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**LEGISLATIVE  
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**The Honourable Shane Thompson, Speaker**

# Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

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(Nahendeh)

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**YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES****Wednesday, March 5, 2025****Members Present**

Hon. Caitlin Cleveland, Mr. Edjericon, 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, Hon. Shane Thompson, Hon. Caroline Wawzonek, Mrs. Weyallon Armstrong, Mrs. Yakeleya

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

**Prayer or Reflection**

---Prayer or reflection

**SPEAKER (HON. SHANE THOMPSON):**

Please be seated. I'd like to thank Judy Selamio for the opening prayer. Ministers' statements. Minister for ITI.

**Ministers' Statements**

**MINISTER'S STATEMENT 109-20(1):  
FEBRUARY 28TH MEETING OF THE  
COMMITTEE ON INTERNAL TRADE**

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Mr. Speaker, strengthening internal trade is essential to ensuring that businesses across Canada can grow, compete, and thrive. With the United States' decision to impose a 25 percent tariff on Canadian imports and the Canadian government's counter-tariffs, Canada urgently needs to strengthen our internal trade framework. Studies show that eliminating interprovincial trade barriers could add billions to Canada's gross domestic product annually, lower consumer costs, and improve supply chain resilience. The committee on internal trade is the place where federal, provincial, and territorial Ministers responsible for this file meet to discuss breaking down barriers to internal trade. For 2025, the Northwest Territories is the chair of the committee on internal trade.

Mr. Speaker, in the last six weeks, since the threat of US tariffs emerged, the committee on internal trade has met three times; most recently on February 28th in Toronto. Through these collaborative efforts, we are making real progress to strengthen Canada's domestic economy, especially since reducing internal trade barriers and ensuring Canadian business have greater access to domestic markets is critical to mitigate the economic impact of US protectionist policies.

During this most recent meeting of the committee on internal trade, we reviewed and advanced several key recommendations endorsed by First Ministers on February 4th:

- Strengthening commitments under the Canadian Free Trade Agreement, including a rapid review of all party-specific exceptions and completing financial services negotiations;
- Second, expanding mutual recognition efforts to reduce regulatory burdens. This includes pursuing priority sector mutual recognition for goods. I am also happy to announce that all jurisdictions are now participating in the Mutual Recognition Pilot Project in the trucking sector;
- Facilitating labour mobility by working with the forum of labour market Ministers to streamline professional certification recognition is the third recommendation, Mr. Speaker; and,
- Fourth, advancing sectoral priorities such as supporting willing provinces and territories to set up a direct-to-consumer system for alcohol and developing an enhanced Team Canada trade promotion approach.

Mr. Speaker, these initiatives are critical for businesses in the Northwest Territories. By reducing unnecessary barriers, we are helping northern businesses expand, lower costs for residents, and improving the movement of goods and services.

The Northwest Territories understands the importance of a unified approach on internal trade. Over \$530 billion worth of goods and services move across Canada each year, representing 20 percent of our gross domestic product. Ensuring that NWT businesses, and businesses across Canada, can access broader markets without unnecessary regulatory burdens is key to unlocking future success.

Initiatives like the mutual recognition pilot project in the trucking sector have strong potential to benefit the North by lowering costs and improve efficiency for businesses and communities.

Ministers on the committee on internal trade intend to maintain our momentum. We are dedicated to swiftly implementing the

recommendations to reduce trade barriers and will continue to engage with Canadian businesses, workers, and stakeholders. As Canada faces new economic challenges, the work of the committee on internal trade is more important than ever.

Mr. Speaker, this committee has updated First Ministers on our progress. I look forward to continuing this important work to ensure our economy remains resilient and competitive in the face of global challenges. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister of ITI. Ministers' statements. Minister responsible for Housing NWT.

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 110-20(1):  
HOUSING NORTHWEST TERRITORIES  
APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM

**HON. LUCY KUPTANA:** Mr. Speaker, Housing NWT continues to expand its inventory of public housing units. These new units will provide stable living conditions and reduce homelessness for vulnerable populations. Safe, affordable housing improves the quality of life. It impacts health, self-confidence, stability, and stronger families, giving people the chance to look beyond survival and focus on opportunity.

New units, however, are only part of the solution. We face a shortage of certified tradespeople, both here and across Canada, to build and maintain existing units. This shortfall delays construction projects, increases costs, and impedes economic development. We need more carpenters, electricians, plumbers, oil heat system technicians, and housing maintainers, to keep our buildings safe and structurally sound.

But Housing NWT has a plan, Mr. Speaker. We are committed to working collaboratively with Indigenous governments and organizations, Aurora College, and the Department of Education, Culture and Employment, to ensure apprentices have greater access to education and employment opportunities. By strengthening these partnerships, we can better support apprentices in building successful careers while also contributing to sustainable housing solutions that meet the needs of NWT residents.

Our apprenticeship program aims to alleviate labour shortages by providing opportunities for residents to gain the skills and education necessary to secure trade jobs in their home communities.

Mr. Speaker, in the 2024-2025 fiscal year, Housing NWT allocated an annual budget of \$861,000 to the apprenticeship program,

resulting in the hiring and training of apprentices by the local housing organizations.

Since the launch of Housing NWT's apprenticeship program in 2007, 24 apprentices have become certified tradespeople and that number is expected to continue to grow. Housing NWT works closely with the Department of Education, Culture and Employment's apprenticeship, trade and occupation certification program. ECE supports apprentices in receiving hands-on training with certified trades people and getting the necessary work hours and classroom instruction to achieve trade certification. Starting April 1, 2025, Housing NWT is funding three new apprenticeship positions, bringing the total number of positions from 12 to 15.

Housing NWT is building capacity over the long term within the construction industry by requiring an apprentice work assignment for all new construction project contracts. As a result of that, Mr. Speaker, Housing NWT contracts have supported 64 NWT apprentice work assignments with our general contractors since 2020.

Mr. Speaker, through our investment in trade apprenticeships, Housing NWT accomplishes several objectives. We are building a skilled workforce by reducing employment barriers and promoting career opportunities in isolated and Indigenous communities. We are bridging employment gaps through worker training. Finally, we are providing preventative maintenance to save money and extend the life of our buildings and systems. We are creating new opportunities for Northerners and building more homes for Northerners through our investments in trade apprenticeships. We are investing in people, Mr. Speaker, that will help us build the future. Quyananni, Mr. Speaker.

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

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 111-20(1):  
IMPORTANCE OF GETTING VACCINATED

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Mr. Speaker, vaccination is one of the most effective ways to protect residents and communities from serious diseases. Today vaccine hesitancy and misinformation are weakening trust in the science and public health. As a result, vaccination rates are declining, leaving residents, especially elders and children, vulnerable to preventable diseases. Right now, Canada is seeing more cases of influenza, measles, and pertussis (whooping cough). The NWT is not immune to these trends.

Measles vaccination rates among two-year-olds have dropped from nearly 90 percent in 2019 to just over 82 percent in 2024; well below the national target of 95 percent. Similarly, only 69 percent of two-year-olds have received diphtheria, tetanus, and pertussis vaccine. Seasonal influenza vaccination rates have also fallen, with only 18 percent of residents vaccinated this year. These low rates put our most vulnerable population - children, elders, and those with chronic conditions - at serious risk.

Mr. Speaker, vaccines save lives. They have drastically reduced deaths from diseases like measles, polio, and diphtheria. But because these diseases are now rare in Canada, many people forget how dangerous they can be. Unfortunately, this sense of complacency, along with the rapid spread of misinformation online, is leading some to question the safety and importance of vaccines. Some are rejecting evidence-based science and falling for fear-driven messaging that puts lives at risk. Vaccine misinformation spreads quickly through social media, making it harder for people to make informed choices. We must push back against false claims with clear, fact-based communication that empowers people to make the best choice for their health. The same time, we recognize vaccine fatigue is real.

The number of recommended vaccines has increased, and some people feel overwhelmed. We need to change the conversation from fear to empowerment. Vaccination is not about pressuring people; it is about giving them the tools to protect their loved ones and communities.

Mr. Speaker, Indigenous peoples in the Northwest Territories have long faced health inequities due to colonization and systemic racism. Historical traumas, such as forced residential schools and medical mistreatment, have created mistrust in our health care system, including vaccines. Addressing vaccine hesitancy in Indigenous communities requires more than facts; it requires building trust through culturally-safe care and meaningful engagement with Indigenous leadership and knowledge-keepers.

The resurgence of measles in Canada and the United States is alarming. Measles is one of the most contagious diseases in the world, infecting nine out of ten unvaccinated individuals exposed to it. If vaccination rates continue to decline, Canada could lose its measles elimination status which it achieved in 1998.

Mr. Speaker, diseases do not respect borders. If vaccination rates do not improve, we will increase the risk of outbreaks from outside of the NWT. This puts countless lives at risk and adds further strain to our already overburdened health care system. Vaccination is not just an individual choice; it is a collective responsibility. It protects those who cannot get vaccinated such as newborns and those with compromised immune systems.

As Minister and former public health nurse, I urge all residents to check their vaccination status and make sure they are up to date. Talk to your health care provider, visit your local public health unit, and get the information you need from trusted sources. Science has given us the tools to fight these diseases; it is up to us to use them. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister of Health and Social Services. Ministers' statements. Members' statements. Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

### Members' Statements

#### MEMBER'S STATEMENT 562-20(1): CONDITION OF K'ALEMI DENE SCHOOL FACILITIES

**MR. EDJERICON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, yesterday I spoke about the Kaw Tay Whee School in Dettah which is a half a century old and separated from a small gymnasium. The school is undersized, and the school must be replaced with a proper gymnasium attached so the students do not have to walk outside even during the freezing winter months to access it. Today I want to highlight another concern.

N'dilo residents have the fact that their K'alemi Dene School reached capacity for many years. Within just a few years of the new school opening, the growing need of the community began to exceed the K'alemi Dene capacity. Currently the school is supporting over 162 students when the number should not exceed 120 to ensure appropriate classroom sizes. These concerns were brought forward almost a decade ago during the 18th Assembly, yet it was later learned in 2020 that other priorities took precedent over these projects' inclusion into the capital plans. It is now five years later, and students in both Dettah and N'dilo are still struggling to access the space they need to learn and exercise. So far, we can't even secure the funding needed to plan for these projects.

The department has been aware of these issues, and yet three separate MLAs over the

years have been told their students are not a priority. Education is a treaty right.

I also want to touch on the point I made yesterday about the N'dilo gymnasium. The school agrees that in addition to these additional classrooms, a proper sized gymnasium that doubles as a community hall should be added as well. This two-in-one approach will save costs and support YKDFN youth and more importantly support recreation activities. However, this will only happen if the Minister commits to working with the YKDFN leadership and local DEA. The constant denying and deferring these projects by her predecessors have resulted in the GNWT violating the treaty rights of Treaty 8 and also against the Canadian Constitution. The Minister must take action if she wants to uphold YKDFN constitutionally-protected treaty rights. Mr. Speaker, I will have questions for the Minister at the appropriate time. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Tu Nedhe-Willideh. Members' statements. Member from Inuvik Boot Lake.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 563-20(1):  
AVAILABILITY OF MEDICAL BOARDING  
HOUSING IN YELLOWKNIFE

**MR. RODGERS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's come to my attention that the Keskorie boarding home in Yellowknife has reached capacity. In addition, Mr. Speaker, hotels across the capital are also at full capacity. This presents a serious challenge for residents from my riding who must travel to Yellowknife for medical and dental care. Some of these individuals are making long and difficult journeys, Mr. Speaker, for critical medical appointments, appointments they've been waiting for, sometimes months. Yet, when they arrive, they are faced with the distressing reality that there is nowhere for them to stay.

Mr. Speaker, this situation is very distressing. The boarding home is full, and even when alternative accommodations are sought there are no hotel rooms available. These individuals, many of whom are elders, families with young children, or people facing serious health concerns, are already under tremendous stress due to their medical needs. The added burden of not having a safe and secure place to stay only compounds their anxiety and uncertainty.

