, and new technology. Again, I hope to see that change in this Assembly.

Our economy must be key, Mr. Speaker. My fear is with no meaningful economic growth in any sector other than government, much of our talent will leave or has already left. We must streamline our regulatory regime so that international business does not look at us as a place with too much regulatory burden that require too much time and the costs that come with that time, Mr. Speaker. Any economic plans that we produce must be much less about statistical overviews and more about strategic roadmaps to prosperity. We must attract investment in our natural resources and work with our Indigenous partners in that effort to create these roadmaps together.

Mr. Speaker, imagine all the wellness and housing projects we could fund together, the jobs we could create for our residents, the influx of others wanting to move to our amazing territory to work in these industries, bringing with them spouses and partners that may be nurses or teachers and doctors, early child care workers, and many other professionals that we so desperately need, Mr. Speaker. Imagine, Mr. Speaker, what we could do if we were not resource rich and cash poor.

Mr. Speaker, we are going to sit here over the next couple of weeks and we are going to fight and we're gonna squabble over the few pennies that we have to work with. We're eventually going to pass this budget, and then we will continue to sit here and we'll fight and we'll ask Ministers to direct money to our ridings, and we will ask for supplements to get those items in the budget for our ridings and then come budget time in the fall, we're going to ask them why they brought those supplements forward. And we've seen it all before, Mr. Speaker. Some people in this House have experienced it before, Mr. Speaker. It's a cycle, and we must find a way - each government, previous government to this one, the previous government to that one, have done same thing. We have to dig deep. We dig deep to think outside the box and do things differently.

It's not easy, Mr. Speaker, but I do have faith in this group. I have faith in the group on this side of the House and I have faith in our Cabinet Members as well, Mr. Speaker, that by the end of this government we could have a new path, a path to prosperity that will restore hope in our residents and maximize the potential we all know this amazing territory has. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Inuvik Boot Lake. Acknowledgements. Oh sorry, replies to the Budget Address. Acknowledgements. Oral questions. Member from Frame Lake.

Oral Questions

QUESTION 217-20(1): AMENDMENTS TO WATERS REGULATIONS

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, earlier I spoke to a letter sent by the land and water boards to the Ministers of ECE and the federal minister. Mr. Speaker, is the Minister open to coming to the table to meet with the boards as they have requested? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Frame Lake. Minister of Environment and Climate Change.

HON. JAY MACDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you to the Member for the question. First, I'd like to thank the land and water boards for their recommendations. The amendments recommended by the land and water boards are being carefully considered and looked at as this is certainly an area of great interest across the territory, and with many of the Indigenous governments as well as the Members within this House and Cabinet and the residents. At this time, we're working through reviewing those recommendations and will consider as we move forward the options around meeting with the board itself. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I didn't hear an explicit commitment to sit down with the boards. I would encourage the Minister that simply sitting down and having a discussion is all I'm asking for at this point.

Mr. Speaker, does the Minister have a response to the board's letter to share with the House today recognizing the letter did just come in, but I just wanted to ask the question. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. JAY MACDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you to the Member for the question. No, as the Member indicated the letter just recently arrived. I have had the opportunity to read through the list of recommendations from the land and water board. And as I said earlier, you know, this is a conversation that, certainly through the Members of Cabinet, is something that is really an interdepartmental area that -- with a lot of concern, and I think it's on the hot topics list, if you will, with Cabinet and certainly with the

Intergovernmental Council and the Indigenous governments. So we will continue to evaluate the recommendations and look forward to have a response in the future. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm certainly happy to hear that from the Minister. Thank you to the Minister for the answer. I am happy to hear that the Minister and Cabinet are carefully considering the recommendations.

Mr. Speaker, is the Minister able to give us a timeline for when we can expect a response to the recommendations brought forward?

HON. JAY MACDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I indicated, this is a multifaceted conversation that the Department of Environment and Climate Change is certainly committed to working with our colleagues within this House as well as ensuring that we're having the appropriate conversations with the Intergovernmental Council on this issue. And, you know, I cannot put a firm timeline on this. As I indicated, it is certainly high on our agenda of issues that we want to deal with in a timely manner, so I will commit to the House that it is a high priority and we hope to bring it back to the table as quickly as we can. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of ECC. Final supplementary.

Oral questions. Member from Range Lake.

QUESTION 218-20(1): SMOKING CESSATION SUPPORTS AND PROGRAMS

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, two out of five people will be diagnosed with cancer, and 30 percent of all cancers are lung, and 80 percent of those are caused by smoking. Obviously, this is a good reason to quit smoking. And I'd like to know what services are provided in the Northwest Territories by the Department of Health and Social Services to help Northerners do exactly that? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Range Lake. Minister of Health and Social Services.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I want to congratulate the Member on his 11 weeks of not smoking. As we know that smoking is -- yes, as the Member has mentioned, and there are a number of things that we have available for NWT residents who want to quit smoking. There is now -- we have merged the NWT Quit Line to 8-1-1, so it makes it a lot easier. The Help Line and the Quit Line

have been merged together so you just have to call 8-1-1, residents who want to quit smoking or vaping, from any community in Northwest Territories, can speak to a registered nurse and trained support to help them on their quitting journey. The residents in Yellowknife region have access to free private cessation services either virtually or in-person, which is being piloted at the Yellowknife Primary Care Clinic. A dedicated cessation nurse is available to help residents navigate quitting smoking and vaping. They offer different options, including access to nicotine replacement therapy and prescription medications to support nicotine withdrawal as well as ongoing follow-up. But we also know that advice from a trusted health care provider increases the odds of a quit attempt.

I want to also let the Members know, and the people of the Northwest Territories, that we have also had education sessions for our frontline health care providers. In the last three years, we've had 63 frontline health professionals trained, and then we have ten more health care professionals trained in advanced -- for tobacco cessation support in the upcoming year. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I think the Minister answered most of my questions, so she's ahead of the curve. But I think you've spoken about this in the past, Mr. Speaker, but the Butt Head campaign was a very popular program and toured around the Northwest Territories, and I think kids really liked it as well. Why have we stopped promoting -- or using the Butt Head campaign -- antismoking campaign? Thank you.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I fully remember the Don't Be a Butt Head campaign. This school-based smoking prevention program was delivered for about nine years as part of the healthy choices framework. In about 2015, there was a shift toward incorporating tobacco cessation into a broader cancer prevention and community wellness initiative. And therefore the funding for Don't Be a Butt Head was absorbed into other budgets. The department has continued to work with delivering supports in substance use and education in school. The new one that they have is the -- what they call The Dope Experience. So this amalgamates combined health information on different substances with mental health, community, and self-care tools using art to explore these themes. And so that's what's been incorporated into the school. This was completed with one-time federal funding related to the cannabis legislation. So that's how this was all created, and it should be running in the schools. The department is also aware that the NWT, as elsewhere in Canada,

vaping is amongst -- is on the rise, and so we've been working with the community health representatives to support conversations about the dangers of vaping in the Northwest Territories, working with students, and trying to come up with new resources to gear them towards youth. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, that's good news. Youth are definitely the gateway to how these companies make their money, how these addictions continue to plague communities. As I said, this year's theme for No Tobacco Day is youth step out and step -- Step In and Speak Out, with a hash tag, tobacco exposed. How is the department working -- or does the department promote No Tobacco Day, and are they participating in these events to spread awareness of how the industry is taking advantage of youth through social media? Thank you.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The department of health is very active on social media. I mean, it came to my attention that tomorrow is World No Smoking Day through the health and social services media campaign. So as for the information how it relates to youth, the youth are on so many different media platforms so I can't be -- I'm not familiar as to what platforms that they're targeting, but I know that it is on social media and, you know, we can be reaching out to all the schools to ensure that, you know, with The Dope Experience, that campaign, that covers all different areas that is being offered within our schools. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Health and Social Services. Final supplementary. Member from Range Lake.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So the costs to -- for nicotine replacement therapies can be -- and products like nicotine gum patches -- I used the patch. It was very effective. I've used them all, though. What financial supports do they have? Because certainly some of these products might not even be available in a small community. So what financial supports and how are we getting these products to individuals outside of regional centres? Thank you.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, one of the things that, within the small communities -- and I had asked this on numerous occasions to the department on different topics -- is with smoking cessations in the communities, the majority of the population in our small communities, you know, are Indigenous, so all of our insurances that we apply have with non-insured health benefits, Metis benefits, extended health benefits, they

all cover smoking cessation. And from my understanding, we do supply those in -- we do have them in the health centres and so people, if they get the physician to -- or the nurse to have a prescription for them, they can access them in the small communities. You can access them here. You can go to the pharmacies in the regional centres where there are pharmacists. And if you have insurances and most government -- you know, if you work for the government or other insurances, they are normally covered. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Health and Social Services. Oral questions. Member from Yellowknife Centre.

QUESTION 219-20(1):
SUPPORT FOR INCOME ASSISTANCE
CLIENTS

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, and I'll focus in on income support area. My question directly to the Minister is what type of peer and support counselling does income support provide their clients from day to day? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Yellowknife Centre. Minister of Education, Culture and Employment.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there's nothing on a daily basis as in day to day. But income assistance clients do have access to their client navigator whenever they do need. And also within the Department of Education, Culture and Employment, there are also career development officers that are based in all of the regional offices, for example North Slave, South Slave. And these are also persons that individuals on income assistance would have access to. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What information is tracked in the sense of how many clients use this service? Thank you.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, statistics like that are not something I easily have at my fingertips but with a little bit of warning, I can definitely get that for the Member. Thank you.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll waste my third question by saying would the Minister be willing to supply it? Thank you.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Mr. Speaker, I would definitely be willing to get that information for the Member. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. Final supplementary. Member from Yellowknife Centre.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, is productive choices a formal requirement of income supports, and is it buttressed with counselling? Thank you.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in the 19th Assembly, the income assistance program underwent a review, and one of the changes that were made during that review was removing the productive choices requirement. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. Oral questions. Member from Yellowknife North.

QUESTION 220-20(1):
SPEECH LANGUAGE PATHOLOGY
SERVICES

MS. MORGAN: That's me. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So my questions are for the Minister of Health and Social Services. As a bit of background, when children are learning -- struggling to learn to speak or communicate or read, speech language pathologists can provide critical assistance and tools for these kids. And HSS is responsible for providing speech language pathology services that include hospital-based services, travel clinics, preschool therapy, school-aged therapy, and elder care. While only a few years ago, we used to have fully staffed SLP teams in Inuvik, Fort Smith, Hay River, and Yellowknife. Now those teams outside Yellowknife seemed to have disappeared and we've lost half of our staff in Yellowknife. And yet another speech language pathologist --

MR. SPEAKER: -- Member from Yellowknife North, can you please get to your question. Thank you.

MS. MORGAN: (audio) government know what's the reason for particularly poor retention of staff in speech language pathology and occupational therapy within the past five years? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Yellowknife North. Minister of Health and Social Services.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there is a nationwide shortage of these professionals as well and us, as well as every other jurisdiction, is struggling to compete for this small pool of professionals to fill these positions. But NTHSSA is working

with human resources to explore additional recruitment and retention options. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So the problem is that only a few years ago, we did actually have staff in these positions and now they've left. So it's not simply a matter of we were never able to staff these positions, it's an issue of retaining the staff that we had only a few short years ago. So what is the department planning to do to address this poor retention to ensure that we can offer the full range of critical services in this area? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned the NTHSSA is working with the human resources to explore additional recruitment and retention options. Last month representatives from the NTHSSA travelled to the University of Toronto job fair to promote speech language pathologists opportunities in the Northwest Territories. The territorial manager of the occupational therapy also travelled to the national occupational therapy conference with a recruitment booth. The rehab leads are working continuously with a talent organization for recruitment campaigns, refreshing that they don't yield any candidates, but they've hired two new SLP grads in the fall of 2023 and they're working towards three new grad OT job offers for 2024. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll just note that the Minister listed some excellent recruitment initiatives, and I think what I've pointed out is the problems with retention, which as I mentioned the other day is a different strategy and a different problem. But I'll move on to my next question, which is so due to shortages of staff, the health authority has pulled back school-based support since 2021. How does the department plan to reinstate school-based services for speech language pathology across the territory to ensure that all kids can gain the tools to be able to speak, communicate, and read? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in-person appointments for urgent referrals within the Northwest Territories and telehealth appointments will continue with the staff that we do have. Services will be maintained for students with priority needs. But we also, I want to let the Members know, that NTHSSA and the department are working together with the Department of ECE as they explore ways to support the learning needs of children who may be impacted by the reduction of school speech and language and OT services. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Health and Social Services. Final supplementary. Member from Yellowknife North.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So while there's limited access to Yellowknife students for speech and language consultations, there's almost no care being provided by the government to students in other regions. And many of the regions outside the North Slave have reached out to private companies to receive services and reached out for funding through Jordan's Principle. How does the department justify having entire regions have to reach out to private companies in order to receive any services at all? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, you know, when regions -- you know, depending on who is reaching out for those services in the different regions, for us, you know, we are working on the recruitment portion of it. But if there independent Indigenous organizations that want to access those funding, the boards that want to access those funding, you know, they can be way more strategic on how they're providing services in their regions. They're more flexible in how they can hire people. So right now what I can -- all I can really say is that the department is preparing a review of the speech and language pathology service to understand what the current gaps are and identify opportunities for improving the services, and that is the same thing that I'm also working with my colleague from ECE to ensure that the focus that is in the school, how are we supporting those students. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Health and Social Services. Oral questions. Member from the Sahtu.

QUESTION 221-20(1):

PUBLIC LANDS ACT REGULATIONS

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Following up on my questions -- or my statement on the Public Lands Act, my first question to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change. Can the Minister of ECC provide the House with an update on the status of the development of the regulations for the Public Lands Act? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Sahtu. Minister of Environment and Climate Change.

HON. JAY MACDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you to the Member for the question. I know this has been a process that

has dragged on for a little while, but I'd like to reassure the Member that the department continues to work on the Public Land Act regulations collaboratively with the Intergovernmental Council technical working group to reach consensus on a few of the remaining issues that have taken some time and conversation to work through. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thanks to the Minister for that reply. My next question, as I said in my Member's statement, the Public Lands Act passed in this House in August 2019 yet its implementation has been delayed because the regulations have not been developed. Can the Minister explain why the development and regulations for the Public Lands Act has taken so long? Thank you.

HON. JAY MACDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the technical working group is working to reach a final consensus on some of the concerns from Indigenous governments related to the jurisdictional interaction between ECC's public land administration and some land use permitting carried out by land and water boards. Some of these concerns are beyond the scope and mandate of the Public Lands Act regulations team and have been taking additional time and effort to find potential options. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My third question, does the Minister have a timeline for when the regulations for the Public Lands Act will be completed? Mahsi.

HON. JAY MACDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, ECC is using technical advisory panels at this time to engage stakeholders in the scope and substance of the PLA regulations. ECC has plans in place right now to reengage with the technical advisory panels on the proposed regulations. Once issued, identification through the IGC's technical working groups are addressed, hopefully before the end of spring 2024, which I know is technically right now, so we're hoping very soon. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Environment and Climate Change. Final supplementary. Member from Sahtu.

MR. McNEELY: Fine supplementary. Thanks very much there, Mr. Speaker. I'm glad to hear we got a timeline, now we can expect our efficiency of land administration to be concluded. That's more of a statement. I look forward to working -- or will the Minister update us after the spring of 2024 is done? Thank you.

HON. JAY MACDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this is an Intergovernmental Council process in collaboration with Indigenous governments. So we are really hoping to have this done well before the end of this Assembly. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Environment and Climate Change. Oral questions. Member from Mackenzie Delta.

QUESTION 222-20(1):
DEMPSTER HIGHWAY INSPECTIONS AND
MAINTENANCE

MR. NERYSOO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Dempster Highway is relatively maintained on a regular basis when the highway's open and the season is busy. But there are times when the ice crossings are closed and the road seems to be neglected. Can the Minister tell me how they receive updates and inspection reports on the highway at any given time? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Mackenzie Delta. Minister of Infrastructure.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there's a regional office in every different region across the Northwest Territories, and each regional office is responsible for doing that type of maintenance when there are issues. There are a variety of different channels through each post. The deputy minister, the assistant deputy minister who is responsible for regions, and myself as well, are all notified. So when there's -- for instance, when there was the -- earlier this year and the ice roads were melting, we were all involved on various chats and emails and text groups and phone calls to notify when there was potential closures of the highways, for instance when there was an ice hole that developed. So there's all those different pathways that erupt, and I certainly make the effort to update MLAs when I have that information. Thank you.

MR. NERYSOO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is important that the highway be inspected and reports go to the appropriate regional departments. Can the Minister identify if you have inspectors on all sections of the road during closure of the ice bridges? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there are inspections and inspectors and roads staff that do go out and inspect all the different roadways. If there's a particular stretch of road that the Member's concerned about or a particular

event in specific, I'd be more than happy to look into it. If there was a time when there was a concern that there wasn't enough inspections happening, I know there -- you know, again, so I'd be happy to speak to that specifics. I can say that there's staff in all the regions that do exactly this work, and they report up through the department. Again, I do often receive reports when there's challenges. So, again, if that system has at some time broken down, I'd like to hear about it. Thank you.

MR. NERYSOO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My next question is referring to a section of the road. There's a section of the road on the Wrangling River portion, and it's very dangerous to motorists. Has the Minister been updated by the regional office on the severity of this portion of the highway? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I can say with respect to the Dempster, in general, that what we are doing right now is looking forward to working with the Yukon and bringing both sides together towards jointly bringing our efforts to find a way to update and to improve the Dempster Highway. So we have road crews going out in this summer season and next summer season to do some initial scoping work and some geotechnical type studies and other studies so that they could be prepared to understand what kind of planning is required to ensure that that entire stretch is looked at. And so that includes the entire portion of the Dempster that's on our side of the border. And I will certainly perhaps ensure that we double-down and speak with the MLA in the regions, which I expect that they would do, to make sure that we're looking at all of these sections. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Infrastructure. Final supplementary. Member from Mackenzie Delta.

MR. NERYSOO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just for a little clarification, the spot I was referring is in between Inuvik and Tsiigehtchic.

Can the Minister look at maintaining the highways during closure of the ice crossings for when the ferries are out -- are shut down for the day for rough sections and dust control to avoid traffic? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I think that's a specific question I'd like to have conversation with the Member and, if necessary, can report back to the House just in terms of what kinds of exactly supports on what roads and what sections the Member is talking about. I mean, I

know we do -- we certainly do send out trucks, depending on the type of year -- what time of year, excuse me, depending on what services may be available. So, again, I know the region would like to make themselves available and would like to ensure that we maintain passable roadways. And so, again, I'd like to follow up with the Member directly and make sure that we're doing our best. If there's a section of this area that is not getting the attention that it needs and could have, then we would like to look to fixing that. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Infrastructure. Oral questions. Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

QUESTION 223-20(1):
ACCESS TO QUALITY EDUCATION IN
LUTSELK'E

MR. EDJERICON: Mr. Speaker, the high school teacher in Lutselk'e resigned and left the community. So there's no dedicated high school teacher in the community, and it's not clear when a new teacher will take their place. My question is to the Minister of ECE.

Is ECE working with Lutselk'e to get a dedicated high school teacher back in the community by next -- by the next school year? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh. Minister of Education, Culture and Employment.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I want to start by just acknowledging the incredible impact that a teacher leaving a community would have on especially a small community in the Northwest Territories, and I just thank the Member for asking these questions to bring it forward and get the information out.

So in the Northwest Territories, education bodies are responsible for hiring teachers. And specific to Lutselk'e, the high school teaching position became vacant in November of 2023. The South Slave Divisional Education Council filled the position with a long-term substitute, and that person taught until March of 2024. And from April through to the end of the school year, the program support teacher has actually taken on the responsibility of covering instructional duties within the classroom. And the teaching position position has now been filled for the 2024-2025 school year. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. EDJERICON: Yeah, thank you, Mr. Speaker. What support is ECE providing to teachers in my communities as we do not want

to have any more teachers leaving the community in the middle of the school year? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, ECE supports education bodies in recruitment of teachers while education bodies themselves hire the teachers. But in that process, there are two online recruitment platforms. The first is an NWT-wide recruitment information database, and there's also a dedicated point of contact to respond to questions that people might have about moving to the Northwest Territories. Because it's really important before people come, that they understand what life is about. And, of course, as always, we really want to also ensure -- in our classrooms, we're encouraging our students to become teachers and to return to home communities after post-secondary. ECE also works with education bodies to provide supports once people do move to the Northwest Territories. For example, there are two-day cultural orientation on-the-land training that is delivered by education bodies for new teachers. There's also the New to the North Educators Conference that is run by ECE. In addition to that, there is a mentorship program for new teachers. In addition, teachers are GNWT employees and they, of course, have access to mental health resources like the Employee and Family Assistance Program, as well as community counselling in the community that they live in. Thank you.

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And we don't know what's going to happen between now and the fall, but some community members are coming to Yellowknife so their children may have better access to education. Will ECE support them, especially if this problem continues in the fall? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm very happy to confirm, again, that there is a high school -- or the high school position has been filled for the 2024-2025 school year and, as well, the teaching coverage that is in place will remain for the 2023-2024 school year, so from now until the end of the school year but we've got a few weeks left here. And families who may be considering relocating their children to attend high school in a different NWT community are definitely encouraged to speak with their school principal or their superintendent to find out information about home boarding programs that might exist and that students might have access to. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. Final

supplementary. Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm also concerned about the lack of adult education services in Lutselk'e. Can the Minister also commit to provide more adult education services in the community? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in response to this question, I can definitely commit to the Member to reaching out to Aurora College and then providing the Member with more information. But this is definitely an interest area of mine as well, and I would like to offer the Member to sit down as well and find out exactly what the community is looking for. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. Oral questions. Member from Deh Cho.

QUESTION 224-20(1):
MEDICAL TRAVEL POLICIES FOR
RESIDENTS INJURED OUTSIDE OF THE
TERRITORY

MRS. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Minister of Health and Social Services.

In general terms, Mr. Speaker, can the Minister explain the health and social services policy, if one exists, of helping an NWT resident return home if they happen to be hospitalized while they are travelling in another province or territory? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Deh Cho. Minister of Health and Social Services.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there is no policy for helping residents return home in the case where a resident has been travelling in another province, anywhere in Canada, anywhere in the world. Like, if the patient -- or if the person has left the territory on their own, there is no policy that covers that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MRS. YAKELEYA: Thank you, and thank you to the Minister. Mr. Speaker, if an NWT resident is hospitalized while they're travelling elsewhere in Canada and that individual is unable to physically get themselves home, does that mean the GNWT is simply going to abandon them and leave them stranded in another province or territory? Thank you.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, every resident who travels outside the territories on their own -- you

know, if you were to end up in the hospital and get sick or anything, that is not the responsibility of the GNWT to bring them back. There is information on the NTHSSA website for travelling out -- information for travelling outside the Northwest Territories. It does speak to even travelling within Canada, that people should -- you know, if they are travelling that they should make sure that they look at what insurances that they have, if they need additional insurances when travelling. Some people have credit cards and things like that that may cover some of those expenses as well. So they should be fully aware of those things before they travel. Thank you.

MRS. YAKELEYA: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Can the Minister confirm if what she says means that all NWT residents must always have their own private health insurance when they travel anywhere within Canada if they expect to receive any assistance in returning home if they're hospitalized while travelling? Thank you.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, anybody who's leaving the Northwest Territories has health care coverage. Like, we have agreements across Canada that if you have your health care card and you can prove that you have health care insurance in your home province, you can have access to health services, insured health services anywhere in Canada. But you also have to be aware that some of the things that we cover in the Northwest Territories are not covered outside of -- in some provinces so those things, you may be billed for. And medical travel is not something that -- you know, that's not included in that. That's why it's important that if you're leaving the territory on your own and you're not being sent out by medical travel, then you should look at what kind of protections you have when you're leaving. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Health and Social Services. Final supplementary. Member from Deh Cho.

MRS. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't think many NWT residents are aware of this therefore would the Minister consider creating a new policy that would provide a one-time only offer to residents where, if an individual gets hospitalized while they're travelling, the GNWT will cover the cost in returning them home? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, that is something that I cannot commit to in the House here, to creating a policy. As I mentioned yesterday, we spoke on many different areas. Within the medical travel policy, there are areas where there are

gaps but medical travel -- like, according to our policy it is to help patients travel to an insured service. And that doesn't -- you know, and so if somebody is away then that's not part of medical travel. And the information -- and I will share that information with all Members of this House and that you can share them on your own social media, and with your constituency assistant, there is a very nice little information on the website, and I'll share it to the Ministers and all the Members of this House to be able to share that information. Because since becoming the Minister, this has happened a few times, and it has come across my desk, and unfortunately, there's -- you know, we can't pay for that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Health and Social Services. Oral questions. Member from Yellowknife Centre.

QUESTION 225-20(1):
CABINET PROCESS AND POLICY FOR
RESPONSES TO ORAL QUESTIONS

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Premier. When I was first elected, I quickly realized how little I knew in the context of government policy and process, and it's certainly a long journey. But since coming back to this Assembly, I notice there seems to be a theme which is Members are asked, either by Ministers or Minister assistants, to supply questions in advance. I'm asking the Premier specifically, is it a mandate position or an expectation in the Simpson government that Members would supply questions in advance to the Ministers? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Colleagues, before the Premier answers, it's the Government of the Northwest Territories, it's not specific persons/individuals. So please rely on the Government of the Northwest Territories for future questioning.

Thank you. Mr. Premier.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And no, that is not the policy. It is just the way that we like to do business is by cooperating and communicating. And for the past eight years as I've been an MLA, that has been common practice. In the last government, the Regular Members would actually share the -- at least the titles of their Member's statements and their questions with Cabinet early in the morning. So it's just we're just all trying to get along here, and we want to make sure that when Members have questions that, as Cabinet, we can provide good answers. We don't know everything, all the ins and outs of all of our departments. It's not all on the tip of our tongue or at the top of our mind. Sometimes

we'll need to go and read a briefing note to refresh our memory about something that maybe we haven't dealt with in a couple weeks or a couple months. And so the rationale behind asking a Member, hey, what are you going to be asking me today, is so that we can come back, do our homework, and give good answers for the Members and for the people of the Northwest Territories. Thank you.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And hearing the Premier's answer, which I thank him for, because I didn't give him notice I was asking these questions, but that said it sounds like there's an expectation that Members are here to set Ministers up so they look really good. Is that a fact? Or are Ministers expected to know their departments with some fullness of effort? Thank you.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. And I'm not sure what the Member was listening to, but I never said that the Members are here to set us up to make us look good. There is an expectation that Ministers do know their portfolios. Here in the Northwest Territories, we have a relatively small Cabinet yet we still are expected to deliver all of the programs and services in all of the same areas that they do in other places in Canada where they might have 10, 20, or 30 Cabinet Ministers. I personally, in the last government, I think I had 14 or 15 different FPT tables that I sat at - that's federal, provincial, and territorial tables, whereas that's pretty uncommon across Canada. In the smaller jurisdictions, it is a bit more common but there is a lot to know. And while there is an expectation that Cabinet does have a good grasp on their portfolio, I don't think it's reasonable to expect the Ministers to have a photographic memory for each of their policies, each of the pieces of legislation that they're responsible for, every staff that the department produces. And so if the Members don't want to provide questions, that's their right. I've never hounded any Member for their questions. If a Member says I'm not going to let you know what my questions are, that's fine. We come to the House, and we give the best answers that we can. Thank you.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As we all know, questions are to illuminate information, probe concerns, and chase down individual details, and there's a reasonable expectation that certain information cannot be at the tip of the Ministers' fingers. So, Mr. Speaker, I just want to clarify one more time on the record, is there any type of informal impression that the government will take if a Member -- not informal -- or actually now I'm trying to qualify this in a way -- is there any sort of backlash or negative response or attitude from the government if a Member chooses not

to proceed that -- because sometimes questions come on the fly, and initiatives need to be raised in the context they're presented, so I just want to make sure Members are not prejudiced in some form. If the Premier could clarify that in some way. Thank you.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There's no hard feelings if Members don't want to provide questions in advance or give Ministers a heads up about what they might be speaking about. Since my very first day as an MLA, I've been very strong on the topic of MLA independence. As a Regular Member or as an MLA representing my constituents, I don't allow anyone to tell me what to do except my constituents. And I'm not telling the Regular Members what to do, and if I tried I wouldn't expect them to listen to me. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Premier. Final supplementary. Oral questions. Colleagues, looking at the time, we will have a brief recess to give our translators a break, and then we'll come back to continue our business. Thank you.

---SHORT RECESS

MR. SPEAKER: Written questions. Member from Range Lake.

Written Questions

WRITTEN QUESTION 6-20(1): AGENCY NURSES

MR. TESTART: Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Minister of Health and Social Services.

1. How many agency nurse contracts have been utilized since 2021 by individual nurse;
2. How many agency nurse contracts have been utilized since 2021 by contracting agency;
3. How many agency nurse contracts have been utilized to support community health centres and Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority operations outside of hospitals in Yellowknife, Inuvik, and Hay River since 2021; and
4. How many individual agency nurse contracts are represented by the \$4.4 million expenditure on agency nurses in fiscal year 2023-2024?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Range Lake. Written questions. Returns to written questions. Replies to the Commissioner's address. Petitions. Reports of committees on the review of bills. Reports of standing and special committees. Tabling of documents. Minister of Finance.

Tabling of Documents

TABLED DOCUMENT 104-20(1):
REPORT ON DEPARTMENTAL
INDIGENOUS EMPLOYMENT PLANS
RESULTS 2022/2023

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following document: Report on Departmental Indigenous Employment Plans Results 2022/2023. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

TABLED DOCUMENT 105-20(1):
FOLLOW-UP LETTER TO ORAL QUESTION
59-20(1): RETENTION STRATEGIES FOR
HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following document: Follow-up Letter for Oral Question 59-20(1): Retention Strategies for Health Care Professionals. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Health and Social Services. Tabling of documents. Member from Yellowknife Centre.

TABLED DOCUMENT 106-20(1):
ADVOCATE FOR PERSONS WITH
DISABILITIES ACT, STATUTES OF
ALBERTA, 2017, CHAPTER A-5.5,
CURRENT AS OF OCTOBER 30, 2018

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table a document. It's called Advocates for the Persons with Disabilities Act. It's from the province of Alberta. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Yellowknife Centre. Tabling of documents.

TABLED DOCUMENT 107-20(1):
NWT LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY PENSION
PLANS ANNUAL REPORT AT MARCH 31,
2023

TABLED DOCUMENT 108-20(1):
PENSION ADMINISTRATION REPORT –
THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY RETIRING
ALLOWANCES ACT AND SUPPLEMENTARY
RETIRING ALLOWANCES ACT, AS MARCH
31, 2023

I have two documents to table. Pursuant to section 4(4) of the Legislative Assembly Retiring Allowance Act; and, section 2.1(1) of the Supplementary Retirement Allowance Act, I wish to table the NWT Legislative Assembly's Pension Plan Annual Report at March 31st, 2023.

In accordance with section 21(1) of the Retiring Allowance Act and section 11.1 of the Supplementary Retirement Allowance Act, I hereby table the Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly's Pension Administration Report Retiring Allowance Act and Supplementary Retiring Allowance Act at March 31st, 2023.

Tabling of documents. Notices of motion. Member for Monfwi.

Notices of Motion

MOTION 28-20(1):
CONSIDERATION FOR ELDERS AND
SENIORS IN DEBT ELIMINATION

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Consideration for elders and seniors in debt elimination. Mr. Speaker, I give notice that on Tuesday, June 4th, 2024, I will move the following motion:

Now therefore I move, seconded by the Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh, that the Government of the Northwest Territories revise the Financial Administration Manual and related policies on the elimination of debt to provide specific provisions for forgiveness of debt owed to the Government of the Northwest Territories or public agency for elders and seniors who are 60 years of age and older;

And further, that the Government of the Northwest Territories review and revise the Financial Administration Manual and policies to define how it will measure and assess unreasonable or unjust financial hardship on elders and seniors;

And furthermore, that the Government of the Northwest Territories review and revise the Financial Administration Manual and policies to ensure that elders and seniors who are on fixed incomes are not forced into undue financial hardship to pay debt to the Government of the Northwest Territories;

And furthermore, that the government respond to this motion within 120 days.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Monfwi. Notices of motion. Member from Range Lake.

MOTION 29-20(1):
MUNICIPAL BLOCK LAND TRANSFER

MR. TESTART: Mr. Speaker, I give notice that on Wednesday, June 5th, 2024, I will move the following motion:

Now therefore I move, seconded by the Member for Frame Lake, that the Government of the Northwest Territories complete the block land transfer of land to communities within municipal and community boundaries without delay;

And further, that the Government of the Northwest Territories remove requirements from communities that are impeding this transfer, such as the requirement for surveying, community zoning and by-law development for land that is under Government of the Northwest Territories authority;

And furthermore, that the Government of the Northwest Territories remove internal impediments that are delaying the efficient transfer of lands within municipal and community boundaries;

And furthermore, that the Government of the Northwest Territories provide public updates on the status of block land transfer to communities;

And furthermore, that the government respond to this motion within 120 days.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Range Lake. Notices of motion. Member from Tu Nedhe-Willideh.

MOTION 30-20(1):
MAINTAINING NORTHWEST TERRITORIES'
HOUSING STOCK

MR. EDJERICON: Mr. Speaker, I give notice that on Wednesday, June 5th, 2024, I will move the following motion:

Now therefore I move, second by the Member for Yellowknife North, that the Government of the Northwest Territories immediately provide funding grants to Indigenous governments that wish to complete home inspections in their region;

And further, that the Government of the Northwest Territories provide financial support to Indigenous governments to assist in data collection to support opportunities to leverage federal government funding;

And furthermore, that the Government of the Northwest Territories provide the funding to the Indigenous governments in alignment with the mandate of the 20th Assembly to secure sustainable financial resources for housing programs and projects;

And furthermore, to facilitate this financial support, the Government of the Northwest Territories enter into a Memoranda of Understanding with all interested Indigenous governments and bring forward necessary appropriations by the end of the 2024-2025 fiscal year;

And furthermore, that the Government of the Northwest Territories respond to this motion within 120 days.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Tu Nedhe-Willideh. Notices of motion. Motions. Member from Yellowknife Centre.

Motions

MOTION 27-20(1):
REAPPOINTMENT OF HUMAN RIGHTS
COMMISSION MEMBERS,
CARRIED

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

WHEREAS section 16.(2) of the Human Rights Act provides that the Northwest Territories Human Rights Commission is comprised of such members, between three and five in number as may be appointed by the Commissioner on the recommendation of the Legislative Assembly;

AND WHEREAS there will be three vacancies on the NWT Human Rights Commission as of June 8, 2024;

NOW THEREFORE I MOVE, seconded by the honourable Member for Kam Lake, that the Legislative Assembly recommend the reappointment of the following individuals to the Northwest Territories Human Rights Commission:

- Ms. Marion Berls, of the Town of Fort Smith, for a term of four years; and
- Mr. Charles Dent, of the City of Yellowknife, for a term of four years;

AND FURTHER, that the Speaker be authorized to communicate the effective date of these appointments to the Commissioner.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Yellowknife Centre. The motion's in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. All those in favour? Opposed? Abstained? Motion passed.

---Carried

Motions. Notices of motion for the first reading of bills. First reading of bills. Second reading of bills.

Colleagues, by the authority given to me as Speaker under Rule 2.2(4), I hereby authorize the House to sit beyond the daily hours of adjournment to consider the business of the House.

Consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters, Minister's Statement 4-20(1), Minister's Statement 5-20(1), Minister's Statement 17-20(1), Minister's Statement 24-20(1), Tabled Document 93-20(1), with the Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh in the chair.

Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): I now call Committee of the Whole to order. What is the wish of committee? Member from Inuvik Boot Lake.

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, the committee wishes to consider Tabled Document 93-20(1), 2024-2025 Main Estimates, and consideration of the Department of Justice and the Department of Health and Social Services. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you, committee. We will proceed with the first item.

Members, we have agreed to review Tabled Document 93-20(1), Department of Justice. We will resume with key activities, corrections, starting on page 306. Does the Minister of Justice wish to bring witnesses into the House?

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Sergeant-at-arms, please escort the witnesses into the chambers. Thank you. Would the Minister please introduce his witnesses, please.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. With me, I have Charlene Doolittle, deputy minister of the Department of Justice. And James Bancroft, director of corporate services. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Moving to corrections, beginning on page 306 with information items on pages 308 and 309, are there any questions? Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from Frame Lake.

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions on page 308, the offender reintegration program, I notice the budget is not changing year over year here. Page 206 of the business plan -- I'll just give you guys a second to find it.

So on page 206 of the business plan, it speaks to a mandate commitment ensuring that policies and programs are designed and renewed with a trauma-informed, antiracist, and cultural safety lens. So corrections programming that supports offender rehabilitation and reintegration back into their home communities. The measure is number of offenders completing programming. The target is accessible and high-quality programs offered to participants. I would describe that that's kind of an expectation of programming as opposed to a target. I was hoping to see a target somewhere along the lines of reduced recidivism rates, something along those lines. But to the point on the budget, how does the department propose achieving this business plan commitment, increasing the number of offenders completing programming, by keeping this budget item the same? And it is a relatively small amount, so I can only imagine you can't deliver a huge amount of programming with \$179,000. So I'd like to hear a bit from the Minister on this.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. So this is -- this funding was recently introduced. That's why we don't see anything for the 2022-2023 Actuals. It is part of the therapeutic community model. And to the Member's comments about the measures, I've said this when I was in front

of the Members before, I am happy to take feedback on the measures. I have some that I brought to the department's attention myself, and so I know that in the next iteration of the business plans we will have measures that are a bit more -- that will allow us to really quantify how we're doing. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from Frame Lake.

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. And yeah, just in response to that I would just say, I mean, I mentioned it already, but I think something along the lines of reduced recidivism rates or success rates, let's track the outcome that we're searching for, maybe set a goal, and that can be a better target than simply stating that we're going to deliver high quality programming. I think that's kind of a baseline expectation. So that's my comments on this item. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from the Sahtu.

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. My question is in this corrections chapter is the closure of the Fort Smith Corrections Centre. It seems to me that -- I've read that we're going to take -- we're going to close the centre and we're going to have approximately 30 people -- or 30 staff members, plus part-time staff, basically laid off. Could the Minister provide a little bit more information on other options; is this really the only option? It seems like such a hard blow to our community and the clients within the corrections centre. I just don't have enough detail whether that's the best option or not, unless there's something that I'm missing. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. And I will say that this is not an easy -- this was not an easy decision. This has weighed heavily and continues to weigh heavily on me and my Cabinet colleagues. This is not something anyone wants to do. There are 15 full-time positions that are being affected. There are 17 relief positions as well. We have committed to do everything we can to ensure that there are opportunities for these individuals in other GNWT positions. There have been -- Cabinet is making efforts to determine how we can utilize the existing facility in a different capacity. The MLA for Thebacha, as well as one of our Cabinet colleagues, has had discussions with the leadership in the community and relayed that information. We are working right now to come up with a bit of a plan to move forward,

and then we'll be reaching out to leadership again directly.