Mr. Speaker, this is a fundamental issue of access to health care. We do not want to see residents forced to reschedule or even cancel their appointments as this could have serious consequences for their health and well-being. We must ensure that no one has to choose between receiving medical care and having a

place to stay. Mr. Speaker, we need immediate and long-term solutions to this issue. NWT residents deserve a safe and comfortable place to stay when they are travelling for medical care. I will have questions for the Minister at the appropriate time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 564-20(1):  
UNINSURED COSMETIC MEDICAL  
SERVICES

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, imagine after a long struggle, you're finally about to undergo a surgery you've been waiting for. You've worked your way through multiple doctors' offices, gotten your referrals in order, and have persevered patiently on the waitlist. Yet, just as you arrive for the operation, you are asked how you're going to pay for it. Up until this moment, it was your understanding that this crucial surgery came at no cost. Now you're faced with a choice: Pay thousands of dollars or give up on the opportunity and, with it, the better quality of life you've worked so hard for.

This is sadly the experience of my Range Lake constituents. In their determination to correct their health, they have lost an impressive amount of weight, so successful were they that they were suffering from a severe amount of excess skin. Through -- though the body dysmorphic disorder that triggered this serious affliction on its own, the pain was physical as well. The skin was pinching their nerves and giving them serious discomfort around their tailbone. Sitting for long periods of time proved unbearable. Doctors agreed that clearing up and contouring their abdomen was medically necessary and made the commonsense assumption that given these operations were part of one treatment, all the costs associated would be taken care of. Well, it turns out they were wrong, Mr. Speaker.

Health and social services were bound by a nonsensical policy dictating that skin removal was necessary, but the contouring was cosmetic; therefore, half of the operation had to be paid out of pocket because it was uninsured, yet the constituent could not choose one without the other. Clearly, these archaic policies must be reviewed, and the Minister does not want to change the rules to fit a handful of situations, exceptions are necessary to ensure this constituent, and those who find themselves in similar circumstances, do not suffer the same indignities.



Today I will give the Minister of Health and Social Services the opportunity to right this wrong and commit to bringing her policy -- new policies regarding the insurability of cosmetic surgeries in certain exceptional circumstances in line with the intent of Canada -- the Canada Health Act's mandate for the accessibility of medically necessary services free from financial barrier. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Range Lake. Members' statements. Member from the Sahtu.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 565-20(1):  
SAHTU TOUR FOR NUTRITION NORTH

**MR. McNEELY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, March is National Nutrition Month. With this year's theme being Nourish to Flourish, the links between food, good health, emotional resilience, and social connections cannot be underestimated.

Mr. Speaker, Food Bank Canada, in collaboration with Nutrition North, is planning a promotional tour of the Sahtu region in April. This initiative will bring together representatives to meet and engage with leaders, community members, on the critical topic of food security and explore how the Sahtu region can position itself to address its unbearable high cost of living challenges.

Mr. Speaker, the vision extends beyond immediate relief. Aside from ideas of setting up a food bank distribution centre in the regional hubs, the dream of having community food bank centres in each of the Sahtu communities is a goal we envision. These centres would not only provide essential food supplies but would also allow for traditional foods to be available to the community members, honouring our cultural heritage while addressing immediate needs. This approach aligns perfectly with Food Banks Canada and the northern food security program which supports Indigenous and community-led initiatives to promote food sovereignty in the remote and Indigenous communities. Their goal is to fund the sustainable programs that increase food security and support in building networks to share knowledge and resources.

Mr. Speaker, I am encouraged by the collaborative approach that we have taken working with local communities to develop solutions that address specific needs. The commitment to understanding, proposing solutions, and advocating for policy change represents a comprehensive approach to tackling food insecurity in the North.

In closing, as we observe National Nutrition Month, let us remember that true nourishment encompasses not only physical health but the overall flourish of our communities. The planned activities for the Sahtu region represent an important step towards ensuring all citizens have access to nutritious and culturally-appropriate food. Mahsi.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from the Sahtu. Members' statements. Member from Mackenzie Delta.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 566-20(1):  
ALTERNATIVES FOR INCOME SUPPORT  
PROGRAM

**MR. NERYSOO:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I rise to give some clarity to this House on the recipients of the income support program. First and foremost, it is not my intention of trying to punish the users of this program that is initiated by the Department of Education, Culture and Employment. My intentions are to try and give the independence back to the residents of the Northwest Territories. One of my main goals as I became MLA for Mackenzie Delta riding was to find alternatives to the program for the recipients.

Mr. Speaker, the income support program is in place to assist the residents for a short period of time, not to make a living off this essential program. There are definitely people out there, the disabled and the elderly, who require the assistance of this program to make sure their well-being is indeed looked after, and the income assistance program addresses this need. Mr. Speaker, there are young adults who are able to work and/or go back to school for a brighter future for themselves and their families, yet they are caught up in the system.

These are the individuals who I am speaking for. I would like to assist them in getting their independence back and build their self-esteem. Getting these individuals back into the workforce, or reviving their culture and traditional lifestyles, would enable them to live a healthier life for themselves and their families. They would, in turn, be role models to their children and others within the communities.

Mr. Speaker, I personally have great hope and aspirations for the residents of the Northwest Territories. I want to see them prosper and to get their independence back, but I cannot do this on my own. It takes this government, the community leadership, and the individuals to make this goal a reality. With the collaboration with all stakeholders, we can have a healthy territory, a healthy community, and healthy independent residents. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Mackenzie Delta. Members' statements. Member from Great Slave.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 567-20(1):  
FOOD SECURITY AND COMMUNITY  
GARDENS

**MS. REID:** Mr. Speaker, I'm excited for the upcoming growing season. For many years, I've had a kitchen garden to grow fresh food for my family and friends. I have so much rhubarb that I have an annual callout for people to come and harvest some. I've spent time, effort, and testing my husband's good graces in creating raised beds and raising a greenhouse to grow fresh food in the Midnight Sun.

Mr. Speaker, with tariffs now looming over our head, food security is more crucial than ever before. I think we could bring back the positive tradition of our grandparents and great grandparents of victory gardens. In many ways, we're already there. There are stories of successful community gardens throughout our territory, and the Yellowknife Farmers' Market is a gem of any summer here in the capital where local gardeners can sell their excess produce at a community table or make a commercial go of it at their own tables. However, I would be remiss if I didn't mention the shining star of community gardening efforts - the Inuvik Community Greenhouse.

A reconstituted hockey arena, the greenhouse can now grow throughout the year thanks to its hydroponic unit. Hydroponic veggie boxes are available to the community at reasonable costs. Here in Yellowknife, we are lucky to have several commercial growers to choose from, and south of the lake too. Mr. Speaker, I would encourage everyone with the ability to sign up for a community plot or ability to set up their own kitchen garden to do so this summer. Growing local and supporting local growers will help us all stay healthy, but I think there is more we can be doing to support our communities in this space. Mr. Speaker, I will have questions for the Minister of ITI.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Great Slave. Members' statements. Member from Deh Cho.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 568-20(1):  
ON-THE-LAND ADDICTIONS RECOVERY  
PROGRAMS

**MRS. YAKELEYA:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, addressing effects of trauma is a priority of this government, of this Assembly. When people leave the territory for drug and alcohol treatment or go away to jail, they come home to the same environment and lifestyle

that they left. Many return to drinking or using. To help them with this problem, the GNWT allocated \$1.6 million for transitional housing for addiction recovery aftercare last year.

But, Mr. Speaker, several people in the communities I represent talk to me about going on-the-land aftertreatment. They want to slowly integrate back into the community. Out on the land, they will continue to learn about their culture, their family history, and continue to use the skills they learned at treatment.

We need our own people who have sobered up and cleaned up their lives with lived experience to help our people. We know when a community wants to change something in their community, the changes need to come from the community. We have had too many times when changes come from headquarters or from other larger centres, and it does not work in our small remote communities. The people know what they need. They need support to enhance their way of doing things in the communities like the culture, the crafts, harvesting on the land, preparation of traditional food, on-the-land tours and places to go where people can participate in cultural activities. Otherwise, in the future, we will not have a true culture for anyone to come and see.

In November, the GNWT set up an on-the-land camp 45 minutes outside of Yellowknife. The ten-week camp was intended to provide addiction shelter space for people who are homeless and offer cultural programming and counselling for people living with addictions. Mr. Speaker, if this program was successful, as the government has said, then we should look at starting similar pilot programs in other communities. Why was it shut down?

On-the-land aftercare will save this government money because fewer people will return to treatment, but we must invest in small communities. Mr. Speaker, I'm going to request more time to do my -- finish my statement. I seek unanimous consent.

---Unanimous consent granted

Thank you, colleagues. On-the-land aftercare will save this government money because fewer people will return to treatment, but we must invest in small communities. There are elders in our communities who know the land and who know how to live a sober lifestyle. Mr. Speaker, this government needs to respect the traditional way of life in each community. We need more aftercare programs like the ones piloted in Yellowknife. I will have questions for the Minister of health. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from the Deh Cho. Members' statements. Member from Frame Lake.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 569-20(1):  
ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, yesterday I spoke to the need for clear and measurable targets related to our goal of reforming primary care and based on the answers the Minister shared in response to my questions, I want to continue on that thread today.

Yesterday, the Minister stated that the goal of primary health care reform is to ensure that all residents have access to culturally safe, team based, primary and community care, and then to establish integrated care pathways to support seamless integration and continuity across various health and social services and levels of care.

Mr. Speaker, I really appreciate the Minister articulating the goals so clearly and succinctly and suggest it is a great set of overarching goals. So now we need to set the parameters and milestones which need to be established in order to achieve them.

First and most importantly, I think we need to define exactly what we mean by the word access. Technically, we all have access to health care now if we're willing to wait long enough or travel far enough or accept that continuity of care isn't possible. So we need to define what access to care will look like once we achieve our goal, and we need to establish a set of parameters which will need to be in place and maintained to sustain this access.

I would suggest, as advocated for by the NWT Medical Association in response to the announcement of the establishment of new primary care teams, that one of the key parameters is ensuring each primary care team is assigned to an appropriate number of patients as informed by data and expert advice. We need to set goals for each of the specific parameters, develop plans for how to achieve them, and realistic timelines for when they can be achieved. By going through that process, we will be able to identify a timeline for the overarching goal. The Minister noted yesterday that she doesn't want to rush this, and I am not suggesting at all that we set unrealistic timelines. But we do need to clearly communicate what we are specifically working to achieve, the various milestones and parameters needed along the way, and when we expect all the pieces to come together. Without effective planning and defined goal setting like this, we run the risk of chasing this

aspiration perpetually without ever fully achieving it. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 570-20(1):  
CLOSURE OF LITERACY OUTREACH  
CENTRES

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Literacy Outreach Centre here in Yellowknife has been a partnership between Aurora College and Inclusion NWT since 1997. The program even won the Premier's Award in 2023 for its excellent results.

So when Aurora College first made its announcement about closing community learning centres, it wasn't immediately clear that the Literacy Outreach Centre would be affected. The staff hadn't even been informed, and enrolment had been high with 39 students in the current winter semester. The program was working. It was award winning. So surely it wouldn't be shut down too. But staff found out later that, indeed, Aurora College was pulling out. Apparently, it no longer fit with the college's priorities.

So what's at stake here? The centre's been the only one in Yellowknife offering structured programs on basic employment skills. These are programs that stretch over an entire semester not just one-off workshops here and there. Morning classes have been for students who have about grade 4 to 5 level of literacy. Some are clients of Inclusion NWT so may have intellectual disabilities. Some are older people. Imagine an Indigenous elder who was sent to residential school but never got a proper education and now wants to learn to read and write better to help their grandchildren or maintain more day-to-day independence. Some are folks who have been working for many years in manual labour jobs but never learned to read and write well, and now they want an opportunity to move to a less physical job that requires those skills.

Afternoon classes have been for students needing better skills for working in an office environment, such as computer literacy. Some of these students include newcomers to this country.

The centre also trains volunteer tutors to work with students one on one which makes a big difference in empower people to change their lives.