The correctional -- the numbers of inmates in the correctional facilities has dropped essentially year after year for the last five years. And there was a significant drop about four or five years ago. We are now sitting at around 80 or 90 inmates in the facilities, on average. I believe that's about 30 percent capacity -- sorry, 44 percent capacity right now. So the capacity is for 228 offenders, and we have a hundred right now. So it's hard to justify spending public funds housing offenders in facilities that are mostly empty and so we want to make a better use of those funds. And we understand the impact this is -- would have on the community, and we want to do what we can to mitigate that impact. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go back to the Member from the Sahtu.

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thanks to the Minister for that explanation and understanding these cuts. I know it's a hard decision to dismiss people, having done that myself. But on the flip side here, it seems that the inmate capacity is sitting at 44 percent, which is good news. So it tells me that the incarceration rate or the occupancy is down. So therefore, is there plans to reduce the staff of that administration to house -- or the administration, the government employees, to reduce because of the reduction of the inmate capacity at 44 percent? Do we need all the employees still working? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. And that's what this reduction is reflective of, the fact that we no longer need all of that capacity in the system. The South Mackenzie Correctional Facility -- or correctional centre is actually at a lower capacity, but it is something unique that we do not want to get rid of at this point given that it is an initiative that is in line with our goal of addressing the effects of trauma. The South Mackenzie Correctional Centre is piloting a therapeutic model where inmates are actually residents, not inmates, and we attempt to help them gain the tools to stop them from coming back into the correctional centre. And so, essentially, it's the closest thing to a government-run wellness centre that I would say we have here in the territory, and we want to ensure that we give that facility the best chance at success. And so we are continuing with that. So we are making some changes to reduce our capacity given the

reduced numbers, and that's reflected here. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from the Sahtu.

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. It seems, you know, from past experiences there, we -- where there's a lost opportunity, another one's created. So we have an emerging willingness for rehabilitation. So there's going to be staff opportunities for the emerging counselling for drugs, as we discussed here the last number of days, more specifically yesterday, on the increased activity of the drug trade. So to minimize that demand through counsellors and those types of positions would the 30 position PY, in this case, you got 17 -- 15 and 17 PYs here. Is there some -- I don't know, maybe some of the staff members are approaching retirement so maybe we can retain those PYs for the emerging drug rehabilitation that I'm hoping some -- I'm hoping, let's say the Sahtu for example, if we have on-the-land treatment centres similar to the other treatment centres or the other campsites there in -- out on-the-land campsites there in Inuvik, if we have those types of trade staffs or professions within this department to help support other regions on drug rehabilitation and counselling. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you for that. And so we have the other facilities in the territory. So there's still a women's correctional facility in Fort Smith. There's South Mackenzie Correctional Centre in Hay River. And there is North Slave Correctional Centre in Yellowknife. And there are vacancies in those units. And the impacted employees, the affected employees, will have first dibs essentially on those jobs. And we have paused hiring until after this budget to ensure that those positions remain open for those individuals. As well, I will note that correctional officers are skilled workers. They go through extensive training and continuous training and so those skills are transferrable to other areas as well. And I'm confident that we'll be able to find other positions for them. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go back to the Member from the Sahtu.

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. And thank you to the Minister for that reply. I'm glad to see that there's some transitional ease or counselling or identification to keep the staff busy in other areas or other departments. And also part of transitioning, if the Minister could

add to the transition list, maybe there's other companies out there, such as the security at the mines, that these tradespeople at the correction centre might want to move to if the availability was there. So I thank the Minister for that assistance. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Next on the list I have is Member from Range Lake.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So on the subject of the Fort Smith centre closing, can the Minister provide more detail on what the plan is with this new wellness centre? Because we haven't seen any concrete details or terms of reference or scoping. So I guess I'd like to know is this just kind of an idea, like hey, maybe we could turn to this, or is it an actual plan that they thought through and are developing? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. We do not have a formal plan. We recognize there is a facility in the community, that the community is taking a hit with the reduction, and we wanted to ensure that we were proactive in raising the possibility of this facility being repurposed. The leadership in the community has been receptive, and I would say that leadership in every single region in the territory has been more than receptive about wanting wellness centres. We've had those requests across the territory. And if that's not what the community wants, then we can work on something else that the community might want. There is -- you know, we've had treatment centres in the Northwest Territories. They come and they go. As a government, we are not getting back into the business of operating treatment centres. But there are opportunities for wellness centres, for aftercare centres, for on-the-land healing. And there is a desire to work with communities to bring those into fruition, and that's what our plan is. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go back to the Member from Range Lake.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Chair. It just -- and I appreciate that, and it was my sense. But it just seems like if we're trying to -- if we're closing this facility because it's under -- they're both underutilized and is going to save money that is going to help us achieve fiscal sustainability, creating an untested wellness centre that would require new staffing, new resources, new special areas of specialty that we don't have -- we don't have efficiencies around, so it would be piloting a lot of these

things, it seems like we'd be replacing a less than optimal facility with an even more expensive facility. So is this really the right direction to take this closure? If we -- you know, when assessing if we need the closure at all. Because are we replacing a costly facility with an even costlier facility? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There is nothing in this budget about a wellness facility in Fort Smith. There's no line items here. So I'm not replacing the facility with anything. We want to work with the community to access funding to do what the community would like to do and given this opportunity of a facility that does become available. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go back to the Member from Range Lake.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So of the 15 full-time employees, the 17 relief employees, those are correctional officers who have been trained -- or who have received training as correctional officers, is that correct, Mr. Chair?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): I'm going to go back to the Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. To operate a correctional facility, there are a number of different positions that are required. And so the majority are correctional officers. There are case managers. There are supervisors. There are -- and similar positions. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go back to the Member from Range Lake.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Chair. How many of those could be redeployed to operate a wellness facility? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I don't have that information. I don't know if individuals want to work at a wellness centre. I don't know the backgrounds of the individuals involved. I am not opening a wellness centre. There's no wellness centre in the Justice budget. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go back to the Member from Range Lake.

MR. TESTART: Thank you. And that's fair, and I will be less pointed about the hypothetical wellness centre that is not before us, Mr. Chair.

So for those positions, what is the current plan? The Minister did speak -- or the Premier did speak to how they want to minimize any impacts to employment. But what is the current plan with these? Because they are specialized roles. So are they going to be transferred to other correctional facilities? Are they going to be laid off? Do we have a human resources plan to -- for these individuals who have affected -- who will be affected by this closure? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. The GNWT has a staff retention policy in situations like this. The Minister of Finance would be the expert in that -- on that policy, and so I'd prefer not to comment. But I know that the department will be working with those employees directly as they make their way through this process. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from Range Lake.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Nothing further at this point. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from the Deh Cho.

MRS. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Chair. My question is can the government better use the facility to make Fort Smith's facility more useful in corrections?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. So the facility is -- as I stated, the capacity of the correctional system far exceeds the need and so -- I mean, we could have infrastructure improvements to the building, but the fact remains that we have excess capacity. And that's in all of our facilities. You know, we have one or two or three women in the women's facility, and I believe the capacity there is 24. We have between one and two and three individuals in the youth facility, and the capacity there is significantly higher than that, at least a couple dozen if not more than that. And so to repurpose the correctional facilities as other kinds of correctional facilities is not something that we're currently looking at. We do have one correctional facility that we did try to do that with, that we tried to change the model, so it's a

different approach, and that is the South Mackenzie Correctional Centre. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from the Deh Cho.

MRS. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So there's going to be, like, 25 to -- about 25 jobs lost that are going to be -- people are going to lose their jobs there. And some of them -- so can you completely shut down the youth facility in Yellowknife instead of the one in Fort Smith?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. By law, we need to have a youth open and secure custody but we may be able to shut that down and send them to another jurisdiction. We may be able to shut the women's facility down, send them to another jurisdiction or to the youth facility. We could shut down a few more correctional facilities if the Members really wanted to, but that's not what we're doing. We understand that that's a massive impact that we don't want to have on the communities. And this is -- as I said, this is not an easy decision. And we could keep it open and keep spending that money, or we can try and save that money and put it towards our other efforts. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Next on the list to speak, I have here the Member from Great Slave.

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So still on the topic of corrections in Fort Smith but maybe corrections more generally, could the Minister tell me what the drop of inmates is attributable to? I'm asking this because he was the Minister of Justice in the last Assembly and should have a little bit of handle on that. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. So the drop in numbers is due to a number of changes to the Criminal Code and decisions by the Supreme Court of Canada that changed the rules around bail and remanding prisoners. We used to have significantly more remanded inmates in the facilities. That is one of the issues. Perhaps I can hand it to the deputy minister for some more detail on this. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the deputy minister.

MS. CHARLENE DOOLITTLE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes, those are two reasons we suspect.

We currently have a senior management working group looking into this. Our numbers have decreased in our facilities significantly since 2020, and they continue to remain so. An increase in social supports in the Northwest Territories has provided evidence as well to decrease in our numbers. So things such as the safe ride, sheltering, alternative housing options, those are things that we presume have continued these decreased rates, along with changes in federal legislation and case law as Minister said. So we are looking into trying to concretely identify specifically more what these reasons are, but those are the three that we have, you know, indicated so far in some of our research. So thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go back to the Member from Great Slave.

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Chair. And thank you to the department and the Minister for that. On the flip side of that, if you read the mandate, if you read the business plan, it sounds very much that the Minister and his department are seeking to increase the tools that would possibly allow for the courts to better pursue folks who are, for lack of better words, you know, ripping at our smaller communities and, indeed, the community of Yellowknife with the drug trade. So on the flip side of that, I'm very excited that, you know, folks are getting better options to them than just putting them in jail, but if we are looking to increase the tools at our disposal as the government to go after folks who are in the drug trade, do you expect have more inmates in the future? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. Well, that's hard to predict but we -- even if we have more, it's highly unlikely that it would be enough to put us close to that full capacity of our facilities. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go back to the Member from Great Slave.

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm good for now. Thanks.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Next on the list I have is the Member from Inuvik Boot Lake.

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, my question is -- so if I understand correctly, the Fort Smith correctional facility equates to about 40 percent of what the department has. Is that -- or there was a 40

percent occupancy in the corrections facility itself?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. So the Fort Smith facility has been -- for the last little while, there's been no offenders there. Previously, it was around half full, give or take. Our entire capacity across the system, we're about 44 percent capacity across the system. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'll go back to the Member from Inuvik Boot Lake.

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So, Mr. Chair, I note in here that there's been no recommendation of any cuts at the senior bureaucratic level for this department, just at the corrections facility in Fort Smith. And given that it is low and if things are as, my colleague from the Sahtu said, improving, are there any considerations for potentially then having some of those positions that are currently in Yellowknife cut as well?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. There is a senior management position in Yellowknife that is being cut. So it should make the -- might make the Member happy but it's an assistant director position at headquarters. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from Inuvik Boot Lake.

MR. RODGERS: Thank you. Yes, it just makes sense to me if we're losing that portion of a department, then likely there's less work the department needs to do.

My other question, Mr. Chair, is that is there any consideration given the -- I mean, the opportunity to work in this, certainly in this field, or to work in general in Fort Smith, likely not as robust as in the capital city, was there any consideration given to potentially closing a couple of wings in the Yellowknife facility and keeping the Fort Smith open and given there may be easier then for either a transfer of jobs for the people affected here or opportunities for other employment? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. All options were looked at. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go back to the Member from Inuvik Boot Lake.

MR. RODGERS: So can the Minister confirm that that option was looked at, sorry.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Yes. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Member Inuvik Boot Lake.

MR. RODGERS: Thank you. Nothing further, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to continue on now to the YK -- the Member from YK Centre.

MR. HAWKINS: Unless I missed it, maybe the Minister could put it officially on the record, when is the anticipation date to provide the layoffs in the context of effectiveness? Assuming the budget goes through, I mean you can't give layoff notices until the budget passes but what's the intent here? And it's funny to say it this way but is that being communicated with the staff? I mean, if they're listening, it's probably being communicated. So it's not meant to be a tricky question, Mr. Chairman. It's just a quite honest question, which is when would it be effective, or the intent is to be effective? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. So my understanding that, according to the staff retention policy, it would be three months after the budget was passed that the notice would be given. And the staff have been informed. So they're not learning about this on the floor of the House. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from Yellowknife Centre.

MR. HAWKINS: Yeah, I may be assertive sometimes and maybe described as acerbic, put on this one this is a very sensitive issue, and I take it to heart. I mean, no one feels good about anyone losing a job or potentially losing a job, so I'm trying to be very sensitive to that end. My question just built on -- just building a little further, I would like to say from the start, I don't like the concept of the building potentially being re-profiled as some type of health centre/healing centre. And the reason I say that, only because it's not the re-profiling of opportunities, that's not the issue, it's just the

concept of a jail being a wellness centre does cause me some personal discomfort. And so before decision's being made like that, I'm not opposing that, I'm saying it causes me personal concern, though. I would really like to hear the community, if that's the direction it wants to go, that's the conversation I'd like to hear come from the community. Because, I mean, it's easy for me to say make a jail a wellness centre or a treatment centre, but I mean people still have those eerie discomfort feelings about what the institution was created for or was intended for. And let us not kid ourselves, changing cinderblock walls and rooms to special rooms, be it sharing circles, etcetera, does come with a negative feel to it. So I maybe ask the Minister if there's to be some creative solution with this asset, will the community be involved in that conversation? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I agree with all those comments by the Member, and the solution will be driven by the community. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go back to the Member from the Yellowknife Centre.

MR. HAWKINS: Yeah, thank you. And it's ironic, I mean, our facilities numbers are going down, which is -- no one wants to pray for more crime which would mean the facilities would be busier. So I don't know if this is a symptom of things are getting better or worse in some ways. And maybe is there a reason why the trend is going in this way? The Yellowknife facility, if I remember correctly, was built for around 200 individuals. The Hay River facility could handle -- I can't remember the number. I'll say 40, maybe or so. The numbers isn't the issue that I'm raising, is the trend is the issue. And is there something we need to know or be aware of? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. And as the deputy minister stated earlier, there is a working group looking at the reason, examining the reasons behind the decline. Some of the obvious reasons are changes to the Criminal Code as well as case law handed down from the Supreme Court related to things like bail. And the majority of inmates has, I believe, historically been remanded, and when the Supreme Court and the Criminal Code says no more remanding of individuals except in expectational circumstances, that has a huge impact. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from Yellowknife Centre.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, the only thing I would say left on this one is that, again, I take the job loss serious. I mean, sometimes government has to do things. I recognize that. I mean, I don't support the layoffs personally in the sense of, yeah, this is a good idea. You're not going to hear that from me. But what I would say is that I recognize the government has to do the government of business sometimes, and I would encourage the department and the Minister to use the fulsome opportunity of trying to find ways to bridge these into the other two facilities, be it Hay River or Yellowknife or find some ways. I do know that the Yellowknife facility has challenges, staffing, overtime, etcetera. There may be opportunities -- you folks know your numbers better than I do. So I know them anecdotically, but you know them accurately. And so I'll leave it that with saying that if -- if the Member -- if the Minister needs support to find ways, I'll certainly be supportive of finding ways to get the people to facilities that could use them. And if that specific line item needed to be a supp for transfer or whatnot, I mean, I would easily be supportive of that. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. No further questions? I don't see none. I'll continue on.

Please turn to page 307, Justice, corrections, operations expenditures summary, 2024-2025 Main Estimates, \$36,757,000. Does the committee agree?

If you could say it louder so that we could hear.

Thank you, I'll read it out again. And if you could speak up so we have it recorded.

Justice, corrections, operations expenditures, 2024-2025 Main Estimates, \$36,757,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you.

Moving on to court services, beginning on page 310, information items on page 312. Are there any questions?

Seeing none, no further questions, please turn to page 311. Justice, court services, operations expenditures summary, 2024-2025 Main Estimates, \$15,765,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Moving onto the legal aid services beginning on page 313 with the information items on page 315. Are there any questions? I'm going to go to the Member from Yellowknife North.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So I'm looking at the line item for Office of the Children's Lawyer, which I spoke about yesterday in my Member's statement. So children and youth in the child welfare system are some of the most vulnerable people in our communities. And decisions that are made for them are supposed to be based on their best interests, on their views and preferences when that can be determined.

So, first, if we just establish what exactly is being lost here. We see that the budget is being reduced by \$200,000. Can you explain what is being reduced and what will remain in the program with the remaining \$225,000? What is that remaining amount for?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. What is being reduced is an administrative position essentially, the position that would assign files to panel lawyers when required to do so as well as perform other duties. What remains is a budget for, I believe, seven panel lawyers experienced in dealing with children's law and family law matters. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from Yellowknife North.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So to be clear, we're cutting the senior lawyer who runs the Office of the Children's Lawyer? Is that what you're referring to when you say it's simply an administrative position?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. Yes, that is correct. That position has not had a case load and so it hasn't been representing children in court. Those duties are done by the panel lawyers. So the position over the last number of years has been working on updates to policy manuals, assigning the files to the different panel lawyers, working on migrating data into the legal aid information network, and similar tasks. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go back to the Member from Yellowknife North.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So my understanding is that some of the important roles of that senior lawyer in the Office of the Children's Lawyer has been training and mentoring those other lawyers who are assigned to children's cases, which is a very specialized area, vetting those lawyers, monitoring them, responding to complaints about them, as well as undertaking research and advocacy around changes to legislation, such as the child and family services process, the CFS Act, as well as advocating about children's legal rights within HSS, to schools, families, even to judges and to other lawyers. Can the Minister explain who will be taking on those responsibilities if the senior lawyer position within the Office of the Children's Lawyer is reduced? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. And those are all things that could be done by someone in that role. The extent to which they're done, I'm not sure. But the duties will be taken on by the executive director of the Legal Aid Commission with support from the other staff. And the Commission, from what I understand, feels confident that those duties can be absorbed and done without any disruption in service. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from Yellowknife North.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Does the Minister know whether the executive director of legal aid has any experience in family or children's law to be able to take on those responsibilities?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Go the Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Yes. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Go back to the Member from Yellowknife North.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So I just want to be clear, you know, based on some of the answers the Minister gave yesterday to oral questions, you know, there's a lot of joking about how we have so many lawyers in this territory, surely we have plenty of them already. But this is a very specialized area of law and to be clear, you know, government lawyers, real estate lawyers, corporate lawyers, criminal lawyers, cannot take on this work. And most of the lawyers working within the GNWT are not actually qualified to work with children. And in fact, many may not want to practice in that area because it is a very challenging and complex

area of law. And my understanding, too, is that legal aid has four family lawyers on staff and often are quite busy and overwhelmed. There's often quite high turnover in those positions. And they often represent parents in child welfare cases so there might actually be conflicts of interest.

Is the Minister concerned about any possible conflicts of interest that would arise if we have legal aid staff that are managing the Office of the Children's Lawyer?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. No. And I would say that the Member stated this is a very specialized area of law, it's essentially family law. You can have some additional training, but I wouldn't characterize it as very specialized. And the position does not have to work with children. There have been no cases held by the children's lawyer for quite some time and so there was no working with children. We have -- there is a number of panel lawyers, as I have mentioned, and they have experience in this. Some of them are actually criminal lawyers or have experience in other types of law so, you know, while lawyers do have specialty, they do also have the ability to work in a number of different areas. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go back to the Member from Yellowknife North.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So I mean, I would -- I would respectfully disagree with the Minister and certainly would strongly advocate that this position be filled again and, you know, that the current person in the position is retiring but I think it is very important that that position is filled again with someone who does have expertise and experience in family law and specifically children's law. I mean, it's not very much money in the grand scheme of things, and that person has really played a linchpin role in holding this office together, including mentoring and training the lawyers that are on that panel of roster lawyers. And, you know, the Minister mentioned there are seven lawyers on this panel or roster. Three are based in Yellowknife. One is based in Hay River. And the others are -- actually operate in both NWT and BC or Alberta. All are doing this on top of other legal responsibilities. They're not doing this a hundred percent of the time. And, really, to have someone who is, like, holding the system together and being the core advocate and the person who can both advocate within our system but also be that person who can mentor and train and field complaints, I think has been quite essential. And so I think it is

quite shortsighted and a mistake to let this position go. So I'll leave it there for now, Mr. Chair. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Next on my list I got here is Member from Range Lake.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I just would like to understand why legal aid clinics is substantially higher in this budget than the Legal Aid Commission itself. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: I'd like to direct that to Mr. Bancroft. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'll go to the director.

MR. JAMES BANCROFT: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The legal aid clinics is where the lawyers are positioned and established out of that operate all of the numerous legal aid clinic -- law clinics. So that's the housing, if you will, of all the lawyers. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go back to the Member from Range Lake.

MR. TESTART: So in 20 -- the actuals from 2022-2023, the Commission had \$3.9 million, and the clinics at 2.7, and now that suddenly inverted, now you see the kind of the opposite proportion, you see the clinics at \$3.5 million and the Commission at \$2.8 million. So I guess what does that change represent? Is it just a re-profiling of resources or are we moving more -- like, more to the panel itself rather than in-house staff? I can provide more detail if that's still unclear. But that's the change I'm trying to understand. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: I will hand it to the director. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'll go to the director.

MR. JAMES BANCROFT: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The variance there, you're seeing there, is the variance between the private bar panel lawyers and the staff lawyers being utilized. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from Range Lake.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So would it be accurate to say that we are -- there's a higher expenditure on private lawyers than on staff lawyers in this budget? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Staff lawyers. There's a higher expenditure on staff lawyers. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from Range Lake.

MR. TESTART: Nothing further. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Now on my next -- on the list here is I have got Member from Monfwi.

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chair. With the court services, I see in here that for 2023 and then with the main estimate and then there was some increase in 20 -- later on revised estimate. But within this fiscal year, 2024-2025, it still stayed the same. And then there's a large reduction in the Office of the Children's Law, which is an important -- you know, it's -- this office is very important for many of our children that are in care or for -- you know, they provide good services. I just wanted to ask where is the increase made within the court services?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: I'd hand it to Mr. Bancroft for that information. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the director.

MR. JAMES BANCROFT: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The in-year increase that the Member's referring to was as a result of a supplementary appropriation tied to the Access to Justice Agreement with the federal government where we received \$1,072,000 for additional funding to modernize and bring newer technology into the Legal Aid Commission. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'll go to the Member from Monfwi.

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Okay, yeah, thank you. Thank you for that information because I was trying to find why, where. And also within the court services, okay, I think this is probably the court workers, you know. In North Slave there's, like, you know, 57, 57 active position -- we're still in the court services -- and there's nothing in Tlicho. There's nothing in Deh Cho and Sahtu. Why, how come

there's no allocations or positions in that region? Can the Minister explain why or why there's no services provided for those three regions?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. The Member's referring to the previous section that we voted on, court services. And the reason that the positions are distributed that way is that's where -- the courts are in Yellowknife. The head main court is in Yellowknife. There are court services that operate out of the Hay River courthouse, and there is a court worker in Inuvik as well. And so that would explain the distribution in the previous activity. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. All right, is there any other Members that want to make comments? If not, I'd like to continue on.

No further questions, please turn to page 314. Justice, legal services, operational expenditures summary, 2024-2025, main estimates, \$7,645,000. Does the committee agree?

Oh hang on. We had -- we'll go back to -- we'll go back up here. We'll go back to the Member from Inuvik Boot Lake.

COMMITTEE MOTION 6-20(1):
TABLED DOCUMENT 93-20(1): MAIN
ESTIMATES 2024-2025, DEFERRAL OF
LEGAL AID SERVICES – JUSTICE,
CARRIED

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I move that this committee defer further consideration of activity legal aid services of the main estimates for the Department of Justice at this time. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): The motion is in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried. Consideration of the Department of Justice, operational expenditures, 2024-2025 Main Estimates, legal aid services, deferred.

---Carried

We will now move to the next key activity. Thank you. Moving on to the Office of the Regulator of Oil and Gas Operation on page 316, with information item on page 318. Are

there any questions? I'm going to go to the Member from Yellowknife North.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So when I was looking through the annual report, the last available annual report for the Office of the Regulator of Oil and Gas Operations, it clarified that we don't have any active oil and gas operations in the territory. And to be clear, this regulator doesn't cover the ISR, the Inuvialuit settlement region. So aside from -- sorry, I should qualify that. Aside from the operation in Norman Wells winding down. And that in 2022-2023, 55 abandoned wells -- sorry, wells were safely abandoned. And that represents two-thirds of the suspended wells in our jurisdiction.

So I am puzzled why we are maintaining the budget at \$1.23 million for this coming year. Can the Minister explain what more the office will be doing this coming year than, for example, what was accomplished in previous years, perhaps prior to 2022?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. The Office of the Regulator of Oil and Gas is arm's length from government, and so I have very little to -- I have no involvement in the daily operations. What we are responsible for is to, A, not meddle in their operations; and, B, to ensure that they are funded appropriately. Through our conversations, this was the appropriate level of funding that was determined. I'm happy to go back and look at next year's main estimates with an eye to adjusting as necessary. And I will note that we did go through an exercise in the last Assembly to adjust their budget based on the level of operations. And I'm happy to do that as necessary but as it is a regulator, I don't want to be heavy handed in dictating what they do or how they do it. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from Yellowknife North.

MS. MORGAN: So I understand that. And I do want to respect the independence of the regulator for sure. But I'm also eager to ensure that the level of funding is appropriate and corresponds to, like the level of need and the level of activity of the office. I wonder if the Minister can -- has any further explanation for us on why he was satisfied that the level of funding being allocated in this coming fiscal year is appropriate to the level of activity or the demands placed on the regulator.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. So I leave OROGO alone unless it's been a while and it's time to look at their budget. And so I'm happy to look at the budget again, and committee is free to defer this activity as well if that is the wish. Thank you

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from Yellowknife North.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I do appreciate the Minister's commitment to review this. And we'll just leave it there for now. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from the Sahtu.

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I kind of view this OROGO office as a continued allied services to the industry community. And I'm going to say this is probably a real good rate of return on this expense there, Mr. Chair, because our revenues or the royalties received by this industry, I think it's -- I don't have the numbers in front of me, but it's into the millions. So if you're spending \$1.2 million, and you're getting back royalties in the neighbourhood of two or three or four, wouldn't you think that would be a good expense on regulatory responsibilities with this area? There's much that this department can do, but we haven't gauged the sense of interest. I wouldn't mind this government would explore over the next 20 months here, on exploring the interest in oil and gas. And it's really not a total expense to us. It's the issuance of exploration rights back in 2010. The rights issue and seeing 5 and \$628.7 million in exploration rights across in that area of Norman Wells. But here we have a unique circumstances on the product of LNG being explored by M18, the old -- the owner, the previous owner of that particular well was Devon Canada, and now it is the Inuvialuit Petroleum Corporation. So I see they're doing remarkable things, and it won't shock me if we're exporting LNG from that particular location. So it just goes to show that there's potential and there's interest in -- potential and interest to be in this sector. And to keep our staff busy, I was -- I participated into a project that the Sahtu is looking at, and they just kick started it with the first or the second meeting just yesterday. So I attended virtually on that, and they're looking at identifying the old sumps that was once regulated to dispose of drilling contaminants. Now it's no longer a regulatory adjustment or mandatory. And so for them, they are cataloging all the old sumps. And with the well watch program, you can create a number of positions here to hold responsible the drilling company to clean up that mess and recap these sumps that have sunk over the years. So

there's some exploration and responsibilities that this department can do, and I look forward to helping in any way I can. But I support the 1.23 costs and view it as a minor cost compared to the overall picture.

So my question to the minister is will the Minister recommend that arm's length is organization to work with the Sahtu and also explore the option of exercising or executing the rights issuance process? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I want to go to the Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate the Member's enthusiasm over oil and gas. I'm a child of oil and gas myself. I wouldn't be here if not for oil and gas in the Beaufort Delta. But it is not my place to actually sort of advocate to the regulator or make recommendation to the regulator. That being said, they're happy to receive a reach out and the Member himself could make those connections. I'm just not -- the reason it is in here in Justice is because Justice is removed from that industry, and it is -- it's for the independence of the organization. And so for that reason I do stay out of those types of conversations. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Go back to the Member from Sahtu.

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Another area of exploration and interest is back in my workdays here when Imperial Oil had their own community. They had their own store, and it was the only one in town. They had their own post office and their own dump site. And their own dump site now is in the area of the airport. So it's outside the proven area agreement but it's still their responsibility, in my opinion, and I think, you know, there might be some value in exploring the clean-up exercise before Norman Wells disappears and moves into -- or the oil field moves into reclamation. So who's going to be responsible for reclaiming that old site? So I think there's a number of witnesses in the Sahtu that can confirm, aside from myself, that's your damage or your responsibility, you're liable for this contaminated site, and get it cleaned up so we can create some jobs and dispose of this liability, which is sitting on government property. And you never know, the excavation might lead to drilling a hole all the way to China so we'll have lots of material to backfill there, similar to what they're doing up in the Tuk area, creating a lot of jobs in this area of reclamation. Thank you. I share that information, so another to-do list possibly.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from Yellowknife Centre.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm going to pass at this time. I think my Member from the Sahtu said it clear enough. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Member from Yellowknife Centre.

MR. HAWKINS: Oh, myself? No, I support the comments provided by my good colleague for the Sahtu. So I support his concerns. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Okay, no further questions, we'll continue on. No further questions, okay, so please turn to page 317. Justice, Office of the Regulator of Oil and Gas, operations expenditures summary, 2024-2025 Main Estimates, \$1,230,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Moving on to the policing services on page 319. Are there any questions? I'm going to go to the Member from Frame Lake.

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. My first question is just on the First Nations policing. So in March 2024, the Office of the Auditor General issued a performance audit on the First Nations and Inuit Policing Program. The audit found that Public Safety Canada and the RCMP have not worked in partnership with Indigenous communities to provide equitable access to policing services, nor to deliver tailored policing services. So significant concerns exist around whether requirements set out in policing agreements are being met and whether the program is achieving its intended results. My first question is whether the Minister is concerned about these findings?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. So the situation in the Northwest Territories is different from the rest of Canada, and the way that the First Nation and Inuit Policing Program works up here is essentially integrated in many ways into the regular force, and so they report to the same commanding officers. And our contract policing services, they actually operate in a sort of community policing model, which is what the First Nation and Inuit Policing Program is intended to do. And so it's actually -- the report is not necessarily speaking about the situation in the Northwest Territories. It's more about the other programs in southern Canada that are

distinct from the other police services. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go back to the Member from Frame Lake.

MR. MORSE: Okay, thank you, Mr. Chair. My next question is on page 208 of the business plan. There's definitely a lot of comments about this in opening comments from Members. There's a plan to kind of bring forward a new territorial crime unit within the RCMP G-division to disrupt illicit drug supply. And so, yeah, my question isn't so much -- how do I put this? So I guess bottom line is what I'm asking is what evidence has the department used to inform the approach of kind of increasing policing services in response to this? And, you know, I would just note that there was some comments earlier that -- not today, but previously in the House, the Premier has indicated we've never had more police. And he also indicated that crime is as high as ever. And so it seems that in response to increasing police, crime is still rising. So I'd just like to hear some discussion on kind of what kind of evidence we're using to support this approach to ensure that we are, you know, taking an evidence-informed approach to these issues. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. In terms of the level of -- or the number of police and the level of crime, we're trying to catch up to the level of crime. And so it is not that more police aren't helping the situation, but the crime rate is rising. We heard yesterday for an hour about the impact drugs are having on communities. I don't need to speak any further to that. That was discussed.

In terms of the increases to the RCMP budget, the way this works is that the RCMP, they look at their operations across the territory, they identify areas where they're feeling pressure, and we've seen some communities with spikes in crime that have been sustained, and they -- there needs to be an increase in the presence in those communities to help deal with the volume of calls. Officers get burnt out, things like that, so. And when that situation arises, the RCMP put together a business case, they bring it to the Department of Justice, and work with the Department of Justice to figure out how they can bring forward something for the Cabinet, for FMB, and for this House to approve. And so there's a bit of back and forth. But it is very much an evidence-based process.

In terms of the crime reduction unit, there have been some changes to the reporting structure

in the RCMP. If we had no contract police service, if we -- if the GNWT did not hire the RCMP to be our police force, there would still be RCMP in the territory because the federal government has federal RCMP who focus on areas that the federal government wants to focus on. And so those areas of focus are things like organized crime, money laundering, guns. And so those -- that federal unit now is operating a little more independently from the G-division but still working with G-division. And so this crime reduction unit is going to fill the little -- the bit of a void that was left there, but also supplement the existing resources, because now we have the federal unit that can work with the crime reduction unit because we're seeing things like organized crime, like drugs. So this really is an enhancement of our services based on the needs that we're seeing.

In addition, there are sometimes increases based on new standards. So if the RCMP come up with a new standard saying we need this many officers in a community at any given time, then we need to bring forward an appropriation for that many officers if we need to bring the numbers up. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go back to the Member from Frame Lake.

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I guess I appreciate the Premier's clarification on that and getting that out in the public. And, you know, I note that further in the business plan, there's -- there's talk of enhancing public education. And I guess, you know, if the Premier could, I would appreciate him speaking to kind of measures that we're taking for a holistic approach, noting that, you know, I don't question that police are obviously needed to deal with gang violence, with illegal guns, things like that. Obviously that's not something a social worker can get into. But the root cause of the drug addiction is what causes the demand that brings these -- I can't remember. I think the word was predators used by a previous Member, but anyways. The demand that's bringing, you know, drug dealers into the communities and these gangs into the communities is ultimately the source, right. So I'm just curious to hear from the Premier on kind of the other side of this, the more holistic side of kind of how we're addressing both demand and, you know, policing supply. Thanks.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So we have a number of ways that we are doing that. We can go back to decades and look at the restorative justice approach that the NWT

really embarked on before many jurisdictions in Canada. I know the RCMP do their best to divert offenders away from the criminal justice system toward the restorative justice system. That system is highly dependent on community involvement. Those boards are made up of volunteers from the community who will work with offenders to figure out ways to help rehabilitate them without putting them into the criminal justice system. And so there's a number of successful examples of that across the territory.

We also have, as mentioned, the therapeutic model of -- in the South Mackenzie Correctional Centre, and that is a model where offenders who are -- you know, have certain issues, whether it's drug or alcohol issues, go to help them deal with those issues and hopefully give them tools to make it less likely that they will return. There's a number of different programs in the correctional facilities that can be delivered.

We have wellness courts in the Northwest Territories, the domestic -- or sorry, now the intimate partner violence treatment court, as well as the -- and so we have the two courts. And those aim at focusing on rehabilitating as well and getting passed those issues that lead people to offend. So those are just some of the examples. We also have the men's healing program, which is a fund that communities can access to deliver programs aimed at men who don't have to but often have a history of things like domestic violence. So despite the fact that the Department of Justice is not a health department, we do have a number of programs aimed at healing and wellness and addressing the root causes of crime. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from Frame Lake.

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. And, you know, I appreciate that the Premier is trying to kind of keep us on the topic of the Justice department itself I guess. I mean, I'm really just looking for an acknowledgement, I guess, that, you know, that there's a lot more to this problem than what the justice system can do, right. So we're talking about -- yeah, when I speak to wholistic solutions, I was kind of hoping for a bit more there. But if the Premier wants to elaborate, he can, or we can kind of pursue this issue with other departments.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. And I don't want to speak too much about other departments. I don't want to get anything wrong

before they appear in front of committee. But one of the main initiatives that I can speak to, because it is in one of my departments, is integrated service delivery. And that is one of the approaches that I hope will begin to address some of these issues. Really, at the end of day, that is the way to stop people from falling through the cracks and deliver the services they need across government. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from Sahtu.

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm glad to see that this department is taking an active role as identified in the business plan to address our drug trade issues. And I'm also glad that some other responsibilities are with the Minister and the Premier so when they're making trips to Ottawa to solicit for more money, I think we can all -- we can encourage our leader to emphasize the need for additional policing resources. And then when we get to the -- when we get to the fact of homelessness, now we've got the Minister and the Premier responsible for that department also or that initiative. So it works in harmony with our Premier's responsibility looking forward and making trips to Ottawa to initiate discussions on resource supports. And the outcomes for the reason for this trip could be said that -- take the Sahtu for example. I think I brought this up here.

The Sahtu in the last three years have seen 448 medevacs in our area. Now, let's just hypothetically say half of that or 50 percent of that is drug related. I know of some people that end up going to the hospital here because I visit them to see if they need anything. So there's a measurable there for the need for more resources. Now, we're targeting the policing by allowing a portion of those resources to go to First Nation policing. So if it's a good model, let's go to Ottawa and get more resources and say we want to minimize these medevacs down to a hundred. It just seems like, you know, the transfer of problems went from this department over to the health department. Now we got more clients over there, and we only got 44 percent of our jail capacity filled. So that's kind of like one way of looking at that. So it's more of a suggestion that we need to emphasize to Ottawa more resources are needed because this is a huge problem here in this drug world. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): I'm going to go to the Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Sure, thank you. And like I said, we've been adding RCMP officers every year since I've been Minister. I have to check the stats, but I would say this budget shows the largest increase in RCMP officers in my time. In

particular, the First Nation and Inuit Police Program has seen a significant increase. We used to have four officers under that program. That is a program that is cost shared differently. Generally, we pay 70 percent of the costs for RCMP, and the federal government pays the other 30 percent. With the First Nation and Inuit Policing Program, the federal government pays 52 percent and so we have been able to get that number from four, and we have an agreement to get that up to -- I believe it's 23 -- 22. And so there's -- in 2023 -- as of 2023, we had nine. And then there was an additional nine, and then an additional four this year. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'll go back to the Member from Sahtu. Is there any further questions?