Mr. Speaker, these students are not getting paid to attend classes. This is 40 people each

semester who are dedicated and motivated to attend because they understand the classes are key to them creating a better future for themselves and their families. About half are successful in finding jobs quickly after they finish the classes, and many are able to move towards college programs to become, for example, childhood education workers or personal support workers. Mr. Speaker, the closure of this centre is a huge step backwards away from meeting many of this Assembly's priorities. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 571-20(1):  
YELLOWKNIFE SOUTH RECIPIENTS OF  
KING'S CORONATION MEDAL

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Mr. Speaker, I'd like to continue my theme this week celebrating Yellowknife South constituents' accomplishments and achievements. And today I am proud to speak about two individuals who last week were awarded the King's Coronation Medal. The Coronation Medal commemorates the Coronation of His Majesty King Charles III as King of Canada and are for individuals who have made a significant contribution to Canada or to a province or territory. And the following two people, Mr. Speaker, are, indeed, exactly that. They have both made significant contributions to our community.

Matthew Yap was awarded the King's Coronation Medal in recognition of his contributions to the Northwest Territories through services for over ten years working with multiple different charities, community groups, organizations, and as a member on various boards. He was also the coordinator of the Yellowknife evacuation centre during the 2023 wildfires working on the evacuation of some of our most vulnerable residents. And further to his service to the Northwest Territories and to the community, Mr. Yap was one of the service aides during Prince Charles and Camilla's 2022 Royal Tour to Yellowknife. This, of course, makes the award, recognizing now the Coronation of His Majesty King Charles III, particularly special.

Mr. Speaker, the other Yellowknife resident who I'd like to make mention of, and who was awarded the King's Coronation Medal for her work in community service, was Rene Sanderson. For many years, Ms. Sanderson has been a support to many folks across the Northwest Territories and particularly within Yellowknife. She initiated and hosted the annual event of Christmas in July, providing

prepacked backpacks to vulnerable populations, organizing clothing drives for families, baby baskets for mothers, and has created a public pantry and toy drives also during the holidays. She's currently employed in a leadership role in one of our local non-profit organizations and serving the houseless population and those facing food insecurities.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank Mr. Yap and Ms. Sanderson for their contributions to Yellowknife, to the Northwest Territories, thank them for their inspiration that they provide day to day to the people around them and, of course, take this opportunity to congratulate them on this well-deserved honour. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Yellowknife South. Members' statements.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 572-20(1):  
LYDIA NELNER, INDIGENOUS SPORTS  
CIRCLE AWARD WINNER

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** Colleagues, I had the opportunity to attend the Indigenous Sports Circle NWT award ceremony on Saturday, December 7th. One of the reasons for attending this important event was to present the sport award winner: Lydia Nelner of Fort Simpson.

I got to know this young lady when she was playing soccer for a team my daughter coached. I watched this young, quiet lady become a leader and sharing her thoughts in a positive way. Lydia was the team's goalie and regardless of wins or losses, she kept the team on a positive path. I witnessed her listen to her teammates and coaches, take suggestions, and offering good advice throughout her soccer career. On top of being a good leader, she would help with the younger soccer teams to pass on her knowledge and love for the sport.

She represented the NWT at the NAIGs in Nova Scotia. In 2023, at the age of 18, Lydia expanded her sports and took up Dene games. She had achieved remarkable success and was selected to compete in the inaugural women's Dene games at the 2024 Arctic Winter Games in Mat-Su, Alaska.

Despite competing against older and more experienced athletes, Lydia won the bronze Ulu in the stick pull competition, showcasing her strength and determination.

Sports was not her only influence in the community. Lydia was selected for the Community Justice Committee in Fort Simpson and worked as a park's interpreter in Nahanni National Park. She is currently studying at MC College in Edmonton to become a hair stylist.

Colleagues, Lydia is a positive role model in our community, regularly training at the fitness centre and encouraging others to lead healthy lifestyles. She is a proud ambassador for her culture, participating in drum dances and celebrating her Dene heritage. Lydia is self-taught makeup artist who loves to wear a different ribbon dress for each drum dance further embracing her cultural roots. Lydia's dedication to our community, her culture, and personal growth serves as an inspiration to all, proving that with hard work and determination, dreams can come true.

I would like to say to Ms. Nelner to continue to be a shining example of dedication and cultural pride in the community of Fort Simpson and the Deh Cho region.

I have attached her acceptance and her nomination speech at the end of my statement and ask it to be deemed as read.

#### **Dennis's Nominator's Speech**

Good evening, everyone. I was invited to highlight Lydia's involvement in sports, what she means to the community, and why she is so deserving of this Sport Award.

Starting at school Lydia had to compete right away, the youngest in her class, at early age Lydia had to work harder to keep up with the rest of her classmates. Lydia was always involved in organized sports soccer basketball throughout high school never missed practice and involved in all extra-curricular activities at home and outside the community Yellowknife, and Halifax for NAIG.

At home, Nicolas her Brother, helped nurture her competitiveness they are both very close she always looked up to her brother. She learnt to be brave and stand up for herself even though her brother very much older larger and equally as competitive. Facing her fears and expressing herself nurtured those skills in the comfort of home, and school. Speaking up and talking about things that are important to her.

Her brother's biggest influences is showing Lydia how to lift weights at the Fitness centre, both our siblings were "gym rats". Not too long after, Lydia was and still is a main fixture at the local fitness centre. Going every day, getting up at 6 in the morning, in order to have time during the day for all the rest of her daily activities.

Lydia entered the workforce at the tender age of 14 years old, starting the Northern store. During COVID she was classified as an Essential Worker, even with this elevated status because of her age she didn't qualify for the extra pay. Lydia has working class values, that need to be acknowledged especially in

today's age, young people have very little role models where focus on working hard is a means to an end.

Our home epitomizes traditional family morals, as a father I provide and protect, my wife Trudy nurtures, combined makes a traditional family unit. Our family is centered on Working class values and traits. For Trudy and me, our fathers and mothers, grandparents and so on have always lived as a working-class family, just as our ancestor have lived before us.

Young people Lydia's age need more than ever to have someone to look up to. She's our shining light, a candle in the dark, a guiding beacon. My wife and I are absolutely so proud of what Lydia has accomplished in her young life so far, we look forward to many more accomplishments and milestones in the future. Mahsi.

#### **Lydia's Acceptance Speech**

I am deeply honored to accept this award tonight. This recognition means so much to me, not just as an athlete, but as a proud Member of our Aboriginal community. Sports have always been a significant part of our culture, teaching us the values of perseverance, teamwork, and respect.

I want to thank my family, friends, and coaches for their unwavering support. Their encouragement has been invaluable throughout my journey. I also want to acknowledge my fellow athletes; your dedication and spirit are truly inspiring.

This award is a testament to our shared heritage and the strength of our community. I hope to continue to represent our traditions and inspire future generations to pursue their dreams with passion and determination.

Members' statements. Returns to oral questions. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

#### **Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery**

**MR. EDJERICON:** Yeah, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to take this opportunity to recognize two pages from the Deninu Kue School in Fort Resolution, Colleen Edjericon and Mandy Miersch-King. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh. Recognition of visitors in the gallery.

If we missed anyone in the gallery today, welcome to your chambers. I thank you very much for allowing us to be representing of the

people of the Northwest Territories. I hope you are enjoying the proceedings. It is always nice to see people in the gallery.

Acknowledgements. Oral questions. Written questions. Member from Great Slave.

**MS. REID:** Mr. Speaker, I'm seeking unanimous consent to go back to item 7 on the agenda, oral questions.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Member from Great Slave. Member from Great Slave is asking unanimous consent to return to item 7 on the agenda, oral questions. Any nays? Seeing no nays, back to oral questions. Member from Great Slave.

### Oral Questions (Reversion)

#### QUESTION 594-20(1): COMMUNITY GARDENS

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's been a long week. Mr. Speaker, my questions are for Minister of ITI. Does the Minister have the financial capacity through her department or through Prosper NWT to fund community efforts to grow local gardens in this upcoming season? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Great Slave. Minister of ITI.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we certainly do. So ITI has multiple funding sources that can support community efforts to grow local gardens, and that includes this season. So one of our main pieces of funding, Mr. Speaker, is the sustainable Canadian agriculture partnership which we lovingly refer to as SCAP, and that is 7.6 and change -- \$7.6 million and change over the next five years of the agreement to support agriculture and agro food sector of the Northwest Territories. I can also say that I was at the agro food conference before I left town last week -- or it could have been the week before -- they are all one long week at this point -- and CanNor also announced that they are contributing an additional \$4 million to our agriculture sector this coming year. So there is lots going on in this area. We also have the northern food development program which is \$425,000 annually to the sector, and lots of people also access SEED for this purpose as well. Thank you.

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There's a certain poetic loveliness about SEED money going for seeds. I will look forward to the Minister sharing that information with me directly so I can promote it.

Will the Minister commit to investigating ways to support more projects like the Inuvik Community Greenhouse throughout the NWT? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, absolutely. So since 2020, I can confirm that ITI has contributed over \$700,000 to the Inuvik greenhouse, \$54,000 of which this fiscal to support the purchase of plants, and we're constantly working with regional offices and communities to figure out what the community-driven initiatives are and how we at ITI can get behind them. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister of ITI. Final supplementary. Member from Great Slave.

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That's good news. So just as a friendly question, would the Minister like to engage with me in a friendly competition to see how much -- which of us can grow the most potatoes by weight this season? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Mr. Speaker, the easy answer is yes. But. But, I'd like to also challenge my Cabinet colleagues to participate with us. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Good answer. I mean, thank you, Minister of ITI. Oral questions. Member from Deh Cho.

#### QUESTION 595-20(1): ON-THE-LAND CAMPS AND PROGRAMMING

**MRS. YAKELEYA:** Yes, okay, thank you, Mr. Speaker. According to media reports, the total cost for the on-the-land camp outside of Yellowknife was more than \$640,000 with most of the money coming from the federal government, save about \$7,000 from the GNWT. Can the Minister confirm the total amount of funding the Department of Health and Social Services provided for this initiative. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from the Deh Cho. Minister of health and social services.

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, health provided zero dollars to this initiative. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MRS. YAKELEYA:** Wow, okay. Is the department considering on-the-land camps as part of its transitional housing aftercare programming in other communities? Thank you.

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm going to just speak to the on-the-land camp a bit, I'm not going to delve into -- this falls under EIA so the -- although health didn't put money into it, there was federal dollars. This was all through -- for homelessness so that fell under EIA, to be clear.

As to the Member's question, there are currently -- health is not going to be putting any on-the-land camps anywhere in any of the communities. What we do do, though, is, we've heard loud and clear, and I've said this many times in the House, is that we are providing funding to Indigenous governments, to Indigenous groups who wish to provide aftercare, addictions, those types of programming in their community, in their regions, and therefore the community wellness and recovery funds that we do provide -- our addiction recovery fund that we do provide annually is about just over \$3 million, and it's spread out amongst many of the regional governments. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MRS. YAKELEYA:** My next question is can the Minister commit to a feasibility study of cost of this type of on-the-land program as part of discharge from treatment planning for residents? Thank you.

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, health and social services is here as a partner to Indigenous governments, and that's why this funding is there. We as health and social services will provide mental health supports that are in -- within health and social services. We have created this fund so that way it's external to us as we -- and I've said it many times in this House, Mr. Speaker, that you don't want GNWT involved in on the land and any traditional programming. We will make it complicated. We will put standards in place. We will make it more expensive. These dollars can be used more efficiently in the communities by the Indigenous groups. We are here to support them to access these dollars. They can use the money to do a feasibility on what it's going to cost and do these types of things. This money is in there for their communities to do these things. So I will continue to stress to all of the MLAs that they reach out to their Indigenous governments and see how they're using these dollars. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister of Health and Social Services. Oral questions. Member from Inuvik Boot Lake.

QUESTION 596-20(1):  
MEDICAL TRAVEL ACCOMMODATIONS IN  
YELLOWKNIFE

**MR. RODGERS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Following up on my statement this morning -- or this afternoon, sorry, can the Minister provide us with an update or whether she's aware of the lack of accommodations in Yellowknife and, Mr. Speaker, how this may impact -- how this impacts people if they have medical travel.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Inuvik Boot Lake. There's kind of two questions in that there so I'm going to give the Minister ability to answer one or two. Thank you. Minister of Health and Social Services.

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I -- as I've been recently briefed, it seems that Yellowknife is experiencing a rise in tourism right now and which is putting additional pressure on an already strained system. NTHSSA is working with its partners right now to identify solutions on this issue. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. RODGERS:** Thank you. I'm glad the Minister's aware of that. I'm glad they're working on something, Mr. Speaker. But what is the -- is there a contingency plan -- and at risk of asking two questions -- and how is the Minister informing residents so they can make informed decisions? Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Inuvik Boot Lake. There was two questions again. Minister of Health and Social Services, you may answer one or both. Thank you.