MR. McNEELY: No further questions. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I want to go to the Member from Range Lake.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, so the increases to RCMP that the Premier's been speaking about, can he just give us a breakdown of where these new officers are -- or how many -- let's start -- I'll do it in smaller checks. How many new officers are being created in this budget? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. There are 13 this year. That includes the four under the First Nation and Inuit Policing Program, and those are located in Fort Resolution, K'atlodeeche -- that will be based in Hay River, Tuktoyaktuk and Whati. The crime reduction unit will be based in Yellowknife, but it is a territorial asset, and it's employed territorially. That would include six, seven staff. Six RCMP. And then we have an increase in the emergency response team. I believe that's two full-time positions in Yellowknife. And then we have an increase of one position in Fort Providence detachment. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from from YK North. Sorry, Member from Range Lake.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, the -- so I've spoken about that I think that this is a worthwhile investment, and I think it speaks to a broader issue of inter -- of cross-border drug trafficking that's coming into the territories. As the question's been raised and someone answered, but does -- in the Premier's discussions with both -- with the RCMP and with his department, like, what is -- what trends are they seeing around drug

trafficking and increased rates of criminality and, in particular, violence and homicide in the last -- since the pandemic? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. In 2019, prior to the pandemic, there were 318 drug violations. In 2022, there were 468. And so that's a significant increase. There are statistics that are released yearly about the police-reported crime. And those show that between 2021 and 2022, there was an 80 percent increase in robberies, which are often things associated with drugs. In the past year, there what's been over a hundred percent increase in the number of drug seizures for the amount of drugs seized. So there's a significant increase that we're seeing. But also a significant response to that increase that we hope is commensurate. And we are working with the RCMP to help get more information out, more stats out on things like this, because we want the public to be aware of what the situation is and what work is being done to address it. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go back to the Member from Range Lake.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Chair. This is kind of more of an opinion-based question, but I think it's relevant. But, like, is the Premier of the opinion that, like the -- not the root -- the root cause is obviously public health issues, obviously drugs and addictions that we've been struggling with for some time. But we're seeing this additional level of organized crime who are bringing more drugs into the communities, who are exploiting things like public housing, right, by capturing public housing clients and using their public housing units to deal drugs in small communities. So how would he tackle that problem without increasing policing resources? Like, what are the other options to deal with organized crime? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. So I mean, I could answer as the Minister of Justice. It sounds like it might be a much more broad question than that, but there are things like legislation like the SCAN legislation which I guess in Alberta is actually the sheriffs use that legislation quite often. I just saw a story about the sheriffs in Calgary closing down a drug house in Calgary. But, you know, ultimately, it's a public health issue and we need to move towards integrating our services, making them easy to access, and ensuring that they are

appropriate. At the end of the day, the solutions are community driven. We can have all the government programs we want, if someone doesn't want to seek them out, someone doesn't want to take advantage of them, then it doesn't really matter. Every time I've seen communities overcome some of these significant issues, these drug crime issues, it's always been community driven. And so what we need is champions. We need champions in the community. We need people to be role models. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from Range Lake.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Chair. And for the record, that was not a trick question. I was sincerely trying to -- because I can't see another solution to this that's not -- that won't take a significant amount of time, and we need some short to medium-term solutions to the organized crime element of this problem while we continue to invest in those long-term foundational changes in resources that our most vulnerable citizens need.

When it comes to the provision of those integrated services, how are the police going to be used -- or policing services going to be used to complement that, specifically around the models that have been successfully used in metro areas where they embed social workers with community policing units, things like that. Is that something we're contemplating with our contracted -- or policing agreement and the integrated case management model? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. So the Member stated that, you know, we need some short-term solutions to deal with the situation we're facing now. And so the focus -- my focus has been on supporting the RCMP, getting more resources to the territory in terms of RCMP and legislative tools for the RCMP, and working with them in any way we can to ensure that they can kick down doors when they need to, and they did deter criminals from coming up here, and then they can just disrupt the life of drug dealers. And so that has been the focus. As I've said, going forward we do need to look at the long term -- the long term. It's not sustainable to just keep adding more and more RCMP. We're not -- we don't want to suggest let drugs and gangs take over and increase the RCMP as that happens. So we really need to look at situations like the Member's mentioned, about having the RCMP work with other departments, like social workers. The RCMP

are open to that. The conversations I've had, they know they can't kick down every door and, you know, jail every drug dealer in the territory. And they're frustrated with some of the roadblocks that have been put in front of them. And they recognize that the solution many times is those other supports, to stop people from getting addicted to drugs, to lower the demand for drugs. And when they're interacting with people in those situations, to ensure that they have the -- can provide those people with the proper supports. And so I don't believe there's been discussions with the RCMP about integrated service delivery.

In terms of what is happening over in EIA as of yet, we are still trying to create that model, ensure it is robust as we bring partners in. But that is certainly the future, I believe, in the territory. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go back to the Member from Range Lake.

MR. TESTART: Thank you. Thank you for the response from the Premier as well. Is there any correlated data between the strength of the economy and the increased rates of crime? And by that, I mean we've seen a dip in economic activity since the pandemic and also an increase in crime. So is there a correlation between kind of a softening economy and the increased rates of crime, addictions, and cross-border drug trafficking? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. When there's an influx of money, you can see an influx of crime. When there is an economic collapse, you can see an influx of crime. And so there's correlations in many different ways. I don't think we've seen the dramatic shifts in our economy that we would -- we could say led to an increase in crime at this point. That being said, I have not confirmed with the stats bureau on any type of correlation that there may be. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. The next Member I have is Yellowknife North.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm actually very appreciative that we're having this conversation that's sort of a more nuanced acknowledgement of the fact that, you know, we can't necessarily solve crime with more police. And I think people know that, but it's easy especially when drug crime and violence associated with it is devastating so many of our communities. We want to find something we can do now, and more police seems like the way to solve it. And I don't think it's the complete solution, especially, you know,

recently our standing committee was up in Inuvik and speaking to the RCMP there and certainly drug trafficking and crime is a huge problem in Inuvik and the Beaufort Delta, and yet the RCMP officer was telling us how frustrating it is that, you know, they'll spend weeks or months and then finally make an arrest or catch a drug dealer, and the very next day someone else will pop up and take their place. And so there seems to be an endless supply coming from somewhere of more and more and more people who will continue this trade. And so I can appreciate the frustration from the RCMP's point of view, and really the whole community's point of view that, you know, we could probably spend endless amounts of resources chasing after drug dealers and not really solve the problem, which is scary and frustrating so I think, you know, inevitably we do have to look at different ways to approach this and trying to, as much as we can, prevent the demand for the drugs in our communities and tackle those mental health and addictions issues.

I did want to ask, you know, we're significantly increasing our levels of police. Has the Minister considered whether we also need to increase resources for court services, legal aid services? Because if we're going to be arresting lots more people, won't we need more resources in those other parts of the system? Has that been contemplated?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. So if someone qualifies for legal aid, then the Legal Aid Commission, if they don't have staff lawyers, can contract outside lawyers. So we haven't been looking at increases in legal aid. And as well, many of these individuals who are coming up from the south don't access -- who are arrested for these drug crimes don't access our legal aid. They have high-priced lawyers in major centres. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Go back to the Member from Yellowknife North.

MS. MORGAN: Okay, thank you, Mr. Chair. And what about court services, will that budget need to increase too?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. In the past few years, we have had some increases in our court officers. Because it is -- they have been stretched prior to this happening. I'll tell you a tough area to get support in a budget is for administrative positions and, you know, court services are no different. So people want

frontline staff. They want money for health care. They don't necessarily want people who work in offices with paper despite the fact that they can -- you know, some of the work they do is invaluable. So we try to balance where we put our resources, and we try to do the best that we can with what we have. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from Yellowknife North.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'll just conclude by saying, you know, it's up to the Minister and Cabinet to really figure out what we need and make that argument to us, even if new positions or aspects aren't popular. I think that's part of the job, and those need to be explained both to the public and to Members why it's needed. So if that's needed, let's hear about it. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Is there any further questions? I'm going to go to Yellowknife Centre.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just want to confirm the -- before I ask the question, make sure I'm on the right page, we're still discussing the area that covers ATIPP?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): No.

MR. HAWKINS: Apologies. My apologies, I'm one page in advance. I shall wait my turn. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Okay. Is there any further questions? Seeing none, I'm going to continue on. No further questions. Please turn to page 320.

Justice, policing services, operations expenditures summary, 2024-2025 Main Estimates \$61,067,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Moving on to services to government on page 321, with information items on page 323 and 324. Are there any questions? I'm going to go to the Member from Great Slave.

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Chair. And I won't steal the Member from YK Centre's questions at all. It's about something different under this section.

So I want to thank the department and the Minister for flagging in their risk and mitigation activities of the business plan on page 211 that the department must regularly adjust legislation, programs, and services with the associated cost implications to ensure that

alignment with federal initiatives, etcetera, etcetera.

I guess my question would be around the legislation division. So, you know, let alone the number of LPs in just simply the Department of Justice, the function of the legislation division acts as a drafter for the entire government. So what metrics does Justice have in place for quality but expedient work on the drafting of legislation noting that Members are eager to see legislation and there's quite a large body of legislation anticipated in this Assembly? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. I don't think we have any metrics on that. I'm not sure if the Member's looking for -- if I can get some explanation of what's meant by metrics. Is it pages per drafter or pages produced per year or things like that? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go back to the Member from Great Slave to clarify.

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Chair. And I'm sorry if I was not clear. I guess I'm trying to say is do we have any way of measuring the expected workload vis-a-vis the amount of drafters that we have and allocating work appropriately? I'm concerned that while the line item for the legislation division has increased since the 2022-2023 actuals, it hasn't increased since last year. And so I'm just wondering -- yeah, on that idea, like are we -- do we have enough drafters, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Yes, thank you for that clarification. I'm going to go to the Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. Yes, we do run into issues with -- I would say the biggest bottleneck is with the French translation. We are required to translate all of our legislation into French. And to be a French legal drafter, you need to be fluent in French, obviously, and also a trained lawyer and also one of the very few trained lawyers who is interested in drafting legislation. And so it's a very narrow subset of lawyers who are available for that, and they are in high demand. And so when there's slow -- issues with the drafting, that is usually where we find them. There are also other issues with, you know, legislation division, they can only draft when departments provide them with the proper information and sometimes during the drafting process, there will -- the drafters will discover that there's a policy issue that needs to be dealt with and that can slow the process down because it has to go back to

the department, they have to look at that policy situation and make a decision. So there's a number of different factors, but. I'll leave it at that. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go back to the Member from Great Slave.

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Chair. And thank you to the Minister for that. I just -- yeah, the reason I'm highlighting this is because I'm not sure it ever has been highlighted before, and I know I have always been very keen and interested in how quickly the mechanisms of legislation churn out of each Assembly, and I think that there is quite a lot of interest in this side of the House to get things going as soon as possible. So I guess more of a comment than a question, Mr. Chair, is to let the Minister and the department know that we would be super keen to have more French language drafters if that's what it takes. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Minister, want to respond?

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. I'm not sure if we're fully staffed in that area. I think we're often down a drafter and so more positions wouldn't necessarily solve the issue. We just need the people, I think. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from Great Slave. No further questions I could see, I'm going to continue on. Please turn to page 322. Justice, services to government, operations expenditures summary, 2024-2025 Main Estimates, \$14,336,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Moving on to services to the public on page 325, with information items on page 327. Are there any questions? Seeing none. Sorry. I'm going to go to the Member from Great Slave.

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Sorry, one quick second. I have it on a screen. There's a lot of things going on on my desk right now.

So with regards to the line item the rental office, so, Mr. Chair, can the Minister please explain as to why the concerns raised in the chief rental officer's annual reports merit a review of the Residential Tenancies Act as discussed in the business plan? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. I believe the review was happening regardless. We have our regular reviews. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go back to the Member from Great Slave.

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So, you know, I kind of took that as an interest on my own accord to go back and look at the annual reports because that was mentioned, I think, in the business plan explicitly. So if you go back to at least the '18, '19 annual report and every one since, the chief rental officer notes that tenants make many inquiries under section 30 of the Act but do not follow through due to likely onerous processes to complete the work of an application. So I would think that additional support for tenants could help alleviate these issues. And so I'd like to ask the Minister if there are any concerns that he knows related to staffing levels at the rental office. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: No, I'm not aware of current staffing levels at the rental office. I know that a few years back -- quite a few years back now, I was still an MLA at that point, though -- it was difficult staffing those positions and it was significantly impacting landlords, especially with small landlords, but my constituents, the ones I deal with, and we were seeing quite long delays in dealing with issues. But I don't believe there's any staffing issues at this point. And I just appointed a few people, actually, in that office. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go back to the Member from Great Slave.

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So can the Minister please clarify if that is the case, if there are more people, why in 2023-2024 revised and in 2024-2025 it's static and, indeed, lower than the 2022-2023 actuals, Mr. Chair. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: I'd like to hand it to Mr. Bancroft. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the director.

MR. JAMES BANCROFT: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The budget is remaining constant in the rental office. The positions that the Minister is referring to are appointments to the chief rental officer and the deputy chief rental officer, which

there is two. One chief rental officer. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from Great Slave.

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Chair. And, again, simply just a strong comment strongly encouraging the Minister to prioritize the timeline of the review to the Act and any possible amendments considering that public safety is a priority of this Assembly, and we hear -- or at least I hear in my constituency, concerns around public safety in rental units. So more of a comment than a question. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. No further questions? Okay, please turn to page 326.

Justice, services to the public, operational expenditures summary, 2024-2025 Main Estimates, \$5,027,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. There are additional information items on page 329 and 330. Are there any questions? Thank you. Moving on.

Please return now to the department summary found on page 297 and revenue summary information item on page 298. Are there any questions?

Seeing none, continuing on. Seeing no further questions, committee, I will now call the department summary. Justice, operations expenditures, total department, 2024-2025 Main Estimates, \$148,586,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from Inuvik Boot Lake.

COMMITTEE MOTION 7-20(1):
TABLED DOCUMENT 93-20(1): MAIN
ESTIMATES 2024-2025, DEFERRAL OF
DEPARTMENT – JUSTICE,
CARRIED

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I move that this committee defer further consideration of the main estimates for the Department of Justice at this time. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. The motion's in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is a carried. Consideration of the Department of Justice, operations expenditures, 2024-2025 Main Estimates, total department is deferred.

---Carried

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

Committee, we will take a break now. Thank you.

---SHORT RECESS

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): We're going to continue on. Thank you. We had a nice little break, and we'll take another break about 8:30 to give the translators a chance to have some tea, coffee. Okay. And I'm going to continue on.

Consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters. Main Estimates 2024-2025, Department of Health and Social Services. Committee, we will now move on to the next department.

Committee, we have agreed to consider Tabled Document 93-20(1), Main Estimates 2024-2025. We will now consider the Department of Health and Social Services. Minister of Health and Social Services, please proceed with your opening remarks.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I am pleased to present the 2024-2025 Main Estimates for the Department of Health and Social Services. Overall, the department's estimates propose an increase of \$36.5 million, or 6 percent, over the 2023-2024 Main Estimates. These estimates support the mandate objectives for the Department of Health and Social Services while continuing to meet the GNWT's fiscal objectives to prioritize responsible and strategic spending.

Highlights of these proposed estimates include:

- \$28.3 million to address forced growth in a number of program areas, including the out of territory supported living program for adults, radiology, and the Yellowknife day shelter and sobering centre;
- \$1.4 million in the new initiative funding for the Transitional Housing Addictions Recovery Program; and,
- \$34.1 million in other adjustments, primarily to recognize funding under

several agreements with federal partners.

These estimates support the priorities of the 20th Legislative Assembly and vision of Budget 2024 by:

- Advancing primary health care reform;
- Improving the public health system and the co-ordination of public education and awareness;
- Improving medical detox programming and establishing transitional housing options to support individuals in recovery from addiction; and,
- Prioritizing initiatives that improve the sustainability of the health and social services system.

That concludes my opening remarks. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Does the Minister of Health and Social Services wish to bring witnesses into the House?

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Yes, I do.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Sergeant-at-arms, please escort the witnesses into the Chamber.

Would the Minister please introduce her witnesses.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. To my left, I have the deputy minister, Jo-Anne Cecchetto. And to my right, I have Jeannie Mathison.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I will now open the floor for general comments on the Department of Health and Social Services. Do any Members have general comments? Okay, I'm going to go to the Member from Frame Lake.

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. And I'll keep my comments relatively minimal but I just had a few things to say that I felt were -- did fall better under general comments than anywhere else. And so I just wanted to say a few things.

Aside from the need for some specific measurables, which I've been speaking to kind of over and over again when it comes to business plans and, you know, we covered with

the Premier in the previous department, but I do want to see us looking and shifting towards outcome-oriented targets in any of the business plans, and I apply that to health also. But I will say that I think the business plan mostly looks good for this department and addresses what has been communicated to me as what needs to change, particularly the item speaking to evolving our primary care system. That was something that was kind of highlighted to me during the election. I campaigned on it. And I'm happy to see that the department is acknowledging the need for that and just, you know, acknowledging that primary care really is the sort of the backbone of the system. And effective primary care is how you get into prevention of so many chronic illnesses and things getting worse. And that access to health care, that's really what that means for me. So I'm happy to see it in the business plans.

The one omission that I don't see in the business plan, and one that I do feel I should speak to is, you know, some of the issues that are going at Stanton and NTHSSA with relation to management, human resources issue, lots of the stuff that we've been talking about in the House with nurses, agency nurses, and I just wanted to kind of speak to and give voice to years of discussion I've been having with nurses and frontline health care professionals about management issues identified, working conditions being untenable, people have either left the system or on the brink of leaving the system. You know, I've recently been meeting with and kind of connecting with nurses, and these concerns continue to be emphasized and re-emphasized. And, you know, the quote that is sticking with me and concerning me the most is this idea that the system is at a breaking point. People are telling us that they are at a breaking point and they need to see change.

And so I think there's a number of ways that can be brought about. I very much appreciate and support and champion the ideas that have been brought forward by AOC in their proposal. I won't speak to those here because they're in the proposal, and I think we need to be cognisant of time. But I do support them, emphasize them, hope that the Minister, you know, takes them into strong consideration.

But I'll leave that as my general comments. There's definitely more to talk about in the health, but I'll keep it brief. If the Minister or department wants to kind of respond to that, just that point on the -- on the (audio).

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Any further general comments? Okay, seeing no more general comments does the committee agree to proceed to the detail contained in the tabled document?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Committee, we will defer the departmental summary and review the estimates by activity summary beginning with administration -- or sorry, administrative and support services, starting on page 195 with information items on page 198. Are there any questions? I'm going to go to the Member from Great Slave.

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Can I just clarify that you said page 198?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Correct, 198.

MS. REID: So administrative and support services? Some questions, so thank you.

Could the Minister speak to -- I'm noticing here on the lines for both operations expenditures summary and I believe -- maybe I'm mistaken. But anyway, at least in the operations and expenditures summary that the -- yes, so for the line items for administration and information services, the costs have continually gone up from actuals to revised estimates from 2022-2023 and in both cases, in these main estimates, have been brought down again. Can the Minister speak to whether or not she anticipates those costs might go up again. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: I'm going to give that to the ADM.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the ADM.

MS. JEANNIE MATHISON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So under the administration and information services lines, the increases between 2023-2024 Mains and Revised Mains are mostly reflective of third party funding for some positions that had time limited. So when we get new positions into the budget, there are certain things that are required to set those positions up, so TSC chargebacks, some supplies and equipment. So those are just one line in the budget and they would get added, and then they would not be needed ongoing for 2024-2025. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from Great Slave.

MS. REID: Thank you for that clarity, that's helpful. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm good.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Any further comments from -- sorry, any further

questions from committee? Thank you. I'm going to continue on.

No further questions, please turn to page 196. Health and Social Services, administrative and support services, operating expenditures summary, 2024-2025 Main Estimates, \$58,109,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): I'm going to go to the Member from Inuvik Boot Lake.

COMMITTEE MOTION 8-20(1):
TABLED DOCUMENT 93-20(1): MAIN
ESTIMATES 2024-2025, DEFERRAL OF
ADMINISTRATIVE AND SUPPORT
SERVICES – HEALTH AND SOCIAL
SERVICES,
CARRIED

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I move that the committee defer further consideration of the activity administrative and support services in the main estimates for the Department of Health and Social Services at this time. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. The motion is in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried. Consideration of the Department of Health and Social Services, operations expenditures, 2024-2025 Main Estimates, administrative and support services deferred.

---Carried

We will now move to the next key activity. Moving on to health and social services program, beginning on page 201 with information items on page 206. Are there any questions? No further questions -- oh sorry, I'm going to go to the Member from Yellowknife North.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. First, just to clarify here, in the announcement -- or the opening remarks for -- from the Minister, one of the big -- the higher profile items was the new initiative for the Transitional Housing Addictions Recovering Program. And can the Minister explain where that funding is located in our budget here? I'm assuming it's probably somewhere on this page 203 under the health and social programs operations expenditure. But can you clarify where we would see that funding and what exactly HSS's role will be in that initiative?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. There is -- yes, it is under this department and it is under the -- sorry, under the other community wellness and addiction recovery. So the new initiatives transition housing and addiction recovery, there's \$1.417 million right there. And the role of the department's going to be in that is -- this is a collaboration between housing and Infrastructure as well as partnering with an Indigenous partner, and we are there to be the -- to support the program in our capacity. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from YK North.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Will HSS be hiring additional staff to support the Transitional Housing Addictions Recovery Program?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: We will be working with the Indigenous governments, and the Indigenous governments are going to be the one that are being to be hiring the staff. We will be supporting those staff with our program. So kind of working together and supporting them in whatever capacity that we need to support those residents that will be living in that facility. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'll move to the Member from Yellowknife North.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So just to clarify, the idea -- will any HSS - you know, mental health workers, counsellors, social workers, outreach nurses, etcetera, etcetera - be, like, going into these facilities and, like, actually supporting them on the ground or all that work is to be managed and overseen by Indigenous governments or partners and HSS is just in the background sort of providing administrative support or something? Can the Minister clarify.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to the Minister.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes, all of the above. I think the way that it's supposed to -- I guess the intent of that program is that the Indigenous governments will support the workers that work there. Housing will -- you know, there will be a housing building or Infrastructure will maintain it, and we will provide services as needed as, you know, required by -- through our partnership with that

Indigenous that will be running the program. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go back to the Member from Yellowknife North.

MS. MORGAN: Okay, thank you for clarifying that. And I'm sure we'll get lots more details soon about that specific program. It's certainly one that I support. It's been a long time coming, to be able to have that aftercare that people have been talking about is a huge gap, and people are -- especially, you know, returning from addictions treatment or programming and need somewhere safe to stay and get back on their feet. I also think there's much scope for more transitional housing/supportive living facilities beyond those needing aftercare, including those just needing stabilization and harm reduction. But that conversation will be to come still, I think.

Another question I have is the budget for the community -- or child and youth counsellor program -- HSS is part of it -- is that also located somewhere in this list of health and social programs? And if so, what is it under and how much is allocated for the child and youth counsellors at this point? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): I'm going to go to the Minister.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you. Just give us a minute to find that level of detail. Mr. Chair, if the Member would like, we can commit to giving that information back --

MS. MORGAN: Sure.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: -- to the committee. Thanks.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go back to the Member from Yellowknife North.

MS. MORGAN: That's fine. The exact details, I'd be happy to get in writing later. Does the Minister know, though, are there child and youth counsellor positions that have been reduced from 2023-2024 to 2024-2025? Have we lost positions between last year's budget and this year's budget?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. With the transition of the way that the program merged, like, works with ECE now, there was a reduction in the amount of CYCs available to -- in the program under health but that those dollars were transferred -- that's the operating

dollars for ECE to use for their program. So, yes, there has been. They just been moved to ECE, the funding for those positions that have been discontinued. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from Yellowknife North.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you. And if the Minister doesn't know off of the top of her head, I'd appreciate getting that in writing too, just the number of positions within HSS that have been reduced in terms of the child and youth counsellor program.

Next, I wanted to ask about the line item community clinics in health centres, which I understand are the ones providing primary care services which, as we know, is to be the focus of this Assembly. You know, according to our business plans, our mandate document, we're focusing on primary care. So I was puzzled to see the main estimates of \$82.5 million is less than last year's main estimates and considerably less than the 2022-2023 estimates. Can you explain why this line item has gone down so dramatically?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. This is the area where there is some sunseting funding, so from some federal funding. There were a number of programs -- a number of sunseting funding that's equivalent to that, which was \$6.5 million. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go back to the Member from Yellowknife North.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Can the Minister or deputy or ADM provide any explanation of are we losing services related to primary care because of the sunseting of those federal funds, or what's the impact on frontline services there to the public? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, under this area, what the -- the bigger piece of the deduction was the COVID endemic funding. So the sunseting of this funding for the transition from COVID-19 to pandemic to endemic. So that's what a lot of that money is that's changed. So that's gone. There is the labour market supplement for NTHSSA and TCSA, sunseting of the one-time funding approved to support recruitment and retention of health care professionals, and the labour

market supplement HRHSSA sunset of one-time funding approved to support recruitment and retention of health professionals. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go back to the Member from Yellowknife North.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So thanks for that additional detail. But I'm still interested in knowing how is that going to impact services from the public's point of view. Can the Minister give any more detail on that?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you. So the labour market supplements, those ended March 31st and I think to the Member, you know, there's only so much I can talk about those because we're in collective bargaining right now and so that's a reduction that will, you know -- what comes out of collective bargaining. As per the COVID endemic funding, that sunset funding, I can turn it over to the deputy minister to fill you in with more details in that area. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the deputy minister.

MS. JO-ANNE CECCHETTO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you, Minister. So it's very odd hearing yourself speak, so apologies. What we can say about the COVID -- the reduction of the COVID funding was primarily to support activities directly related to COVID. So things such as testing centres, things such as vaccine efforts.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Hang on a second. Just wait a couple minutes, and we'll try to get it sorted out. Testing, one, two, three. We're going to take a five-minute break until we get this sorted out.

---SHORT RECESS

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Okay, we'll continue on. We've got that issued resolved. We'll continue on with the Member from Yellowknife North.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I think we were just in the middle of an explanation as to possible impacts to public services of the reductions to the line of community clinics in health centres for primary care.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): I'm going to go to the Minister.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So going back to the COVID endemic funding.

So when that sunseted, we also -- and I announced -- remember, I did that long list of all of the different funding pots that we just recently -- so the shared health priorities that we got funding from Health Canada for activities under the new bilateral agreement and the Working Together to Improve Health Care for Canadians, which includes family health services, health workforce and mental wellness, substance abuse, that was an increase of \$4.382 million to this budget. There was an increase with the collective agreement. So that offsetted -- so those positions that we had -- that long list of positions that ended with the sunset funding of COVID, we tried to mitigate that with a lot of the new positions that -- and it also covered some of the positions that were -- you know, where we were keeping with that funding. So it's kind of more of a math thing in here. We've sunsetted this much, and then there was an increase of the \$4.382 million to offset some of those costs in that area. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. The time has ended on the ten-minute mark. I could put your name back down if you wanted to go further. I'm going to go to the Member from the Sahtu.

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm glad to see that the -- there's an increase of 6 percent. Hopefully it's going into the right programs, being as efficient as it could be. And when we hear a lot of the news on lack of nurses, so we got to rely on agency nurses, and we hear the ongoing delivery problems with medical travel, pre-assessments, so when I hear that and I look at the business plan and the supported financial documents to that plan and I look at the list of programs and -- or health and social programs that this department's offering and services and so on, so taking a real holistic approach to this, knowing there is some weaknesses out there, is the department going to entertain or going to pursue an outside management evaluation of this department? Is it part of that goal to see -- to seek an outside opinion on where can we improve, what policies need to be changed, what funding has to be moved to be more efficient because of the demand? So I just ask that question, if there's going to be an outside evaluation to help improve our system of delivery, including staff retention? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, there has been a number of reviews within this department, and one of the most recent -- you know, we have the governance review. And I have mentioned it in this House,

and we're finalizing reviewing that. It was an outside independent review of the governing structure of the NTHSSA. And within programs and policies, I think that's one of the things where when I look at with programs and policies, this is where the direction of the mandate, the direction of the business plans, you know, this is our job as the -- as the Legislative Assembly and, you know, the direction of our priorities to put the -- put that focus on where we want to see this department going. And I think when we look at our business plans as one of the areas that -- you know, when we talk about putting those high level in the business plans to our departments to give that direction, that is where that -- you know, that leads what policy work and things that are going to be reviewed and followed up and held by this House to make sure that that's what's happening. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member of Sahtu.

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yeah, it was more of a suggestion on how to improve our management system. The management system is really the governing organization of this department, and if we have collectively identified various weaknesses how do we fix that. So it was just a suggestion. We do have a co-management structure in place called our territorial wellness and regional wellness councils. So I've been telling some leaders back at the Sahtu, we have this joint venture, or whatever you want to call it -- in this case co-management system -- to deliver and improve our services because our people are coming to us for assistance to mitigate through that. So that vehicle or that wellness council could be used in our headquarters to see how we can improve out there. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Did the Minister want to respond to that?

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Yes. No, I appreciate the Members, you know, putting the word out there on the regional wellness councils because one of the things that I do as the Minister is I work closely with the leadership council, and they are the governing body of the Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority and they are -- you know, they get the direction on, you know, what our priorities are as well, and they are the ones that are the administrators of all of the health programs. So it's really important that the Northwest Territories realize that those regional wellness councils are the voice of the regions, and those issues that they bring forward to the territorial leadership is what guides the governing council, which is made up of all the

chairs, to direct the Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority as well as direction from, you know, myself with, you know, with the chair. And coming from this House, you know, like, the priorities of this government, you know, that's what directs. And so I appreciate the -- this is a collaboration between -- and that model was very supported by Indigenous governments as it is the voice of the regions. And so it's very important that regions know that when people are being appointed to there how important their role is in the voice of the regions of the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from the Sahtu.

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. That's all I had at this point in time. Mahsi.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Is there any further questions? I'm going to go to the Member from Monfwi.

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: I see in here community clinics and health centre, there's a decrease. So what programs and services are affected by this decrease?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go over to the Minister.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, this is where the sunsetting is, so the labour market supplements and the COVID endemic funding. That is what is the decrease within this department. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from Monfwi.

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you. And the community mental wellness and addiction recovery, I think this is where that -- the transitional programs or for housing, for addiction recovery, I think you said it's under this community wellness. I just wanted to ask, I know that we've been talking for last two days the impacts of drugs that it has on our communities, on our people. And in Behchoko alone, you know, like, I mean, we have huge problems. And when our residents, they go for treatment, some of them they go back to the same old, everything's still the same, there's no change to the place that they're returning to, and there's nothing. There's no aftercare. So some of these people that we're talking about, they last a day after spending like two months. And I know that it's greatly needed. I'm glad that you guys identified that. But it's going to Inuvik and Yellowknife. But some of the people don't want to leave our community. So I know there's a great need for one in Tlicho region because we still have issues with -- because of there's

no aftercare, some of these residents are going back to a place where, you know, all the activities is still happening and they're still homelessness, you know. We really do need a program similar to the one that's going to be in -- that's going to be allocated in -- or going into Inuvik and Yellowknife. We need that service in Tlicho region, probably in other regions as well, because for the last two days we've been talking about the impacts of drugs and alcohol, especially drugs, you know, that it has on our people. So I just wanted to ask the Minister if -- I know it's not in here in this budget but if they can -- I'm just wondering is that a pilot project?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, what we -- I guess where to start is that the department, you know, working with -- as I mentioned, with housing and Infrastructure, did kind of a callout to and got some interest from different NGOs, and so we were able to come to an agreement with two within the funding agreements -- like, within the funding and the resources that we do currently have to be able to move forward on two. However, I hear the Member. I know this is a -- you know, we don't know how it's going to work but we know it's better than what we have. You know, there's nothing, right, for aftercare. So I think this is a great initiative, and I look forward to this initiative being able to support people in those two communities. And, you know, I've always -- you know, I will -- any Indigenous government, any NGO that, you know, I think would benefit from these in most of our communities but as right now, we're -- you know, our resources are tied into these two programs. That's what we have enough for. If there are Indigenous governments that want to work together and, you know, and they have idea of things like this, this is where I think we want to do things differently. We want to work with Indigenous governments. You know, if they can access funds -- like, there's new -- like within the 2024-2025 federal budget, there are different pots of funding that are specific for Indigenous governments under mental wellness, and I think that we will find out what those details are. We have stressed from the Northwest Territories to the federal Minister of health on what the needs are of the North. And so we're hoping that will help form their decisions and policy to be able to support us in the Northwest Territories for more programs like this. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from Monfwi.

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you. Thank you for that. And I'm sure our leaders are listening, so I guess, you know, I am glad that, you know, that you said -- well, that this government is working really hard to maintain a good working relationship with the Indigenous, which is good. So I know that something -- this kind of program, it's good for other regions as well. So hopefully we will keep it in mind for the next fiscal year, you know, because due to the resources we have.

So this program for -- the transition program that's going to Yellowknife and going to Inuvik, is that going to be operated -- the service provided by the health and social services or NGO? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, the day-to-day operations are going to be -- of running the facility is going to be by the NGO; however, Health and Social Services' role is to support that NGO and the needs of those clients in whatever area that they need to be successful in their recovery. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from Monfwi.

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Okay, thank you. And also I see here -- okay, the compensation and benefits, this fiscal year for 2023-2024 for the main estimate went down for 2024-2025. Do you know which region is impacted by this?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I think the reductions in this area was part of the sunset of the northern wellness agreement related to -- and then there was a reduction in COVID endemic. I don't have the details as to specific which region those were, but we can figure that out and get back to the Member.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from Monfwi.

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you. Yeah, that's it.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): I'm going to go to the Member from Great Slave.

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So I want to preface this question with the fact that I've had really good conversations with the Minister on this, and I think where she and I differ on the perspective of this issue is the how, not the

why. The why being, of course, that we want to have midwifery services in our smaller communities, especially for our Indigenous folks who are giving birth. So my question, however, is, you know, given that the GNWT has made repeated public commitments to the expansion of midwifery in the NWT, how did it arrive at the decision to discontinue the establishment of midwifery services in Yellowknife and the surrounding communities without consulting the public, the midwives association, the NWT advisory committee for midwifery, or the Indigenous advisory board? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, this was part of the restoring balance. And so those conversations happened and so we had to make some tough choices, as many Ministers will speak to some of the tough choices that we had to make as a government. So thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from Great Slave.

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Could the Minister elaborate a little bit further on why midwifery in Fort Smith and Hay River is considered adequate in her mind to base expansion to midwifery in the territory? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, midwifery began in Fort Smith, and midwifery in Fort Smith began with two midwives. And those two midwives did the majority of the births and if not all the births in Fort Smith, and ran the only midwifery program in the Northwest Territories. I don't have exact dates but we have expanded that program over the years. So midwifery expansion happened in Fort Smith to an additional nurse. Then it expanded into Hay River. And currently, they have expanded from Hay River into supporting Fort Resolution, Deninu Kue, and the Metis of that community. As of right now, we've had to suspend that service because of staffing in Hay River. There is a current vacancy there. We have just recently gotten Fort Smith, since February, back online to be able to provide births. Those two communities are very fragile, and we need to make sure that those expansions there are successful in the Northwest Territories before we can expand further. And so the choice was to put the efforts into supporting those two communities to ensuring that those communities that do not

have any other choice, don't have any other options of birthing services, to ensure that those programs are stable. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from Great Slave.

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Chair. And thank you to the Minister for that explanation. I deeply respect midwifery in both Hay River and Fort Smith as necessary and crucial to those communities; however, the arguments that have been presented to me from midwives here locally is that Yellowknife has a high number of births and the opportunity to be a place where midwives -- Indigenous midwives can learn and seek to become a midwife here in the territory, it's very difficult to get into midwifery school outside of the territory, and to build that capacity up and to cut off the program here at the knees is a little bit frustrating. I mean, I know the Minister knows it's frustrating for these folks. They're being very -- very vocal as is their desire. But I guess is there any desire to continue the Yellowknife program in some form? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I want committee to know and I want, you know, the Members to know, and as well as the public to know, that there was actually no program because there was no positions. They're all vacant. They have been vacant. You know, the vision of, yes, making Yellowknife a training ground but, you know, those are just visions. And, you know, and I hear the Member, and, you know, if that was something that was happening, you know, it would be very hard. But with the positions -- this has gone back many, many, many years. It's gone back to -- that there's been, you know, sporadic -- we'll get a midwife and then, you know, it's not successful. We don't have enough. The positions, they're not being filled. And so, you know, here we are now and having to make decisions within this government knowing that, you know, there's areas where we could utilize different, you know, areas of funding. We've heard from the Members loud and clear all of the needs that they want and all the new things that they want and all the new things that I want to do as a Minister to make changes, and so this money has to come from somewhere and these positions that were vacant for many years, you know, this is just one of the areas that we had to seriously take a look at. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from Great Slave.

MS. REID: Yeah, thank you, Mr. Chair. And thank you to the Minister for that. I guess I'd just return the volley and say, you know, there are two student midwives who are here as summer students in the health work in town right now at this moment, and I guess I put back to the Minister, you know, where are you going to recruit from? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, we have vacancies in Hay River and Fort Smith. You know, when we look at midwifery and if we're looking at expanding those students, I mean there's jobs throughout the territory that are not always in Yellowknife and they're not always in Inuvik and they're not always in Hay River. And if those are the two areas that we want to train in, sometimes we have to go and move to where those are. And midwifery -- you know, when I look at midwifery, I do support midwifery because I do support it to be there in those communities that don't have any birthing services. So, you know, like I said, there's a vacancy in Fort Smith, and there's a vacancy in Hay River, and so there's always -- you know, there's ways that we can support those nursing students in those communities. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from Great Slave.

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I think we're both entrenched in our positions. I'll leave it at that.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from Mackenzie Delta.

MR. NERYSOO: Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's good to see the community mental health wellness and addictions recovery with an increase in this year's mains. I've always stated that, you know, community-based programs will work for our people who are hurting. This is no different. So my concern is funds going to the regional government versus the community. I can see funds going to the regional organization in terms of providing addictions counselling. And, for example, in the Beaufort Mackenzie Delta region, the Gwich'in wellness camp, there's -- I'm sure it's going to be funded because there's a lot of interest. There's a lot of individuals expressing interest and people who did go for counselling, but they had no aftercare. So it'll be good if some of these communities can access funds to set up a friendship centre because I've noticed when people do come back from addictions recovery programs, they have no place to go. They

wander around the communities. And within a week, they're back with their old friends because they have no place to go. In the past, they had friendship centres where you can go and hang out or actually get counselling from qualified people who went through these traumas. So will there be more funding for communities to access funds to start up sort of a friendship centre or a service centre where clients can go and meet with counsellors? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, and I really appreciate the Member for bringing, you know, one of the things that I think -- when I looked at this fund last week before I went out to meet with an Indigenous organization and community, was that the community wellness and addiction recovery fund was opened in two regional governments until January 31st of this year to apply for multi-year funding. Only three organizations had reached out. And so now that those three organizations has reached out, there is a little over \$3 million in that fund, and it can be used for mental health and addictions in very flexible, as I mentioned in the House too, as well that, you know, it could be used for on the land. It could be used for any Indigenous government and so in your communities can apply -- like, each one of your communities can apply on this fund. It's a first-come-first-serve basis. So I can provide more details. And I think am, actually got my department, because when I recognized that this wasn't being accessed I encouraged them to put together something that I can send out to all the MLAs so that they can let their Indigenous community governments -- because I think with this fund, it's for Indigenous governments. And then there's also -- not just under this fund, but the suicide prevention fund, there's another additional pot of money that can be accessed and is flexible to use towards suicide prevention in your communities. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from Mackenzie Delta.