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, NTHSSA is working to secure alternative accommodations at this time, including the securing hotel rooms to hold every day for unexpected patient arrivals or discharges at the hospital. NTHSSA is also trying to use other contingency services to accommodate the overflow. There are also right now, as I was just recently briefed, so there's some work that's going on and asking for practitioners and staff to be considerate of booking nonurgent medical appointments to Yellowknife right now, working with Indigenous Service Canada to advise NIHB patients travelling for dental to consider booking nonurgent appointments and travel at another date, preferably in the summer when there's no northern lights. Work is also underway to develop some public communication to support residents to make decisions about booking nonurgent dental appointments.

One of the things that I will say is that as the Minister right now, we have many of our regional -- and I come from the same region as

Denny, so we have many people who are getting on a plane, arriving here, and they may not have accommodations. So if you have dental appointments that are nonurgent of checkup, I would suggest, you know, it's -- spring break, if you're travelling, maybe rebook your appointments in places where you're travelling to. We know there's a big hockey tournament coming up in Whitehorse. Many Beaufort Delta residents head down there. Try getting a dental appointment in there. Because there may be risk that you may not have an accommodation when you arrive here, or it might be not up to the standard that you would like. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister of Health and Social Services. Colleagues, remember, no personal names, titles would be better. Thank you very much. Member from Inuvik Boot Lake.

**MR. RODGERS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If it happens, we live in the same community I guess. The Minister mentioned a communications plans. So is there any details on how that will roll out, how we're going to let people know in Inuvik that this is certainly happening and that they may want to consider doing, as the Minister stated, booking the nonurgent appointments at another time. Can there be a little more detail on what that communication plan will be, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I apologize, yes, we live in a small community and we know each other by first names.

Right now it's actually just in the works, and the teams are working on it. And what I'm hoping to have is something to share to all MLAs because dental is not just in our region; it's -- people are travelling from all regions and they will need accommodations. So it will go out to all MLAs. It will go out on my social media, and I encourage MLAs to do that as well. And as the plan comes up, I will share with the MLAs. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister of Health and Social Services. Oral questions. Did I hear somebody's name? Okay, I thought so. Please refrain from using personal names.

Oral questions. Member from Frame Lake.

QUESTION 597-20(1):  
HEALTHCARE ACCESS MILESTONES

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, first I'd just like to quickly seek unanimous consent to return to item 5 on the agenda.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The Member from Mackenzie Delta is requesting to move to item 5. Can we wait until after we finish the oral questions and then -- when we finish oral questions then we'll go to -- back to item 5. Thank you Member for Frame Lake, sorry.

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions today are for the Minister of health.

Mr. Speaker, I think my statement spoke for itself so would repeat what I said. Mr. Speaker, will the Minister of health commit to defining and publicly communicating what access to health care will mean once we achieve the reforming primary care goal? Thank you.

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

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned yesterday there, I will be getting more of a briefing on the information that is -- there's lots of work going on right now and behind, and as we are ready to present to committee with a lot of this information and so when we -- once I have more of those details, I'll be able to share more of the framework and a lot of the details around this. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I will take that as somewhat of a commitment that the Minister does want to go forward with what I was asking. I'll just continue with my questions, Mr. Speaker.

Will the Minister commit to establishing and publicly communicating the parameters and milestones that we'll need to achieve to maintain access to health care once we define it? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the strategic framework is currently being developed, as I mentioned yesterday. The -- developed to provide clear direction and performance benchmarks for this initiative and will be expected to be completed in 2025. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker; I appreciate that. And I hope that as part of that, we will be establishing and publicly communicating a timeline for achievement of the overarching goals the Minister communicated yesterday. Can she just confirm that establishment of the framework will, indeed, come with a timeline for achievement of



the overarching goals? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I will have to go back to reviewing more of the documents more in detail, and I will have that information for committee when we are able to present to them. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 598-20(1):  
SENIORS' HOME HEATING SUBSIDY  
PROGRAM

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this is continuing from my statement from March 3rd, adequate supports for seniors. So this is a question for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment.

Mr. Speaker, can the Minister say whether the senior home heating subsidy program can be reviewed to better assist our elders? Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Monfwi. Minister of Education, Culture and Employment.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the last evaluation and review of that program was done in the 19th Assembly when the previous Minister reviewed the income security programs. Thank you.

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Okay, well, it needs to be revisited again so. I know that we need to, so. If not, then I wouldn't be here doing this statement and questions.

Can the income threshold levels and community zoning be re-examined to better reflect accurate costs of living in each community? Thank you.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Certainly didn't want to get too far ahead of ourselves and know that I've had great conversations with the Member about this program, and also acknowledging that our buying power with our dollars these days is much different than it was before. And so previously committed to the Member to reviewing the income thresholds of the program to ensure that it is still meeting the need of seniors and also getting to the purpose of the program. Thank you.

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

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Can the Minister commit to conducting community engagement on the senior home heating subsidy program? Thank you.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I've had the great privilege of travelling to some of the Monfwi communities in the previous term with the Member and have committed as well to doing the same this year and would be more than happy to follow the Member's leads on any conversations that the Member would like to see happen in the community while we are there. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. Oral questions. Member from Tu Nedhe-Willideh.

QUESTION 599-20(1):  
K'ALEMI DENE SCHOOL  
INFRASTRUCTURE

**MR. EDJERICON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I'd just like to welcome the Minister of ECE back as well. Yesterday, Mr. Speaker -- Mr. Speaker, yesterday --

**MR. SPEAKER:** Member. Member, do not recognize people that were not in the House. People are here, and that's what we need to appreciate. That's what we're working with. Not the people who were not here. Okay, thank you. Member from Tu Nedhe-Willideh.

**MR. EDJERICON:** Thank you for that, Mr. Speaker. It was very enlightening.

Yesterday, due to the ECE Minister's absence, the infrastructure Minister heard my concerns, instead spoke about whether a planning study to replace the Kaw Tay Whee School and gymnasium, which was supposed to take place in 2019, had occurred. She needed time to find the answer to that question. Is the ECE Minister aware now if that study went through? If so, is she ready to act on its recommendations and get a new school for Dettah? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, certainly I would like to acknowledge the Member's statement from the beginning of the day today. We have 49 schools in the Northwest

Territories, and they were large -- our infrastructure across the territory, including arenas, housing, and the rest, was largely built at the same time. So we certainly go through all of our schools and infrastructure and have to make difficult decisions on prioritization and look first and foremost at safety and accessibility, and then from there determine what we need to start with. But I certainly hear the Member that it is a continued concern for his community. Thank you.

**MR. EDJERICON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Regarding the addition of the new school and gymnasium to K'alemi Dene School in 2021, an assessment for the project was considered but not selected. Can the Minister commit to commitment to getting a new -- five new classroom and a gymnasium and a community hall for the K'alemi Dene School addition onto this year's capital plan if possible? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, what we do is we sit down, we send out a survey to all of our education bodies and speak with them about what their needs are, and at that time education bodies, the DECs and DEAs, are able to identify what it is that they are requiring and where they're at. We also work with the Department of Infrastructure and go through the condition ratings of the schools. And then we also, to be quite honest, look at the priorities of the Assembly. I can tell you that education and having safe spaces for school -- for students across the territory is absolutely a priority of mine, as I know it is many of my colleagues.

In regards to our small capital, just as an example, there were 75 needs identified across the territory for small capital, and we have multiple schools, and leadership from multiple communities identified their schools as wanting to be next up. And so we have to ensure that there is some evidence-based and data that goes along with that when these decisions are made to ensure that we're prioritizing safety of students and accessibility of students to their education facilities at the end of the day. And if I could, Mr. Speaker, I would have a very long list, just like the Members that I would want to do everything at the same time, but I know that that's not a reality in our territory. Thank you.

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

**MR. EDJERICON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Years of denying or deferring the upgrades to learning and recreation facilities, the Yellowknives Dene First Nation students need

their education and without proper facilities, it violates their treaty rights for education. Yesterday, the infrastructure Minister had not heard about these concerns from the Yellowknives Dene First Nation, but previous MLAs have brought this up as far back as 2018.

My question is the education Minister clearly stated that the department were aware of these concerns every time they put together the capital plan. Will the Minister work -- sorry, will the Minister commit to working with the Yellowknives Dene First Nation leadership and DEA to start addressing their needs? Thank you.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, those conversations occur on an annual basis when we go through our capital planning process. And I can also confirm for the Member that I have had conversations with the N'dilo DEA chair in regards to infrastructure as well. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. Oral questions. Member from Range Lake.

QUESTION 600-20(1):  
INSURABILITY EXCEPTIONS FOR  
COSMETIC MEDICAL PROCEDURES

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, a 2016 study, which evaluated dozens of patients before and after body contouring and excess skin removal surgeries, found significant improvements in physical function and mobility and that prior to their operations, daily tasks were extremely difficult for these patients. I have a constituent in this circumstance. I have been spending quite a bit of time working with the Minister's office to no avail. There are no expectations for this person's -- this individual's case. Will the Minister correct this policy, which doesn't make any kind of common sense, and bring an exception forward for my constituent? Thank you.

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

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Mr. Speaker, I don't want to go into too much detail but I had this -- or there's been -- there's a BF on this with the Member and the answer -- you know, there are surgeries that happen and insured services -- the insured services parts were billed. There are parts of the surgeries that are not considered as insured services and therefore those pieces get billed to the patient. And that stands. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. TESTART:** Mr. Speaker, exceptions for this kind of care have been made in the past. A patient with a very similar situation, who was not initially insured in Manitoba, has appealed this successfully but this has not been taken into account by our health and social services authority or policies and programs. Will the Minister review this case -- or this case in Manitoba, similar cases across the country, and make changes to the policy to allow an exception to my constituent? Thank you.

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there have been many other things that have been on the floor of this House that are not covered under insured services. If we start to open up every single piece that is -- you know, that is going to be an exception or made an exception. This was put through the process and the decision, again, still stands. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. TESTART:** Mr. Speaker, I'm not asking for all cosmetic surgeries to be covered. I'm asking for an exemption to be made based on this patient's specific situation. The Minister doesn't want to change the definition of what is and what isn't cosmetic, can she not move towards a system that ensures cosmetic surgeries based on patient-specific evaluation. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At this time, this is not work that we are doing within the department. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 601-20(1):  
YELLOWKNIFE LITERACY OUTREACH  
CENTRE

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions today are for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. So the Literacy Outreach Centre is in danger of shutting down if it can't find classroom space to operate, new funding, and new partners. Has the Minister or ECE staff had a chance to meet yet with the staff who have been running the Literacy Outreach Centre, either Inclusion NWT staff or Aurora College staff, as well as with any other interested partners to help find a path forward for the centre? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I can confirm that conversations have begun but they are certainly not finalized, and there is still more work to be done. Thank you.

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Will the Minister commit that by the end of this fiscal year, she will not only figure out how much money ECE has been allocating to Aurora College for the Literacy Outreach Centre but reallocate that funding to other partners who may want to carry on with the program? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can do better. At the end of the fiscal. Aurora College annually operates the literacy outreach programs with \$350,000 in funding. In addition to that, Inclusion NWT receives \$85,000 annually in funding. So I can confirm the first part of that.

The second part of that, which is figuring out what to do next, is what is currently underway with the Department of Education, Culture and Employment, but that program will still operate until the end of June. Thank you.

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

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I appreciate that the Minister has managed to do the work to find the amount that we're talking about here. Will the Minister commit, if there is another partner that steps up to continue the program, to reallocating those funds away from Aurora College to that partner, that \$350,000 that's currently going to Aurora College? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. So, Mr. Speaker, I think what needs to be -- there's a few things that need to be ironed out first, and that is what the future looks like before we can start allocating funding to different entities. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. Oral questions. Member from Range Lake.