MR. NERYSOO: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you to the Minister for providing that information. It's good to see that there is projects such as on-the-land-based programs. It'll be good to utilize some of these funds for that. So I will be informing members of my region that there is limited amount of money on

a first-come-first-serve basis to help their community residents.

On another note, long term care and continuing care services. In the past in Aklavik, they had the Joe Greenland Centre, which was used very well by the whole region. There was people from Old Crow, people from Fort McPherson, Tsiigehtchic, Inuvik, that stayed in this facility because they were looked after well and they were looked after by Indigenous workers, so they felt comfortable. And right now that facility closed, and it's used in a different way. And what I've been hearing from members of the community of Aklavik is they require more community support services because elders who live at home, they don't -- they have to administer medication and sometimes they have multiple meds that they can't read or they don't know which ones they were supposed to take. So I wonder if there will be some increase in the community support services specifically for Aklavik where they've written the letter stating that they do need help in this area. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, that is in a different section that we haven't got to yet. But under this section, I know there is home care and home support work that does support communities. And so if you want to move on to the next section, or did you want me to wait to answer to that when we get to that section, Mr. Chair?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I think we could wait until we get to that section. I'm going to go to the Member from Mackenzie Delta.

MR. NERYSOO: Oh, I'm good there. That's good. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Now next on the list I have is Member from Range Lake.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, so I know that there's sunsets to -- oh, and I'm not sure if they're here. Anyways, so just related to labour market supplements to recruitment to referrals to -- recruitment and retention, period. And it's close to \$3 million. So how is the department making up for this? I know we're in the midst of a bargaining process so is there a plan to bring something -- is there a reserve being set aside in case there's a need for this resource to be brought back once those negotiations are concluded? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. It'll be details will come after bargaining is done. And, you know, I mean, I think there's not much more information that I can provide as I don't have that. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from Range Lake.

MR. TESTART: So the -- like, the labour market supplement was brought in around -- like, many provinces and territories were bringing in those kind of bonuses during COVID when health care professionals were leaving their profession or going towards private agency jobs that are much more lucrative, and the supplement existed outside of the collective bargaining process through an agreement with the union. So can the Minister explain why that -- why we're waiting for collective bargaining to decide whether or not to bring that back? Because my understanding is it's not a -- it's not related to that. It's in addition to the collective agreement. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. That agreement expired on March 31st, and that agreement was decided during an urgent need, during COVID, and so it's now part -- you know, I mean, now there's collective bargaining on, and so that's as much as I can say about that. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go back to the Member from Range Lake.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Well, I look forward to the conclusion of collective bargaining, then. Hopefully we have clarity on what we can provide to frontline health care professionals.

So I'll turn to the midwifery cuts and also to the need for agency nurses to staff obstetrics at Stanton Hospital. Why is the department having such a hard time providing birthing services in the Northwest Territories or investing in birthing services? Because it seems like we're not really interested. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. You know, for myself, I was a labour and delivery nurse, so I don't understand why nobody wants to be a labour and delivery nurse, so. But, you know, for the most part I know even when I was a manager trying to convince some nurses to go and train to be a labour and

delivery nurse -- it's a specialty. It's just like any other thing people want to do. And, you know, and I think for a long time here once we -- one of the issues that we know that within the current obstetrics where we -- I mean, it's not a secret that there was many vacancies over COVID, and then that's when, you know, it enacted the time that we needed to start using agency nurses to ensure that we could provide birthing services back in Yellowknife. And since then, we've done lots of training. We've trained nurses. We've provided training. We provided combination training of education so that they could get the mentoring and the specialized training to be able to become obstetric nurses. And so we're starting to get more in that area. As of right now, they still need mentors because they're not independent and so that's why we're still having to use agency nurses to bring in because we don't have any permanent staff that are available or able to recruit at this time. And our goal is to be able to train enough nurses. And then with the change in model in supporting those registered nurses to be able to work at their scope, we've changed the model so that we could bring LPNs on into the obstetric unit, which wasn't there before. And that is taken off the weight of the RNs so that they can do the job that they need to do and then the LPNs can support them in that department. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from Range Lake.

MR. TESTART: Okay, thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I was going to ask the Minister if she cares about obstetrics. Clearly, she does, so I appreciate that. So when's this going to kick in, right? Like, because it's -- it sounds like a plan. It sounds like we have the resources coming together. So when can we expect this new model to take over and the agency nurses to be relieved of their contracts? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's currently ongoing right now. So that's the process, and that's what we're hoping that we will be able to phase out, the use of agency nurses, you know, in that area. And so it's currently -- we had a forced growth submission, and that's in this budget. So we're hoping that, you know, that will support that -- those additional nurses in that unit. But we are actively doing that training and I think recruiting, and I think there are LPNs now being trained into that unit. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from Range Lake.

MR. TESTART: Can the Minister be more specific in terms of a target? Like, ongoing doesn't give me much comfort. Ongoing could be 30 years from now. So I'm wondering if we can get a fiscal year that meets the department's timelines, because of course, it can't offer this training indefinitely - there are budgets attached to it, there's staffing attached to it. So can the Minister give us a fiscal year when this -- when the changeover will take place? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, this is -- like I said, I'm sorry I can't give you a specific date or time. There are nurses that are going through this and being supported are different levels of where they are. And, you know, it can take up to one to two years for that specialized to be independent in this area. You know, we want to make sure that they have all the training that they need to be independent. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to go back to the Member from Range Lake .

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So one to two years, that's, what, 2026? So could the Minister commit to having -- phasing out agency nurses by 2026? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I can't commit to phasing them out, and the reason why is I -- you know, I mean, somebody might go on mat leave. You know, somebody might move away. I can't tell the future of what the future of that staffing model will be. You know, we phrased out the -- by utilizing a lot of our education programs, the agency nurses in the operating room but, you know, every time somebody leaves and we don't keep them, you know, there's an opportunity that that service could shut down. And as many -- like as I mentioned in the House this week, is that some of the smaller communities, it's not just Stanton, it's not just Inuvik. It's keeping the health centres open when we've exceeded every other way to try and recruit a nurse to ensure that that health centre doesn't close, and that will impact our small communities significantly if we didn't have an option for them. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from Range Lake.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Chair. If you look at trends in public health care systems that use agency nurses, private health care, it always starts small. It's always a department here, a hospital there, a clinic there, and they start and it keeps ballooning, ballooning, and ballooning, and soon it's \$65 million to provide a service that used to cost \$10 million. And this is the case in Ontario, in Quebec, in large centres. It's the case in smaller provinces as well. I am watching the time, so I will wrap up here so the Minister can respond. But if you put an agency nurse into a small community, you will never get any other type of nurse in there because you'll never be able to meet those wages and then we're paying a huge premium for every community health centre. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, you know, I think many of our communities are, you know, we have different models that are going on in our communities. We have job shares. We have term nurses. We have full-time indeterminant ones that have been there for years. The last resort that we want to use is agency nurses. And, you know, as a nurse I know that sometimes, yes, you're frustrated with that model but when you're the only one in there and that's the nurse that's going to come in and relieve you so you're not working 24 hours a day, you're very appreciative to have some time. So I hear the Member. I hear the concerns. What I can do, and I will continue to do for the Northwest Territories, is continue to advocate at the national level that this is a national crisis. Like, this is something that our health care system cannot sustain in the Northwest Territories and it cannot -- our public health system in Canada cannot sustain this. And so I will continue to bring this to the national table when -- at the FPT tables. I am a small territory but I'm pretty loud and I can be pretty strong, and I'll play the room with what I have to do, you know, I mean this takes the country to change. It's not going to be me saying I'm not going to use these five nurses this week, because they will just go somewhere else. And as long as they have somewhere else to go, we will continue to lose nurses here. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from Inuvik Boot Lake.

MR. RODGERS: That's me. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, first of all, I thank the Minister

and her staff. Monumental task. Huge department. Appreciate the work you guys are doing.

You know I've been an advocate for -- obviously for addictions, mainly for aftercare, and I'll certainly be speaking with the Minister on that come capital budget time and be prepared for that. But I know for now -- I know as I spoke to in my Member's statement today, the Gwich'in have built a wellness centre, are working -- having the wellness centre that they're working on using for trauma and for different addictions. We know that the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation are in the process of building a family centre which, again, will be focused on wellness. So I guess my question is, you know, from the business plan, what was the department been doing or plan to do looking with regards to kind of interaction, cooperation, if any, with these two groups and any possible maybe redundancies there as well that we can probably see as they kind of continue, as the Indigenous governments are doing in my region, and ramping up in all areas and this is certainly one of them. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, this is -- you know, I hear the Member. And, you know, we've started our bilateral agreements as a Cabinet meeting with -- you know, we'll be meeting with all of the different Indigenous governments. And this is one of the topics that I'm sure will be on the agenda when meeting with the Indigenous groups in the region and how do we work together. I know that the -- you know, that they have very good leverage on federal funds up to date to be able to do the things that they've done with their centre. How they run programming and how we move forward, you know, I think that's -- we will continue to work close with all Indigenous partners that are running programs. As I said many, many times, and you'll see in the business plan, that we want to be able to have as many wellness and culturally relevant programs to people in the regions. And so this is where I -- you know, I want to make sure my focus is, is how do we work together in collaboration, how do we work together to access as much funds federally together for the operations of not just the program but, you know, Inuvialuit has their program going. I know that the Tlicho has programs that they want to do. Every single government I've heard from, I've spoken to, we all heard from all of the Indigenous governments when we were elected, that they need money and they want to work together on programs for their people in their communities,

and that's what I want to do with them. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from Inuvik Boot Lake.

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Chair. And I thank the Minister for that answer. And, yes, of course, I mean, the funding that they receive to -- for in the Gwich'in -- for the Gwich'in centre to renovate, they got the feds, and I know that the Inuvialuit as well got federal funding to build their new centre. You know, and, yeah, we need their money likely more than what they need ours. But certainly for programming, and I get that. And I know this will -- both these programs will dovetail very nicely into the new aftercare centre we're going to build there next year. So that's great to hear.

So the other thing I wanted to mention -- and I know the Minister's heard me mention this in the House before -- is in our -- it is in the document that AOC has presented, and that's the dialysis machine for Inuvik. And I know we've spoke about this before. I don't think it's a huge cost for the machine and why I bring it up here, likely the CT scan would likely be a little more that's in there. But the dialysis machine, I think it's very important. Hay River has one. Yellowknife has two. I have spoken with people in Inuvik that if they don't need it, they may need it in the near future, and it would just be an absolute shame if someone who's lived in that area their whole life, or for 30 or 40 years, now have to move because they can't get that medical service they need. And I know we discussed this, and I know there's an issue with finding, you know, the right people to be able to operate this machinery, but I can't help but think there's got to be a way to train someone to be able to do that. And I guess, you know, has the Minister and has her department considered a way that we can potentially put a dialysis service in Inuvik? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I know that there was a review done I think 2020. We do do reviews on patients that, you know, with renal disease and where they are and what their needs are going to be. I'm not familiar when -- I mean, I can get back to the Member as to when the next planned review will be. I'm sure it's going to be soon, to just find that out. But another area that I -- you know, and this is part of our business plans is the chronic disease management. And this is a chronic disease. And so when we can better know and better control our -- what we -- you know, with our chronic disease management in the

Northwest Territories, we'll have a better handle on what supports are needed in the Northwest Territories. And as well as, you know, doing more into the health promotion and, you know -- so we were preventing these things from happening. I know not all renal disease is preventable. Sometimes, you know, there's certain things happen in people's lives that this happened. But I will say that I will commit to making sure that we have another review done soon to making sure that we see what the numbers are in the Beaufort Delta, you know, to require a service like this. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from Inuvik Boot Lake.

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Chair. And, again, thank the Minister for her answer. And I must say I was quite impressed as well when she didn't even flinch when I mentioned that the two other programs will dovetail nicely into her new aftercare facility she's building in Inuvik next year. So it's a good sign.

No, that's all from me, Mr. Chair. I realize that, you know, we also have a CT scan in there. I know we're going to have a conversation around that, but. So I have no further questions, just to say thank you and keep it up. It's not easy.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from Frame Lake.

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I made some comments in my opening comments about the various kind of -- the sort of crisis that is being faced at NTHSSA, and I think I don't need to repeat those comments but was hoping to get a response back from the Minister and the department on ideas they are bringing forward to address these kind of issues.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. As I mentioned, you know, I mean, I've had these discussions on the floor of the House so I'm not denying that, you know, there has been many concerns brought forward. I know that there will -- you know, that the department is doing work. I know that there was an employee satisfaction engagement done and the results of that will -- you know, will help us guide some of the work. And, you know, we've heard from the Members. We've met -- you know, we've met with some of the Members and some people that are advocating for some of these changes. And, you know, that is one area like I keep staying to my staff that I just want to be

able to fix this, you know. And just like everybody else, I want to -- you know, I want people to go to work and be supported. I want people to go to work and feel like they -- you know, that they're -- they want to be there. And so how we get there, it's going to take -- you know, it's not going to happen overnight because this issue didn't happen overnight. It's many years, you know. And I mean, it didn't help us with, you know, the COVID crisis in our health care system across Canada. Not even across Canada, across the world. And so there's many areas that we're looking at to try and increase support to staff, to increase staffing. You know, one of the other Members have raised, you know, international educated nurses. You know, my colleague from ECE, we will be meeting with CAN to look at different ways on how we can support -- you know, what's needed to support that, you know, how can we work -- you know, so there are many things on top of all of the other things in health that we're trying to achieve for residents. And I understand like, we are -- we need good staff and we need happy staff to be able to provide those programs to our residents. So I'm not sitting here going to say that everything's perfect, and I know things need to be done. And we've got some plans and we've heard some recommendations. And how we get there, I think it's going to take a little bit of everything. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from Frame Lake.

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. And, you know, I think we've got a big budget to get through here. I'm not going to belabour this point. I do appreciate the Minister acknowledging the problem. I do want to see the department, you know, actively working on finding solutions, trying things. You know, we've talked a lot in the business plan about taking risks, breaking status quo. You know, don't be afraid to try things. And if it's not working, try something else. I can just commit to continuing to keep the pressure on as long as I'm hearing from constituents about these ongoing issues.

Mr. Chair, I'm not going to repeat items that I think have already been raised by my colleagues and spoken to by the Minister. But I just want to say I strongly support midwifery in my community and support many of the comments raised by my colleagues on health. But I'm going to leave it at that for this page. Thanks.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from Sahtu.

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. When I look at the programs and the funding and the grants coming in there, it sort of encourages me to say here's solutions. As I mentioned several times here, I'm quite -- I would say quite proud about the actions taken by leadership to address the drug issue that we're experiencing right across the territory. But in our area, the leaders are grasping the problems and taking a hold of it and doing some planning and having some consultations. And this coming after the weekend, they're going to listen from the youth. So the youth is going to raise their list of priorities, and it's going to be incorporated into this plan. So when I look at this funding, I see a lot of good supports there for resources to support the plan of transition to eliminate the plague problems. But these problems are costing this government, I would say, millions of dollars. And if we have to pay for a medevac, I don't know how much that cost is, but I can only imagine it's costing the government quite a bit just for the airplane, not to mention the staff and the treatment.

And to help be more efficient on medical travel, will the department look at setting up a PY? We used to have -- the Sahtu used to have a medical travel coordinator. Anyway, it was taken and directed back to Yellowknife. But have we got any room for setting up a medical travel coordinator in the Sahtu? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, at this time I won't commit to that because what I am committed to is -- in the business plan is taking a look at the medical travel and how we move people around is going to -- you know, I'm hoping we'll be able to -- I guess what I want to do is I want to implement, by the end of this government, a better way to move people, a way to make sure that when people have medical travel -- and this is -- you know, are not as stressed about getting the medical travel as they are about having to go to the appointment that they're going for. You know, and I think we've heard that many times and so I won't deny that, you know, that's sometimes the feeling, especially when you're not getting your travel on time or the day before. And we know that this is -- you know, there's many reasons why, you know, our staff are working hard. They have so many medical travel things in front of them. Like I said yesterday, I think our stats are just under 50,000 people we are moving a year. So, you know, with a small team and so, you know, how I hear the Member that if there is -- if a position in Norman Wells is going to better support medical travel and the outcome of this, then you know that -- I can see that being put forward as

some of the change. But as of right now, I don't want to commit to any changes and I don't want to put this on any person until we can -- you know, we can really figure out -- and review the program and review how we're moving people in the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from the Sahtu.

MR. McNEELY: Yes, thank you, Mr. Chair. And thanks for that encouraging reply by the Minister.

On my last trip, which was a one-way from Norman Wells to Yellowknife, it cost the government \$1,800. And there's many cases where medical travel patients are coming here only to find out the appointment wasn't booked but it was booked for a month later, or other cases where people actually told me their experience. So that's why I say it's costing the government because of some mistake that was made and it seems to be quite common for medical travel patients to come to their appointment when, in fact, it was the day before or the day after or next week. So in the meantime, it's costing our government. So if we can look at, as the Minister said, the movement of patients back and forth to their home community -- on the spirit of efficiency, I still recommend having a PY to focus on movement of patients. But I'm encouraged by the Minister saying that she will look at it. So thank you very much there, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Next on my list here I have the Member from the Deh Cho.

MRS. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Chair. My question is to the Minister on x-ray machines in small communities. Do all small communities have x-ray machines? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. All the health centres that have health centre nurses in them do. The health cabins, however, do not. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'll go to the Member from the Deh Cho.

MRS. YAKELEYA: Thank you. That's good to know because these x-ray machines help with early detection of illnesses if there's people that have TB, pneumonia, or lung issues, and can save a lot of time from people getting medevaced to Yellowknife or having to come for services here. If their illness is something like pneumonia, it'd just probably have to get

them -- I'm not a nurse but I've had pneumonia, so I've had to take antibiotics. But the only time I've got tested for that was here in Yellowknife, so. Yeah, so that's one's that I just needed to know, are all those machines in the communities working and in good working order.

The other one I have is on community services. We're looking at that. And it's good that the department is supporting communities and addictions and stuff like that. Is there a community -- the health doing anything with on-the-land healing? Is that something that this department is working on? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, just to the first part of the Member's question is x-ray machines maintained. All the x-ray machines are maintained by our biomed and they are -- like, they're all maintained in the communities.

And to the next question, the on-the-land program, health is not running those types of programs. What the Indigenous governments have told us is that to make the funds available and more flexible for them, and so that's where the community wellness and addiction recovery fund it. And so that's where Indigenous governments from the communities can apply to access those dollars. And there is a fund, as I said, is a first come first serve. And so I would encourage, there is a staff member to help in community government, like the Indigenous governments to do their proposals, to work with them, to support them, to access those dollars. So I would encourage the Member to -- you know, to provide that information to their Indigenous governments and their communities. And they can use those for on the land. They can use them for hiring, you know, mental health workers. They can use them to do youth programs, you know, things like that within the community that are targeted for mental health and addictions. Yes, thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'll go to the Member from the Deh Cho.