QUESTION 602-20(1):  
INTERNAL TRADE BARRIERS

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in the midst of the dumbest trade war

in perhaps global history, northern businesses are very concerned, and I know the Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment is chair of the internal -- sorry, the committee on internal trade. We heard a statement about it earlier. How is the Minister going to ensure that measures like the BIP program, that are very successful in protecting northern businesses and supporting northern businesses, continue as trade barriers come down across the country? Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Range Lake. Minister for ITI.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Member for the question. So our BIP program is currently one of our exceptions under the Canadian Free Trade Agreement, and there's no plan to take away that exception that we currently have. Thank you.

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the Minister for that. That is reassuring. Mr. Speaker, what changes are being contemplated? I know we have I think around 18 -- anyways, in the teens of exceptions in the Canada Free Trade Agreement. So what are we looking at eliminating here in the Northwest Territories?

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We currently have 12. The first 11 are on things like our business incentive program, they're on things like our resources, like fisheries and oil, and then there's one of them that is a future one so it's not for resources today. The things that we are looking at doing resolve more around labour mobility and barriers that we have in that realm. And then the other piece, Mr. Speaker, is around regulatory harmonization. So a great example of that is the work that's currently being done at the reconciliation table around the trucking pilot, and all jurisdictions right across Canada have doubled down on that commitment to that table because that's one of our biggest gains to be had right now as a country, is ensuring that goods are moving around the country in an affordable way and that we don't have unnecessary administrative burden or unnecessary additions of cost to how we're moving foods and goods -- sorry, goods and services around the country. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister of ITI. Final supplementary. Member from Range Lake.

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you. And on the matter of trucking, we have trucking businesses in the Northwest Territories. They have access to these kinds of fast passes to get through

provincial borders without paying dues they can reconcile at the end of the month. It expedites the whole process. Unfortunately, we can't certify that process here in the Northwest Territories, so businesses are looking -- have to base their operations outside of the Northwest Territories. Alberta seems to be the case in most areas. Is this something the Minister can correct and allow northern-based trucking companies and moving companies to get their certifications for cross-border programs like this here in the Northwest Territories so we aren't losing businesses to southern jurisdictions? Thank you.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. So absolutely, mutual recognition is something that we're fully committed to for the NWT's part of our participation within the committee on internal trade. And this also works into my colleague of infrastructure and the work that her department is doing. And so certainly we are absolutely committed to doing this work and are in the process of working towards it on that reconciliation and cooperation table. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister of ITI. Oral questions. Member from Range Lake.

QUESTION 603-20(1):  
SUPPORT FOR NORTHWEST  
TERRITORIES BUSINESSES AFFECTED BY  
TARIFFS

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, on the subject of business supports, the Government of Yukon announced yesterday, I believe -- may have been announced before but I just saw it yesterday -- a million dollar fund to help Yukon-based businesses adjust to any additional costs caused by tariffs, the illegal and unjustified tariffs from the Americans. Is -- what are we doing to support our own businesses? I don't see a fund in this budget. I have heard no announcements. This seems like a good idea. Is the Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment considering bringing forward a similar fund that is flexible, supports northern businesses, keeps jobs in the North, and protects northern businesses? Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Range Lake. Minister of ITI.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, right now the Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment is certainly watching what's happening. They've got a close working relationship with our Chambers of Commerce, industry representatives, as well as business

associations in the Northwest Territories. I think it's crucial at this time that we're very open and honest about what the impacts are. We don't have an indication of doing -- or sorry, we don't have a plan right now of launching a program because I think it's really important that we see what the impacts are. There are a lot of businesses that are looking to changing who they currently source items for and switching to Canadian suppliers, which I think is incredibly important in this. But until we know what the impacts are, it's hard for us to design a program that actually gets to the crux of what some of those challenges will be. And until we also see the responses from the Canadian government, we need to ensure we're not duplicating efforts as well. Thank you.

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I mean, I'm curious as to why the Yukon feels they need to do this, but maybe that's something the Minister could speak to her territorial counterparts. I'm sure businesses would be assured by that. There are a number of other things we can do by eliminating the red tape, reducing fees and services, make it cheaper to do business for northern businesses and Canadian businesses. Will the Minister undertake to do that work, to find ways she can cut those fees and barriers to doing business in the Northwest Territories to protect Canada's interest in the NWT? Thank you.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. That certainly is the work being done at the committee on internal trade, and the NWT is a very active partner in that table in regards to, you know, why one jurisdiction might react differently than another. We all have different trading partners, we all have different trading activities and different investments in it, and so how we react across the country is certainly going to be different, but at the end of the day we are certainly very committed to being part of Team Canada right across the board, but our pathways to success in that may look different. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister of ITI. Final supplementary. Member from Range Lake.

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the work the Minister's doing at the FPT table -- it's important work -- but I want to know what work we're doing here because we can't wait for that interprovincial work to support our own businesses. People are worried now. Plus, this is an opportunity to actually support businesses locally by acting on a lot of these concerns that have been brought up over time. So will the Minister commit to working with the NWT Chamber of Commerce, the regional Chambers

of Commerce, and find ways that we can reduce barriers to business, make -- bring the costs to do so down, perhaps even lower taxes. But will the Minister make that commitment to start that work immediately and not waste another day because time is of the essence, and we need to make sure that the NWT is put first in our decisions as we move forward into an uncertain future. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, about three minutes ago I was committed to those relationships, and I remain committed to them. I agree with the Member that those relationships are what are going to let us know how the tariffs are impacting the North, and that information is absolutely critical. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister of ITI. Oral questions. Member from Yellowknife North.

QUESTION 604-20(1):  
LABOUR MOBILITY LEGISLATION

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are, again, for the Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment.

There was mention that labour mobility is a priority given the internal/external trade challenges. So can the Minister explain whether there is work underway by the GNWT to create standalone overarching GNWT labour mobility legislation to ensure that we can facilitate better labour mobility between the NWT and other provinces and territories? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Yellowknife North. Minister of ITI.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this one falls under my ECE hat. There are other jurisdictions that have overarching labour mobility pieces of legislation, and the Member is absolutely right, we in the territory don't have a piece of this legislation as it stands today so that is certainly something that is being considered. Thank you.

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Does the Minister have an anticipated timeline for when the government might be able to bring forward such legislation? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's almost as if the Member was on some of my earlier phone calls last week. So other jurisdictions are in a position where if they put an overarching piece of legislation in like that, then it goes to all their regulatory bodies. But here in the territory,

some of our regulatory bodies are here in the territory and some of them are regulatory bodies in other jurisdictions that we use for some of our licensing. So an example of that would be, for example, a physiotherapist. We don't have a regulatory body here in the territory and so physiotherapists can pick any jurisdiction across Canada to register themselves in, and we'll accept that here in the territory.

With a piece of legislation like this, I would need to ensure that we're aligning with other jurisdictions and that they also have matching legislation so that I'm not indicating that, you know, this has to be a -- licensing has to be accomplished within, say, a 30-day timeframe and imposing that on another jurisdiction simply wouldn't work. So that's where it's really important that as a country we're working together, and that is work that is currently being looked at under the FTP table for labour Ministers across Canada. Thank you.

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

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So given that one of our most urgent labour mobility issues is around doctors and a pan-Canadian licensure of doctors which certainly the Canadian Medical Association has been calling for and -- so would that be included in this work around overarching labour mobility legislation, or is that become pursued through other means? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. So, Mr. Speaker, this is a conversation specifically one around health care workers that's currently happening in the context of labour mobility and how we go about doing some work both under the envelope of Team Canada to ensure that we're aligned at the end of the day and to ensure that we are moving forward in a way that respects the diversities of regions across Canada. As you can imagine, every time we peel back a layer, there's another one underneath it. It's a bit of a national onion but certainly a very important one that we work through, and health care workers is absolutely at the top of that conversation. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. Oral questions. Member from Range Lake.

QUESTION 605-20(1):  
DIRECT-TO-CONSUMER SALES MODEL  
FOR ALCOHOL

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, speaking of provincial trade barriers, alcohol is one of the most cherished areas of protection by provinces. That's why US beer, wine, and spirits are coming off the shelves because governments control what goes on those shelves for the most part in this country. Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure who to ask this to, but this direct sale -- direct-to-consumer sale system that's being proposed, can we get more details on that and how it will affect our businesses in the Northwest Territories that provide sales of alcohol to consumers? Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Range Lake. Minister of Finance.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this is one that, again, straddles probably a couple of different departments. I am happy to say that prior to attending the internal trade Ministers' meeting, the Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment and myself had the opportunity to discuss this issue and, indeed, we are sitting at that table, we are participating in this working group. At this point, the direct-to-consumer sales I understand is going to go through some reviews, some considerations to what can be workable, not only for us but for other provinces and potentially territories. We're at the table, and we want to see what could be workable for us as well. Thank you.

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you. And I know this is emerging territory, so my apologies to the Minister if this is coming fast and furious but, you know, we need to get some clarity here. We have a brewery in the Northwest Territories. They often struggle with our system, the commission system we have here. How will their business be affected by this new system that's being proposed? Thank you.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That's exactly the kind of question that we would like to have the time to examine before signing on to any sort of direct-to-consumer sale system. It's precisely for that reason, and likely precisely for that reason, that other provinces, although we're all committed to reducing tariffs and trade barriers want to just make sure that the businesses that we all represent are understanding what exactly it is that we're putting to them and what kind of opportunities we're creating. What we want to create is more opportunities for Canadian businesses, more markets within Canada for Canadian businesses, and to do that in a way that is supportive of the businesses that we represent. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister of Finance. Final supplementary. Member from Range Lake.

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you. And thank you for that. There's certainly opportunities with these changes, but there could be risks as well. If our tiny brewing company is put into a national wide market, they might be, you know, washed out by all the other brands out there. So what did -- will the Minister -- obviously details are scant. But will the Minister make sure that in these negotiations, we keep in mind that we have an industry here that is chugging along -- it's their tenth year in place -- and make sure that they are one part -- well, that they are part of the conversation and that their interests are protected as we move forward to a Canada free of interprovincial trade barriers? Thank you.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have had the opportunity, together with the Member for Range Lake, to meet with the brewery. I've met with them on past occasions as well. They're significant contributors to this community in Yellowknife, Mr. Speaker, and this is -- again, I do want to re-emphasize, not only to the brewery but any businesses as we're talking about reducing trade barriers, ourselves, territories, Atlantic provinces, we all have businesses that are small that may be concerned about what it means to open up, but this is an opportunity and we want to seize that opportunity, creating opportunity, creating more markets, engaging in internal trade, having trade tours that are about Canada. So, again, we want to work with our business community, make sure they see this as an opportunity, and that that's how we want to move forward with this change. So happy to continue to work with them and any other small business here so that they benefit from this opportunity for Canada. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister of Finance. Oral questions. Member from Frame Lake.

QUESTION 606-20(1):  
VACCINE HESITANCY, PROMOTION AND  
ACCESS

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I appreciated the health Minister's statement today on vaccine hesitancy and lowered vaccine rates in the territory. I share the Minister's concerns.

To that end, Mr. Speaker, I would like to know from the Minister what measures is the Minister putting in place to help make vaccines more

accessible and bring vaccine rates up to pre-COVID levels? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, with vaccine rates, you know, I mean, it varies across the territory as to where to get vaccines. Most of the health centres are the venue to get childhood vaccines, any vaccines. The community health nurse can give those. In the regional centres, we usually have public health units that do the majority of those vaccines in those regions, and the appointments can be -- you know, accessing those appointments through public health. Within Yellowknife, I know that the public health unit here there were some -- you know, some staffing, and my understanding is that they've recruited and now they have their unit. So they have well child clinics. They have travel clinics for vaccines. We also do vaccines in the schools with school-aged children as there's -- you know, there's vaccines that happen during the age groups that kids are in school. And, you know, they -- and they do provide the information upfront so that they can bring it home, they can get the consent signed. There's -- at a certain age, you know, the teenagers and stuff can make an informed decision to have the vaccine themselves. So there are many, many ways for this. I think the thing that we are trying to stress -- and that's what I tried to stress in my Minister's statement today -- is that online social media and misinformation is being rapidly spread, and we do not want people to think that that is the information. And so if the information is not coming from a trusted health care provider like the Northwest Territories, you know, one of the territorial provinces, you know, I would question it, and I would bring that information and ask questions to a health care provider. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And certainly I appreciate some of the challenges we're facing.

Mr. Speaker, some of the concerns I received when the first flu vaccines went out this year is just that the timing in the territory was a bit late compared to some of our neighbours. The Yukon, for example, had their flu and COVID vaccines out about a month before us. So I'm just wondering if the Minister is looking to expand the availability, extend the timing that clinics are available, just to make it accessible for residents. I know, speaking for myself, the reason I didn't get vaccinated for the flu this year is simply that I wasn't able to find a time I was able to go. So I know that it's not

necessarily hesitancy that's preventing vaccination. Sometimes it's availability too. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know we have a lot of things going on in our life and -- anybody, you know, and I'll be the first to say I do not like needles, and I would try and make any reason why I don't want to get a needle. But I always make a priority to get my flu shot ever since I was young. You know, but I think the thing is is that the reason why -- and I'm going back to my public health days -- is that vaccines are -- yes, some areas, they may have released public clinics in certain areas. There were public -- you know, we start in the high-risk areas. When we look at releasing flu vaccine, that vaccine strain is only good for a certain amount of time and we have to -- and our public health -- the chief public health officer and her team try to measure around how that gets rolled out in the Northwest Territories based on activity that's going on and, therefore, you know, if we're -- what happened here is that each community may roll out sooner than some of the capital regions because the access to care is less in those communities. So there might have been rolling out sooner than the clinics that opened up in the capital. And then seniors will go around, and home care will usually go around and do a lot of those vaccines. You know, inpatient, long-term care, those people will get their vaccine first and then the rollout to the public. And it's unfortunate that -- you know, that some people aren't able to get into these clinics, you know, but it's making the time. And maybe next year we'll make sure that I get out there maybe way before and start highlighting those times and where and the places that you can get those vaccines. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And really that's what the Minister was starting to touch upon towards the end there is what I was looking for, is just considering that the department is concerned about it and the Minister's concerned about it, is the Minister looking at ways to increase availability knowing that it can be hard to find times in your schedule, etcetera, etcetera, just so that we know that hesitancy -- or sorry, hesitancy is a challenge that we have, but we want to make sure that access isn't. That's the point that I want to make, Mr. Speaker. So will the Minister commit to taking measures, if need be, to increase access for vaccines for residents. Make sure it's easy, that it's available, clinics in grocery stores, schools, etcetera, make it easy

for people to access. So just advocating for that, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, our public health staff are amazing, and they do try to get to everywhere. Here in Yellowknife, they did have in the grocery stores. I mean, I went on Saturdays, they had day clinics here in Yellowknife while I was here and that's where I got my flu and COVID shot. So I think it's -- well, we can look at how we are making sure that that information is -- and as the clinics pop up, you know, sometimes in public health we'll see activity, and that's when people then start to get worried and want their flu shot. And so if we start to see activity, I can bring it back to the department to see if when we start to see increased activity, is there ways that we can, you know, have more clinics. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 607-20(1):  
COVERAGE EXEMPTIONS FOR  
UNINSURED MEDICAL PROCEDURES

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Returning to my earlier question to the Minister of Health and Social Services. Is it common practice to schedule insured and non-insured medical care simultaneously? Thank you.

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

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are many times where there are procedures that may overlap. Those conversations usually happen between the patient and the surgeon and the health care provider. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And arising from those conversations, is there a mechanism, again, to provide -- to seek some sort of exemption or some sort of request for exemption or appeal for service based on the advice that a patient is getting from their medical provider? Thank you.

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, I hear what the Member is raising, you know, I think, but what we're looking at is what the things that are covered that are insured services that have been -- and it's not just here. It's across Canada. There are a standard of things that are covered, what are covered under insured services. These are core services. And then there's other things that



would be considered cosmetic and those -- the process -- I can't tell you how the process goes when it's in between patient and doctor. I mean, I can find out the information as to how that process works and possibly get back and have a discussion with the Member. Thank you.

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

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, when an exemption is brought to for an appeal or a request for an exemption is brought and the advice is saying something along the lines of this procedure will reduce medical costs because it's preventative, it will allow a person to live a full life, work a full job, and if we don't do it they're going to be severely impacted in that moving forward. Does any of that matter in terms of this policy which, I might add, is housed within the ministry or with the department rather than the health authority. So does -- is there anything a doctor can do to convince decision makers that an exemption or an appeal is warranted if a procedure's not insured? Thank you.

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I will have to take that question on notice. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister of Health and Social Services. Oral questions. Member from Tu Nedhe-Willideh.

QUESTION 608-20(1):  
EDUCATION FACILITIES  
INFRASTRUCTURE IN THE  
YELLOWKNIVES DENE FIRST NATION

**MR. EDJERICON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I just want to go back to the Minister of ECE.

As mentioned, the school in Dettah is 55 years old. The GNWT brought in portable trailers in 1979 with no gymnasium. The GNWT built an undersized gymnasium back in 1978 in Dettah as well as -- and used as a community hall, and the students in the school use that gym for recreation activities.

My question to the Minister, can the Minister confirm if ECE consulted with the Yellowknives Dene First Nation and local DEA going back to 1979 to build a new school in Dettah and N'dilo? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And thank you to the

Member for the question. And I may have misunderstood the question but if the question is if I could explain the engagement process that the government undertook in the 1970s, I would be hard-pressed to do so. Thank you.

**MR. EDJERICON:** Okay, thank you, Mr. Speaker. As mentioned earlier that I mentioned that education is a treaty right, the GNWT are acting as the Crown so there's a need for a Crown consultation and accommodation with the Yellowknives Dene First Nation to look at for a new school in Dettah. Can the Minister commit to working with the Yellowknives Dene First Nation chief and council and the Dettah and N'dilo DEA to start a process to get on the ECE capital plan process? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And thank you to the Member for the question.

While I can't speak to the exact process that would have occurred in the 1970s, I'm very excited that the process has certainly changed today. We're currently working -- one of the capital projects that we're currently working on is the new school for Colville Lake. And that process is taking on a much different life and one that I am very excited about, and I am very excited to say that those conversations are going very well.

And so the Department of Education, Culture and Employment is working alongside the Department of Infrastructure with the Behdzi Ahda' First Nation in Colville Lake to work on what that school's going to look like and what type of a facility it's going to -- or what role that facility will fill within the community. And I think that's an incredibly huge success story and one that I think that we can continue to build on until that school is fully realized. But the community and those conversations has brought forward things like wanting to have space for a greenhouse, wanting to ensure that they have a full-sized gym and not a small community gym like used to be built, and thankfully, that is a piece that was updated in our school capital infrastructure standards by the previous Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. And I absolutely agree with that one. We shouldn't be building small schools in communities; we should be building right-sized gyms in communities because those gyms really are an epicentre of what happens in a community and often are the only facility of that kind in that community. And so I'm very excited for that project and very excited for the precedent that it sets for the whole territory as to what community school builds end up looking like down the road. And so my longwinded response to the Member -- sorry -- is that I'm

absolutely excited to sit down and have these conversations with leadership across the territory. Thank you.

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

**MR. EDJERICON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My final question is when can the Minister of ECE start the process on Crown consultation and accommodation with the Yellowknives Dene First Nation; is it possible to do that this fiscal year? Thank you.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. So, Mr. Speaker, every year the Department of Education, Culture and Employment speaks with local DECs, DEAs, about what capital projects they want to put on the list and what it is that the school needs, and then the Department of Education, Culture and Employment works closely with the Department of Infrastructure to make sure that these projects are prioritized. As I said earlier today, we're not in a situation where we could do every single project across the territory in one year but certainly ensuring that at the end of the day we're working as hard as we can to invest in schools because I absolutely agree that students need a space that is conducive to learning at the end of the day and that over time our needs within communities change, and that needs to be reflected in our capital builds as well. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 609-20(1):  
GETTING AHEAD PILOT PROGRAM

**MRS. YAKELEYA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Minister of ECE from my Member's statement yesterday.

Can the Minister explain if Aurora College and the department are considering collaborative initiatives like the Getting Ahead pilot program as a replacement program from the community learning centres? Thank you.

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

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In regards to the new programming that Aurora College is envisioning for the community learning centres, Aurora College board of governor chairperson, chair -- well, sorry, I won't say names. But the chairperson, along with the president, will be in

front of committee tomorrow morning, and they intend to present their plan to the Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight. Thank you.

**MRS. YAKELEYA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Concerning funding for the GAP program, or Getting Ahead program, Aurora College contributed instructional leadership and provided the structured training framework. What was the approximate cost to Aurora College to provide this; does the Minister know? Thank you.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in regards to that specific program and the breakdown of that specific program, I would not have that information on hand. But I know that part of the presentation that Aurora College will be delivering tomorrow is in regards to the cost breakdown, and this would be a great opportunity to be able to ask those detailed questions of the chair and the president. I have passed along information to them that Members will want very detailed information and are very much looking to this presentation to answer a lot of questions, and so they intend to come very well prepared for this conversation.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. Final supplementary. Member from the Deh Cho.

**MRS. YAKELEYA:** Thank you. Are there other current pilot programs similar to GAP that are operated through partnerships between Aurora College and Indigenous governments happening across the territory? Thank you.

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the chairperson and president would be best positioned to speak directly to these types of pilot programs. But one of the things that I would love to share is Aurora College is always looking for new opportunities, especially for ones that will be successes in communities and that Indigenous governments are looking to put on. And so those types of conversations are best placed with the board of governors and the president because, ultimately, they want to deliver well-attended, successful programming, that is desired by the North. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. Colleagues, our time is up for oral questions. Oral questions. Member from Frame Lake.

### Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery (Reversion)

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I understand I have a constituent in the gallery today. I just wanted to recognize -- oh sorry, Mr. Speaker. I do ask for unanimous consent to return to item number 5 on the agenda.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Frame Lake. The Member from Frame Lake's asking for unanimous consent to return to item 5 on orders of the day. Seeing no nays, Member from Frame Lake.

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate your grace. I just wanted to recognize my constituent Trevor Kasteel is in the gallery today. Thank you very much.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Frame Lake. Member from Range Lake.

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just want to take a moment to recognize two pages from Range Lake North School, Sophia Regidor and Arpi Ghalyan. Thank you very much for being here today.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Range Lake. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. 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 Education, Culture and Employment.

### Tabling of Documents

TABLED DOCUMENT 300-20(1):  
ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE EDUCATION  
BODIES OF THE NORTHWEST  
TERRITORIES FOR THE 2023-2024  
SCHOOL YEAR ENDING JUNE 30, 2024,  
VOLUMES 1 AND 2

TABLED DOCUMENT 301-20(1):  
ANNUAL REPORT ON OFFICIAL  
LANGUAGES 2023-24

**HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND:** Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following two documents: The Annual Reports for the Education Bodies of the Northwest Territories for the 2023-2024 School Year, Volumes 1 and 2; Annual Report on Official Languages 2023-2024. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. Tabling of documents. Notices of motion. Motions.

Notices of motion for first reading of bills. Minister of Justice.

### Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills

BILL 22:  
LEGISLATION ACT

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Mr. Speaker, I give notice that on Tuesday, March 11th, 2025, I will present Bill 22, Legislation Act, to be read for the first time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister of Justice. Notices of motion for first reading of bills. First reading of bills. Second reading of bills. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters, Tabled Document 275-20(1), with the Member from the Deh Cho in the chair.

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

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** I call the Committee of the Whole to order. What is the wish of the committee? Member for Inuvik Boot Lake.

**MR. RODGERS:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, the committee wishes to consider Tabled Document 275-20(1), 2025-2026 Main Estimates, Department of Executive and Indigenous Affairs and Department of Justice, Madam Chair. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Does the committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

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

---SHORT RECESS

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Committee, we have agreed to consider Tabled Document 275-20(1), Main Estimates 2025-2026. We will now consider the Department of Executive and Indigenous Affairs. Does the Minister of Executive and Indigenous Affairs wish to bring witnesses into the House?

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Yes, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Does the committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Thank you. Sergeant-at-Arms, please escort the witnesses into the chamber.

Would the Minister please introduce his witnesses.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you. To my left is John MacDonald, deputy minister of EIA and secretary to Cabinet. And to my right is Terence Courtoreille, associate deputy minister of the health care system sustainability unit within the department of EIA. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Committee, we will resume where we left off last week. The next key activity is healthcare system sustainability on page 140 with information items on page 142. Are there any questions? Member for Great Slave.