MRS. YAKELEYA: Thank you for the Minister for that response. Is there a number for the budget and a length of time that they can run these programs? Is there -- like, what's the max for the budget? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'll go to the Minister.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. There was a set amount for regional

governments to be able to apply. As a region up until January 31st for multi-year funding. After that -- after April 1st, then it opened up to Indigenous community governments. And so individual Indigenous communities can apply up to 208 per -- that's for the regional. \$208,000 a year.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from the Deh Cho.

MRS. YAKELEYA: Thank you. And so that \$208,000 a year, that's multi-year funding so they'll get that for three years?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Yes, I would encourage -- like I said, there is -- it is a set dollar in the budget, and it is now open for first come first serve. So that's why I'm saying, like, I encourage people to reach out to -- if they want to run on-the-land programs and they want to do these types of things in their communities, speak with their Indigenous governments in their communities so that they can access -- work with our department to access those dollars and do their -- you know, I think they're proposal-based, but there's a set amount per community. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'll go to the Member from the Deh Cho.

MRS. YAKELEYA: Thank you. That's all the questions I have for the Minister for that. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I have one more, then I will go to the Member from Range Lake.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So the electronic medical records system is now deployed in all communities in the Northwest Territories, which is good, but unfortunately it needs to be replaced, which is not so good. And I understand that the replacement cost is somewhere between 20 to \$30 million. I know this is an issue because I was seeing my doctor recently and the terminal in the examine room wasn't working, and the system was down. So we had to actually go to his office and figure things out there. So this -- and it's causing an inability for services to be shared with other -- with Alberta and a whole bunch of other hosts. So this is a thing that, like, needs to be replaced urgently. What is the Minister's plan to deal with this problem? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, again, this is one of the things that's in our business plan. I know it -- you know, I've had asked questions because the timeline is long. We started rolling out the EMR before, way back when I was still practising. And we finally just got it into the last community in the Northwest Territories. So now that we have to replace the -- it is a multi -- I guess to explain it, there's multiple systems. And so I think what the Member's referring to is like right now, what we want to do is looking into -- when we designed the system, I think the goal is -- you know, we've heard many times that our system doesn't speak to other systems. There's things in our system that it doesn't do because it's old. And so it's taking an account of all of the things. You know, we'll be working with our -- like, the frontline staff, like, as the needs, the doctors, what their needs are, what we need to transfer -- you know, if there's a possibility that we can access, you know, blood work. You know, we've heard all of those kinds of things that when we're going into Alberta as one of our service providers. So it is a huge task. It will be a large -- you know, there will be a large cost to that. So the RFP will go out in September for phase one, and we're hoping that we'll be able to begin that process. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from Range Lake.

MR. TESTART: Okay, thank you. That's more imminent than I expected, so that's good. That's good that we're moving towards that.

So we spend an awful lot of money on the authorities, which is to be expected given the cost of health care. But often I think there's a disconnect between what is accountable -- what the Minister is accountable for and what the authority's accountable for. And certainly when it comes to some of these workplace issues we're hearing about, some of the performance of health care services, there seems to be that disconnect. And I think that the Minister needs to be empowered to be more -- to have more direct -- ability to direct the authorities and to change things if they're not working instead of working through the board and all that. I think we see a health care system that's not performing optimally and where -- and it's not performing efficiently or effectively as well with the resources it's being provided. We keep giving it more money, and the results aren't changing that significantly. And I don't think the answer is just more money.

So how does the Minister propose to create more accountability and transparency around NTHSSA management so the public can be

assured that there's value for money in health care programs and services? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'll go to the Minister.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I hear what the Member says, to keep putting more money in here but, you know, Members keep asking for more stuff we keep needing more money. But no, you know, and I think one of the things that I will say is that, you know, within the department, it is -- there are many things that haven't been budgeted, you know, and they -- I guess for health, knowing in the health authorities, this is all the frontline workers. So when we think about health centres, when we think about, you know, staffing the units, making sure that there's always -- like, it's not a place where you can just close -- the nurse just doesn't show up that day because they're sick or they have a sick kid. There's always areas where we have to make sure that that is filled and overtime over years and years and years has never been budgeted. So that's always been -- you know, and I mean, I had my own system when I was a manager to make sure that we kind of limited how much overtime was happening and making sure that, you know, people weren't working into third weekends and things like that because those things drive up the costs that are not budgeted and that's what's driving up the deficit. The thing when we talk about -- you know, there's more programs, there's new ways of doing things, there's -- everything costs more. Salaries are going up every year and yet trying to expand programming into 33 communities. And it is expensive. So when we talk about how do we -- you know, I work with the leadership council. The budgeting process, you know, things that we are budgeting, making sure that those things are being spent on those things that are budgeted for and that's why when we have things that aren't -- you know, for years and years, if we have O and Ms that aren't being spent, or if we have positions that are vacant that are not -- you know, we have to really, really look at all of those things and say, you know, where do we repurpose this money and so that it's not just being spent into the department and we don't know where it's going. So I think those are the things that we've been working on. I know Minister of Finance has been -- is making sure that I'm making sure that I'm following that. So there is a lot of work, though, that still needs to be done and I have -- I kind of -- my department and finance have been working more together to kind of take more control and see where -- not necessarily control but where the money is being spent and how is it being spent. And the big part is is that there's so many things that we

are -- as an insured service that we are to provide and then there's the other things. So those are the things that have been built into our health care system that we provide that have been political, that have been -- over the years that have been, you know, there's no -- you know, we keep saying there's gaps here, there's gaps there. So where do they fit in? They usually end up fitting in in health. And then it's not something that it's in our core job to provide but we end up providing it because if we don't, then there's a gap in service. But those all cost dollars. So thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from Range Lake.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Is there -- I appreciate where the Minister's coming from, and there's always going to be a push and pull between the -- or the demand for services versus what the government can realistically provide. But when we have our auditors telling us that take a look at how we're spending health dollars because it's unsustainable and it's, you know, causing the government -- the government's public accounts to teeter on a knife's edge, that's a problem that we need to solve.

So is the Minister willing to look at different models of governance for the authorities that would allow more closer scrutiny -- or sorry, more control and accountability and transparency and more action directly from the Minister over the operation of the system? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chair. And I hear the Member. And, you know, I'll echo what I've said is, you know, what we are funded for and our core programs and services and what we provide to the Northwest Territories, the things that are not covered in other territories and provinces that we provide over the years that we have just -- you know, we have decided as a government, and many governments up until now, that this is something that we need to provide to our residents is why we are in the shape where we are. And every new thing that we ask for and we want to do that's not a core service of health and social services that's a funded insured service that we can be billing for or, you know, from Canada becomes out of our pocket and so then it comes out of whatever the government's -- like, whatever we have as a territory left. So, you know, we've been working on a lot of things. Like I said, the NHIB agreement, trying to get that fully federal

funding so that way that frees up those dollars. But even though we -- you know, we freed up \$24 million this year, it's still -- it goes to our operating costs that we normally would need to spend for our health care program. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from Yellowknife Centre.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Maybe just the -- if it's been asked, maybe just a quick snap answer which is how much money do we spend in aftercare? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): I'll go to the Minister.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I think as of right now for aftercare, what we have is the budgeted for THARP. Up until now, I don't believe we -- you know, we provided wellness, you know, for homeless and things like that but we haven't had fund up until this budget for aftercare, and that is where the THARP program falls into that. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'll go to the Member from Yellowknife Centre.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And exactly how much would that specifically be? So in other words, what's the specific number dedicated to aftercare? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'll go to the Minister.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you. This budget has \$1.417 million, and that would be for the two THARP programs. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'll go to the Member from Yellowknife Centre.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chairperson. Under community wellness and addiction recovery support fund, they look very similar to mental health -- sorry, mental wellness and addictions recovery. So you have a 3. -- we'll call it -- 055 budget and a \$125,000 budget. What is the true distinct difference between the two; why aren't they collapsed and put together? Thank you. Because they say similar things.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'll go to the Minister.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Sorry, Mr. Chair. Just trying to get that. Are you asking -- I'm going to have to get back to the Member unless he can clarify which line item are you?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'll go back to the Member from Yellowknife Centre to clarify.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The community wellness and addiction recovery fund, we have just over \$3 million, and then under mental health and addictions recovery fund, which is just over a hundred thousand dollars, why isn't -- what's the distinct difference to have two specific different line items? They say similar things, and I'm trying to understand why we don't collapse and make one. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'll go to the Minister.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Sorry, the \$3.055 million is the community wellness and addiction recovery fund, the one that I keep kind of talking about that Indigenous governments can apply on. And that is separate from the mental wellness and addiction recovery capacity building fund -- or no, sorry, the mental wellness and addiction recovery fund. In the one here is, 125, is used for the youth addiction prevention and youth detox model.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from Yellowknife Centre.

MR. HAWKINS: Of course I'd recommend a hundred percent reprint of the whole budget just so we add the word youth. No, I don't. But I would recommend if it's targeted at our youth, then we should put in brackets youth just to help clarity. More of an edit there than concerns.

So maybe we could jump to one of my favorite topics, doctors. Why don't we start with how many doctors do we have employed under this service, and where do we find them? Thank you. In which authority -- thank you -- when I say where do we find them.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'll go to the Minister.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. You'll find doctors under all three authorities and so that -- here, well, you'll see grants, contributions, and transfers, when we transfer those dollars from the department to the health authorities and later on you'll see in the activities where we -- the health authorities later in the budget, so. But we do have a list of all of the different, like, FPTs, and I think we have a subtotal of 56.5, yes, regular physicians.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'll go to the Member from Yellowknife Centre.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, amongst the three authorities, if I understand it correctly, could I get the breakout of how many in each authority and adding the specific dollar amount of contribution to that allotment? So in other words how many are in the Inuvik authority and how much that's distributed financially and then successively. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'll go to the Minister.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: We can provide that information to committee.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'll go to the Member from Yellowknife Centre.

MR. HAWKINS: Yes, I'll take that. Is it lengthy? Because then it makes it difficult to ask my next question. But I'll take it as well in paper. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'll go to the Minister.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Yes, we can provide that the Member. Just, we don't have all of it -- like, I have the number, 56.5. How we break it out, I'd have to provide that later unless you want to sit here all night, we can calculate it.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Okay, thank you. I'm going to go to Yellowknife Centre, the Member.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you. It makes it difficult to ask my next question but I'm willing to work with you folks. The challenge, of course, on my next question is I'd like to know what the normal staffing capacity at each region authority thereafter including what dollars amounts are being not spent for doctors. So that makes it very difficult to ask my next question. Perhaps the Minister sees where I'm going and maybe someone, including herself, is able to answer that. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you. I'm going to pass it to my ADM, Jeannie Mathison, to see if she can help answer this question. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the ADM.

MS. JEANNIE MATHISON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'll speak in terms of FTEs just to -- I don't have the dollars tied here on this page. But there are 56 and a half funded family physicians, and 28.9 of those are currently

filled. So that's about 50 percent. There are 25 specialists, and about half of those are also filled with resident doctors right now. So in total, 81 funded physicians, and 41 of them are currently filled. The vacancies are generally staffed with locums. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from Yellowknife Centre.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you. And I'm assuming you'll have the breakout provided in written form so I won't keep beating a dead horse.

So does the cost of the locums eat up the full remaining approximately 40 doctor spaces in the -- I'm assuming the financial dollars, which I don't have here, but I'm sure you understand the point is that do the locums eat up the remainder of the money? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Yes, we usually end up having all of the budgeted item for physicians used up by the permanent and the locum doctors, and sometimes we may even go over, so.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from Yellowknife Centre.

MR. HAWKINS: Yeah, no, thank you. With the response of the other written information that the Minister said she'll provide, can I find out where outside the regular authorities we go? So, for example, I'm assuming we don't have a doctor in Fort Simpson as an example, but do we send locums there? Is that charged to the, for example, the remaining amount -- I'm trying to find out how we get doctors into the other regions outside of the main three, and what is that cost. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I guess each region -- so I know in the Beaufort Delta, the physicians are scheduled to travel from -- like, if they're hired as indeterminate doctors in the Beaufort Delta or locums to fill the vacancies, they are all scheduled to -- each community has its scheduled allotment of visits per month and those doctors will service those communities. The same thing in the south. There's different models for different areas. I mean, if you want more detail I can pass it on to the deputy minister to describe the south of the -- and there's the doctors from Yellowknife that travel out. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Okay, thank you. Time ran out. Because we got the translators here, we're going to take a 15-minute break.

---SHORT RECESS

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Order. Okay, we're going to continue on. We're going to do a hard stop at 9:30, so last ten minutes, so it'll be 9:20, so we'll continue on until 9:20, and then we'll get the Speaker back in the House. We'll continue on.

Next on the list I have here is the Member from Yellowknife North.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Now, I know there's many things that I'd like to speak about but I want to focus my limited time here -- it's already late -- on the midwifery program and my understanding of its potential. So my understanding is that a lot of work has actually happened over the last few years even though it seems on paper that positions have remained vacant and the potential of the program has just sort of languished. What I've heard is that actually a lot of ground work has been done to lay the framework for a territorial program. And that has been the focus is -- even though, you know, work might -- some work might need to start in Yellowknife or be based in Yellowknife -- I shouldn't say start. There's already work that's being done in the South Slave. But what I'm understanding is that Yellowknife could play a really important role in territorial-wide program.

As my fellow Members mentioned, there obviously are many births in Yellowknife so it's an important training ground, training site. And the vision would be to expand the program to many other communities outside Yellowknife but the fear is that if the YK-based portion of the program is, you know, destroyed completely, that that could actually jeopardize the program across the entire NWT.

So one idea is to -- that I heard today actually, potentially we could reduce the budget that was on the books for the last few years but keep plugging away at the groundwork for another couple years and keep laying the foundations to carry along that road towards the vision of a territory-wide midwifery program. I know that there are two midwives in training who are eager to begin work in YK once they're done school. And they're not done yet but, again, that -- the pieces were being put in place and just to sort of abandon that or -- would be a real shame at this point.

So what I would throw out there as a possibility is that we could stay the course but perhaps pull

back on costs from sort of the full amount that had been allocated from the program.

What I'm wondering is if the Minister would be willing to meet with NWT Midwives Association to better understand this groundwork that has been done, the implications of just sort of cutting all of the expansion money at this point, and try to find some kind of reasonable compromise to not lose all the work that's been done up to this point. So would the Minister be willing to meet with the association and consider options?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes, I'm always willing to meet with any groups. You know, like I said, I'll meet with Indigenous groups, I'll meet with any groups. I'll meet with Members. You know, and I hear the Member and, you know, and I fully understand where, you know, this -- like I said, these are some decisions that we had to make. But, again, I'll leave it at that. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I will go back to the Member of Yellowknife North.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm encouraged to hear that, and I think that we could -- that's a promising start and that we could still find a path forward. So I'll leave it there for today. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Is there any further questions? Seeing none, no further questions, please turn to page 203.

Health and Social Services, health and social services program, operational expenditures summary, 2024-2025 Main Estimates, \$384,586,000.

Sorry, I didn't see your hand. I looked around. There was -- okay.

The Member from Yellowknife Centre, I just had a quick question for you, is we had Members speak out already and they had their allotted ten minutes. Are you going to need ten minutes? Okay, I'll give you the latitude. Keep it short and sweet.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just a couple quick easy questions. The first one is fee for service doctors, and the Minister asked me questions on the last one and I couldn't answer because I ran out of time. But the only area I just -- and I'll respect the time and Members are all getting tired, including myself. I'd like to know how many fee for service

doctors we have in this section. So in other words, how many in total.

And out of the locums that we hire, are they hired as fee for service and can information specific to their type of costing, if possible, be provided. And I suspect, assuming that goes easy, that will tie me off for information wise this time around on this page. Thank you. If it goes easy.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Chair. We have one.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from Yellowknife Centre.

MR. HAWKINS: So I'm not going to drag this on. Just to clarify, we only have -- that's not like two half times. We're talking one doctor only in the Northwest Territories working for fee for service. Okay. I'm seeing nos.

And our locums, are they working for fee for service, or are they -- I'm seeing nos. So I've answered my own question. That's all I need. Okay. Thank you. I have agreed to move on. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): All right, thank you. Okay, I'm going to continue on. Again, please turn to page 203.

Health and Social Services, health and social services programs, operations expenditures summary, 2024-2025 Main Estimates, \$384,586,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Moving on to the long term and continuing care services, beginning on page 207, with information items on page 210. Are there any questions? No further questions, I'm going to continue on.

Please turn to page 208. Health and Social Services, long term and continuing care services, operations expenditures summary, 2024-2025 Main Estimates, \$72,657,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Moving on to out of territory services beginning on page 211. Are there any questions? No further questions. Please turn to page -- sorry. My apologies, I want to go to the Member from Yellowknife North.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just to confirm, we're on out of territory services, right? Okay.

So the budget for residential care for out of territory services, so that would cover supportive living arrangements for adults in a residential or group home setting for extended periods of time in facilities outside the NWT. And so I understand that in many cases that the people that would require this kind of residential care might have very specialized needs or, like, particular conditions that, you know, can't be met with services or facilities inside the NWT. But I'm also hearing from the NWT Disabilities Council and other advocates that in some cases, we have adults with certain challenges that could actually be met if there were increased supports for them to be able to stay at home or assisted living or ways that they could remain at home and remain in the community and that it's actually costing the territory much more money by sending them out of the territory to live for extended periods of time. Sometimes they can't really come back and live.

Has the Minister considered or done analysis of the number of cases of adults being sent for residential care outside the territory and what -- how many might have benefitted from better services inside the territory that could be provided that would assist them to stay at home and stay in their communities? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): At this time, I want to excuse the witnesses and the sergeant-at-arms, could you escort them. And thank you for your time and have a good evening, everybody. Thank you.

---SHORT RECESS

Report of Committee of the Whole

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Colleagues. Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

MR. EDJERICON: Mr. Speaker, your committee has been considering Tabled Document 93-20(1) and would like to report progress with three motions carried. And Mr. Speaker, I move that the report of the Committee of the Whole be concurred with. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh. Do I have a seconder?

Member from Yellowknife North. All in favour? Opposed? Abstentions? Unanimous consent, good job.

---Carried

Third reading of bills. Orders of the day, Mr. Clerk.

Orders of the Day

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Orders of the day for Tuesday, June 4th, 2024, 1:30 p.m.

1. Prayer
2. Ministers' Statements
3. Members' Statements
4. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery
5. Replies to the Budget Address, Day 6 of 7
6. Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills
7. Reports of Standing and Special Committees
8. Returns to Oral Questions
9. Acknowledgements
10. Oral Questions
11. Written Questions
12. Returns to Written Questions
13. Replies to the Commissioner's Address
14. Petitions
15. Tabling of Documents
16. Notices of Motion
17. Motions
18. Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills
19. First Reading of Bills
20. Second Reading of Bills
21. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters
 - Minister's Statement 4-20(1): 2023 Wildfire Season Review and Planning for the 2024 Season

- Minister's Statement 5-20(1): Emergency Management Preparation

- Minister's Statement 17-20(1): Reaching Average \$10 a Day Child Care in the NWT

- Minister's Statement 24-20(1): Health Human Resources Recruitment and Retention

- Tabled Document 93-20(1): 2024-2025 Main Estimates

22. Report of the Committee of the Whole

23. Third Reading of Bills

24. Orders of the Day

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. Colleagues, for you that are going home tomorrow, drive safely, fly safely. Enjoy your weekend with your family and friends, and we'll see you bright-eyed and bushy-tailed on Tuesday.

This House stands adjourned until Tuesday, June 4th, 2024, at 1:30 p.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 9:15 p.m.