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Madam Chair. This is mostly me just making sure we don't swing past this key activity as people get ready to ask more substantive questions. But could the Minister please provide an update on where the unit has gotten to thus far. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Minister of Executive and Indigenous Affairs.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you. I'd like to pass that to Mr. Courtoreille witness.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Mr. Courtoreille.

**MR. TERENCE COURTOREILLE:** Thank you, Madam Chair. So far to date, the unit has been busy working on a couple different fronts. The first front was to develop some of our key scoping documents that will help guide the work of our unit, and we largely completed that work prior to Christmas. And then since Christmas, we've been in engagement mode consulting with people within -- mostly within the health system. So to date, we were able to connect to every ADM or executive director for every area within the health system. We were also able to connect with the health authorities, the Hay River Health Authority, NTHSSA, as well as TCSA, and their respective PAs or boards. And we also did a fair amount of engagement out into the regions with the COOs. And then from a staffing perspective, Madam Chair, we have four staff on strength right now. We have an additional three coming on strength within the next few weeks at varying times. And then the proposed budget here has an additional ninth position to be recruited for in 2025-2026. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Member from Great Slave.

**MS. REID:** Yes, thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you for that update from Mr. Courtoreille. Could I also, for the public's knowledge, understand a little bit better the overlap or the touch points between EIA's sustainability unit and the public administrator. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Minister for Executive and Indigenous Affairs.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. So that's also part of the work that's been happening. We, of course, have the healthcare sustainability unit, the Department of Health and Social Services, and the NT Health Authority which is right now being run by the public administrator. And so the work has been to ensure that we all know what each other is doing, and we're all working together towards common goals.

So there's a couple different areas we're looking -- or a few different areas. So there's a governance and policy considerations. There is financial sustainability, and there's operational efficiencies. So under each of those broad umbrellas, everyone has a specific role. And so the public administrator is looking at the roles and responsibilities within the health system and the corporate functions of the health authority as well as the overall governing structure that they're working in.

In terms of the fiscal sustainability part of it, the public administrator and the health authority, along with the department of health, are looking at the budget and the deficit and how that can be addressed. And for operational efficiencies, the health authority public administrator and the Department of Finance are looking at a workforce review.

The healthcare system sustainability unit, in terms of the governance and policy side, is looking at investigating how the Hay River Health Authority could become part of the GNWT which was in the mandate. And in terms of operational efficiencies, the healthcare system sustainability unit is looking at the -- looking at defining the core services of health and social services. And then, of course, there's additional roles for the department of health and the health authorities themselves. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Member for Great Slave.

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I understand that the Minister of health and the public administrator will be presenting some of their initial findings and scoping to committee, and I hope that information can be made public towards the end of this first quarter. Is there any

contemplation around the work that HSS and EIA are doing together on these crucial tasks to sort of give a very plain language overview for the public around their vision and expected outcomes on these two sort of pillars of healthcare sustainability on both operations and financial pieces? Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Minister of Executive and Indigenous Affairs.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you. I'll hand it to Mr. Courtoreille.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Mr. Courtoreille.

**MR. TERENCE COURTOREILLE:** Thank you, Madam Chair. So to the Member's question, we do have a monitoring and evaluation framework, and that is a key piece of -- that's a key scoping document for laying out how we're going to do this work, how we're going to monitor progress, and how we're going to measure success, and the tools and the logic model are all inclusive as part of that document. So that's going to be helpful for that response. And I guess that's just my longwinded way of saying that yes, absolutely, we would be happy to provide a plain language translation of that document. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Member for Great Slave.

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm good for this section.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Thank you. Next, I have Member for Yellowknife North.

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Madam Chair. So I also wanted to ask some questions about this unit. I know that according to the monitoring and evaluation plan of this unit, my understanding is that the first year or so is to be focusing on finding what's core and not core. And then after that, looking at diving deeper or digging deeper into specific areas in terms of finding efficiencies or different ways of doing things. My concern with that timeline is that, you know, there's an urgent need to improve healthcare system; find, you know, ways to balance the budget; find efficiencies and that, you know, the work of the public administrator might be working at a different pace or, you know, than this unit and that by the time this unit gets around to starting to find efficiencies, you know, work of the public administrator will have already proceeded to be trying to balance the budget, etcetera.

So I wonder if there's consideration to altering the work plan or the sort of monitoring and evaluation plan of this unit to better line up with

the urgent work that's happening to, you know, try to balance the budget and find efficiencies in a way that ensures that our frontline services and system stays robust and able to serve people. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Minister of Executive and Indigenous Affairs.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you. And these are the conversations that I've had with the Minister of Health and Social Services and we've collectively had with our respective teams because we do have, as I mentioned, the health authorities, the public administrator, the department of health, and the healthcare system sustainability unit. We wanted to move in a coordinated fashion. And so already the -- those conversations are happening, the work of the healthcare system sustainability unit is -- it's not that there will be, you know, no progress and then all of a sudden a final product. There's progress along the way. They are learning things as they go, and that is being incorporated into the conversations they're having with the public administrator as he is looking at the overall system and the governance of the system. And so it's not -- that work is happening right now, I can say that. And we expect a preliminary report in the spring from the unit on those -- the definition of the core services with the final report later in the year. And perhaps Mr. Courtoreille might have something to add. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Mr. Courtoreille.

**MR. TERENCE COURTOREILLE:** Thank you, Madam Chair. And just to Premier's point, that preliminary analysis is going to happen a little bit quicker than over the next year. That analysis is going to look at defining what the programs and services are that's currently being delivered, and we're hoping to have that costed out so that we can understand some of the cost drivers a little bit better, and then that will come late spring, early summer, that work. And then the next step will be to use that work to help prioritize the next phase of our analysis which will be a little bit of a deeper dive into those priority areas. But to the Premier's point, that collaborative approach with the department and the health authorities is expected to happen throughout the entire process. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Member for Yellowknife North.

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I very much appreciate that willingness by this unit to sort of be flexible or work with the other initiatives that are underway to sort of change

the plan as necessary. I mean, I'll be honest and say my biggest fear about the sort of initial exercise of sorting it into core or non-core services and what's needed and not needed is that we'll just take a big look at everything we're already doing and then ask the question what are people going to miss most if we take it away, and if we feel like people won't notice as much or miss it as much then we'll just sort of take it away because it looks like a cost saving opportunity. But to me, the right approach would be to start with what are we actually trying to accomplish, what are the different possible ways of accomplishing it, are we choosing the right way of accomplishing something, the right way that's most cost efficient, that's most culturally appropriate, the most effective in terms of helping people over the long term with their health. So I mean I offer those as comments that I hope the unit will take to heart and -- because I know often politically, we just look for the -- you know, we look for some easy wins and we look for things that people aren't going to object too strongly against or if people won't notice if we take things away. But I think with health care, we really need to go back to basics in terms of what are we -- what are we trying to accomplish here.

One thing that I wanted to ask about the evaluation framework is that my understanding was that the plan was that after a year, the department would start coming up with some indicators to track, you know, are things getting better, are we having success with our work. But my concern would be that isn't that too late to start tracking things because if we want to see a change over time, if we want to know if the work is improving things, don't we have to start monitoring and tracking the situation now and then we'll see if things change and get better over time. We need to establish the baseline of where we're at now to be able to compare to once, you know, significant changes are made within the system, have things gotten better or have things gotten worse. Is this unit able to help create that kind of baseline now in terms of establishing indicators and starting to monitor them now so we know what our baseline is? Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Minister of Executive and Indigenous Affairs.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you. First, I'll note that the plan isn't to just see what's easiest to cut without the public noticing for the sake of cutting. The idea is to work to achieve the priorities of this Assembly to improve access to basic health care. And so that's the ultimate goal, And how we get there is going to be determined on, you know, what we find out during this analysis. But I'm not looking for

easy, you know, political decisions; I'm looking to improve the healthcare system, whatever that -- whatever that takes. But for the remainder of the question, I'd hand it to Mr. Courtoreille. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Mr. Courtoreille.

**MR. TERENCE COURTOREILLE:** Thank you, Madam Chair. And, yeah, I think that's really the work that's going to be happening in the first phase of the monitoring and evaluation framework, is to understand what are the programs and services that we're delivering, what data is available for us to track and establish that baseline, and then to track that baseline going forward.

Part of the -- and I keep referring to them the monitoring evaluation framework because it really is a key document that outlines and is fundamental to the work that we're going to be doing. But included in that document is a continuous improvement plan that will help us identify and measure that approach going forward for those programs and services. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Member for Yellowknife North.

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Madam Chair. That's all for me. I really appreciate those comments and commitments.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Next, I have Member for Frame Lake.

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Really appreciate it. My first question -- and forgive me if I'm wrong about this, but I'm not sure that we've been provided with the monitoring and evaluation framework, and I know that Mr. -- sorry, the deputy minister offered to provide a plain language summary. But would we be able to get a commitment simply to just provide a copy of the framework? Thanks.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Minister of Executive and Indigenous Affairs.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** The framework was shared with all MLAs on January 31st. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Thank you. Member for Frame Lake.

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you, and thank you for the reminder. I'll make sure to scan my email inbox. We get so many sometimes, it's easy to forget whether we received something or not.

So, you know, just going on the thread that I was pulling on over the past couple days with the health Minister, you know, one of our top priorities is supporting primary care reform, and certainly there's all sorts of evidence for why this is a worthwhile initiative. And something that I would point out is that we may -- and one of the reasons I was pushing us to kind of define the issue and to better understand what we mean by providing equitable access to health care is that we may, in fact, need to shift resources further into primary care and increase resources that they are -- they're using in the system.

So I'm just wondering can -- you know, when we look at this unit, I think it's been seen as being a unit that's there to kind of reduce fiscal -- reduce spending, improve fiscal health, but would just note that system sustainability involves workplace morale, it involves sustainability in terms of being able to attract and retain workers and, indeed, to achieve our goal of reforming and improving primary care access. So I was just hoping that the Minister or his staff could comment on that and how we're going to be careful that we're not throwing out the primary care baby with the fiscal sustainability bath water. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Minister of Executive and Indigenous Affairs.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you. And so the primary health care reform is the responsibility of health and social services. The department, they are leading that work, and we are here to support that work. We're all here to support each other. And so the work that is being done by this unit can inform that work.

I'll note that, you know, there -- I think there might be a perception, and I hope it's not coming from me because I've never said this, but the idea of this unit is to not just find what we can cut and save some money. It is to make the system sustainable. As the Member mentioned in his latter comments about the things that the system -- that this unit should be contributing to, that's what the unit is contributing to. It's for the healthcare system sustainability at large not just the financial sustainability. So it's also to allow decision makers to have eyes on what's going on in the system. As a Minister for five years now, it's been difficult for me to get a grip on what's going on with the healthcare system because it is so large, there's so many programs, it has grown so rapidly. So, you know, by virtue of having this unit while there is primary health care reform happening, but I -- it's my sense that that's going to give us better eyes on that as well. And so we'll just have a better understanding of what's happening and how to

better support -- and as decision makers, as Ministers, how to best support the system going forward. And I'm not sure if Mr. Courtoreille has anything to add so I'll throw it to him as well. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Mr. Courtoreille.

**MR. TERENCE COURTOREILLE:** Yeah, thank you, Madam Chair. I don't think I have much more to add than that other than just to echo the Premier's comments on all of these mandate priorities that address system reform or some sort of system sustainability topic is really meant to be all the agencies working together and collaborating with one another. So at some point in time, I suspect we might be asked to participate in this conversation but today, we have not been part of the primary health care reform conversation. Thanks.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Member for Frame Lake.

**MR. MORSE:** Okay, thank you, Madam Chair. That's all my questions for now on this section. Thanks.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Okay. Member for the Sahtu.

**MR. McNEELY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm in support of this unit and the objectives or the goals set by this unit and, ultimately, it's to make our health care more efficient, more modern in the process. So I look forward to the -- my continued support and the updates provided by the Minister. Mahsi.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Minister of Executive and Indigenous Affairs, would you like to respond?

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you. I appreciate the Member's support, and I look forward to continuing to update committee as the work progresses. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Thank you. No further questions. I see no further questions, please turn to page 141.

Executive and Indigenous Affairs, healthcare system sustainability, operations expenditure summary, 2025-2026 Main Estimates, \$2,096,000. Does the committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Thank you. Moving on to Indigenous and intergovernmental relations on page 143 with information items on page 146. Are there any questions? Member for Great Slave.

**MS. REID:** (audio).

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Minister Executive and Indigenous Affairs.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you. With your indulgence, I would like to swap out my witnesses for this section.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Sergeant-at-Arms, please exchange witnesses.

Thank you. Now I'll go to Member for Great Slave.

**MS. REID:** Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Sorry, Minister, would you introduce your witness.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you. With me, I have Tram Do, the director of corporate services. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Thank you. Now I have the Member for Great Slave.

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Madam Chair. So there are, according to EIA's business plan on page 19 of their business plan, three legislative initiatives currently underway with the IGC technical working groups with two to three more still to be initiated. And my apologies if this isn't the correct section to ask about this, but I think it might be. So I was just curious if the amount of that work is sufficiently resourced and what the timelines are looking like for these technical working groups within the life of this Assembly. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Thank you. Minister of Executive and Indigenous Affairs.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you. The department does feel adequately resourced to do that work. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Member for Great Slave.

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Madam Chair. And I know we are all looking forward to seeing the UNDRIP action plan, implementation action plan later this year. Will the committee be briefed on this plan prior to the fall sitting? Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Minister of Executive and Indigenous Affairs.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Yes, if committee's willing to accept the briefing, we will be definitely be briefing committee before the fall. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Member for Great Slave.

**MS. REID:** Well, I'm always personally excited for briefings but I can't speak for committee. So fair enough, I suppose.

And further in this area, I'm curious if the Minister could please provide a status update on the Intergovernmental Council Secretariat coordinating with the IGC governments to advance the seven-year review of the 2014 intergovernmental agreement on lands and resource management. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Minister of Executive and Indigenous Affairs.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you. The group met in September, and there was agreement to proceed with that work. So the work is not proceeded -- is not yet started, but there's an agreement to proceed. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Member for Great Slave.

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you for that answer. I will admit my -- I am not as well versed in this area as the Minister. But is it planned that there would be work done on this file in this upcoming fiscal year and at what frequency throughout the Assembly? Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Minister of Executive and Indigenous Affairs.

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

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Deputy minister MacDonald.

**MR. JOHN MacDONALD:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Our intention is to proceed with IGC direction on this. At this point, we'll be working through the secretariat to ensure that all parties are ready to proceed and are prepared. So we do have the intention, at least for our part, to advance this work during the life of this Assembly. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Member for Great Slave.

**MS. REID:** Yeah, thank you for that, Madam Chair. And I recognize that the Minister is just one party at that table so I appreciate that he may not feel comfortable giving firm timelines or deadlines, but I am glad to hear that that work will continue in this Assembly. So nothing further. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Thank you. Minister of Executive and Indigenous Affairs, would you like to respond? Thank you.



**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** I take the Member's comment. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Thank you. Next, I have Member for Yellowknife North.

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I just wanted to quickly ask: I know we're maintaining a leased space in Ottawa for, you know, business that happens in Ottawa and intergovernmental affairs in that way. But can the Minister confirm whether we're -- we still have a staff person based in Ottawa that is managing that office? Like, do we still have an office manager or are we just leasing the space? My understanding is that we're trying to find creative ways to, like, share that leased space with other groups, like Indigenous governments who might want to use it from time to time. But do we still pay an office manager? Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Minister of Executive and Indigenous Affairs.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you. So that position has been eliminated for the future fiscal years. So there is not a solid plan on who is going to fill that role or how that's going to be filled. That's still in discussion. Perhaps the deputy minister can add some more detail to this issue. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Deputy minister MacDonald.

**MR. JOHN MacDONALD:** Thank you, Madam Chair. As the Premier mentioned, as EIA's contribution to fiscal sustainability, the position in the Ottawa office was eliminated. What we are exploring at this time is with our counterparts in other territories, looking at whether they would like to also utilize the Ottawa office, share the space, and use it for their engagements with the federal system as well. And, of course, we always maintain the office as available for NWT Indigenous governments should they be in Ottawa for meetings or negotiations or what have you. So it does provide an opportunity for us to support some of the partner governments. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Member for Yellowknife North.

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Madam Chair. That was what I was interested to know, but it's good to know that we have looked for efficiencies and we're also trying to work other territories as well as Indigenous governments to share that space. That's fine. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Seeing no further questions,

please turn to page 144.

Executive and Indigenous Affairs, Indigenous and intergovernmental relations, operations expenditure summary, 2025-2026 Main Estimates, \$7,714,000. Does the committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Thank you. Moving on to Office of the Secretary to Cabinet on page 147, with information items on page 150. Are there any questions? Member for Great Slave.

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I want to preface this question that I'm very grateful to the Premier and his staff on the work that they have done in quick order on the Way Home comprehensive strategy on addressing homelessness. It's much appreciated, the work that they conducted with me last year specifically with my riding and the encampment, and I know that the Minister and his staff know we have a long way to go, and that's okay.

But I am interested specifically in that strategy and whether or not Members of this committee and AOC will be seeing further work in this space to outline targets, timelines, more details about the work that we are expecting this year and beyond. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Minister of Executive and Indigenous Affairs.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you. And I believe this would fall under the governance and service integration section, but I'm happy to speak to it here. We are presenting to standing committee on this in the coming weeks, I believe -- yes, next week. And so we should have some more information for committee there, but perhaps I can hand it to the deputy minister to expand on this. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Deputy minister MacDonald.

**MR. JOHN MacDONALD:** Thank you, Madam Chair. As the Premier mentioned, we have a briefing scheduled before Standing Committee on Government Operations on March 12th. That briefing is intended to focus on the structure of the department, that is the unit that's focused on the work associated with integrated service delivery and homelessness, as well as anti-poverty now. But we also are planning to advance a separate briefing that would focus entirely on providing a government-wide update on the homelessness strategy, updates on each action, what departments and agencies have been doing,

and what we're looking forward to be doing in the future and hopefully getting committee's feedback and comments on that work at that time. So we're hoping to have that ready to advance to committee probably late March, early April, depending on timelines. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Member for Great Slave.

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Madam Chair. And my apologies for getting the activity incorrect. I just saw the office of the deputy, and I know the deputy is where the buck stops on the actioning of these items. So my apologies. I think that is all for this section for me. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Seeing no further questions, I'll move to Executive and Indigenous Affairs, Office of the Secretary to Cabinet, operations expenditure summary, 2025-2026 Main Estimates, \$1,730,000. Does the committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Thank you. There are additional information items on -- from pages 151 to 153. Are there any questions? Thank you, Members.

Please return now to the department summary found on page 119 and the revenue summary information item on page 120. Are there any questions? Seeing no further questions, committee, I will now call the department summary.

Executive and Indigenous Affairs, operations expenditure summary, total department, 2025-2026 Main Estimates, \$35,026,000. Does the committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Thank you, Minister, and thanks to the witnesses for appearing before us. Sergeant-at-Arms, please escort the witnesses from the chamber.

Committee, we have agreed to consider Tabled Document 275-20(1), Main Estimates 2025-2026. We will now consider the Department of Justice. Does the Minister of Justice wish to bring witnesses into the House?

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Yes, I do.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Does the committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Thank you. Sergeant-at-Arms, please escort the witnesses into the chamber.

Would the Minister please introduce his witnesses.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you. To my left is deputy minister of the Department of Justice, Charlene Doolittle. To my right is James Bancroft, director of corporate services.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** The committee has agreed to forego general comments. Does the committee agree to proceed to the detail contained in the tabled document?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Committee, we will defer the departmental summary and review the estimates by activity summary beginning with community justice starting on page 306 with information items on page 309. Are there any questions? Member for Range Lake.

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm assuming this is where the community safety officer pilot is being funded, so maybe I'll ask about that. I just see where the pilot project has found itself. I know it's still under review but how is it going? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Minister of Justice.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you. So from -- by all accounts, the pilot project is going well. I hear good reports on -- you know, anecdotally about what's happening. I'm not sure if the deputy minister has anything to add, but I'd like to hand it to her. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Deputy minister Doolittle.

**MS. CHARLENE DOOLITTLE:** Thank you, Madam Chair. The department -- things are going well. There's training with the community safety officer program, applied suicide intervention skills, de-escalation. So we are working with the community and the program to train them and support them as well as we are continuing to gather monthly reporting measures on the progress of the pilot, including community partnership and activities, program calls for support, and RCMP calls for service and prisoner count, so collecting statistics as well to keep track for a future evaluation. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Member for Range Lake.

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you. And when is the planned evaluation going to be completed? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Minister of Justice.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you. So the evaluation would be winter of 2026. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Member for Range Lake.

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you. And what kind of metrics are we looking at to determine if it's a success? Like, is it a number of -- I guess I'll just ask that. Like, what metrics are we looking for to inform that evaluation? Because I'd like to see these programs continue. I think they have borne fruit in other jurisdictions, and I'm really -- I hear, again anecdotally, it's going really well but, like, what practically do we need to see before we expand this to other communities? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Minister of Justice.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you. So some of the metrics are things like the calls for service received by the community safety officers and the calls for service for the RCMP, has this had an impact on their calls for service. How many nights are people spending in cells, RCMP cells. These are the types of things that we would hope the program would help to address. Anything further I should add? Maybe I'll hand it to Mr. Bancroft; he might have some more information. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Mr. Bancroft.

**MR. JAMES BANCROFT:** Thank you, Madam Chair. The only additional statistics I would add is local crime statistics which are reported on a monthly basis with the RCMP and to local government. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Member for Range Lake.

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Madam Chair. So I'm assuming if we see those things go down that the program would be a success. So that's good to get awareness of that. I would say, though, there might be another way to look at it that if the CSO might reveal there's more of these incidents rather than less just because there's another body, you know, providing community policing so there should be some nuance, I think when you do the evaluation, to make sure that it's not like, well, things keep going up and we have a CSO so the CSO

wasn't effective. So I guess I'll wait eagerly for this report -- or sorry, the eventual evaluation.

So the pivoting to the gun and gang strategy. I know this is a federal contribution that is to assist our community policing towards this. We've heard -- well, not anecdotally but statistically that gun crime is on the rise and has been for the last couple of years. The Standing Committee on Social Development just received a presentation from a local landlord with some pretty frightening imagery and anecdotal evidence -- well, and statistical evidence as well that this is something that is present in the capital. We know it's present everywhere. So what are we doing with this funding to protect our communities? Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Minister of Justice.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you. So this is being used for a number of different initiatives. So one example would be that the department, the department of MACA, health, and along with the RCMP, contributed to bring the Odd Squad to the territories to provide 14 drug awareness presentations to youth in nine different communities. The department is looking to fill justice navigator positions to help support system navigation and case management for individuals being released from custodial sentences. And there's also funding for -- to top up some youth centres to help address -- give kids a place to go. Because when you're wandering around, that's when trouble can start. So those are some of the examples of where the money's being put. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Member for Range Lake.

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you. And I appreciate that -- yeah, especially that youth piece is really important, and I'm glad to see that we are finding ways to use funding for gang prevention and it's targeted towards youth. But I guess my concern is, like, we have -- war zone's probably too much of an embellishment but, like, we have an increasingly -- increasing incidents of violence on the streets of Yellowknife. I see it all the time because of here, in the apartment buildings, especially where there's concentrations of poverty. So on the gun part of this, I guess the organized crime front, are we doing more -- are we providing more resource to those efforts? I know we have the crime reduction unit at headquarters, but that's much more of a taking on the big fish kind of guys, the organized crime piece. The boots on the ground piece I think is what a lot of people are looking for to feel safe. And is any part of -- well, and

not even this funding, but the entire division that does community justice, how are we using these resources to enhance that kind of community policing and the community policing of having, you know, police officers ready and able to react expediently to concerns and, you know, catch people before they -- or catch gangsters before they're committing violent acts against our citizens. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Minister of Justice.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you. So this is \$800,000 a year for the next few years, and so it's not a lot of money to put a lot of boots on the ground per se. One of the other items I failed to mention that this is funding is a safety analyst position and -- yes, in this division, I guess. And so that's going to help identify where we could put more resources or how we can better utilize our resources.

I'll note that the crime reduction unit, you know, the Member said it's to go after the big fish, I wouldn't necessarily say we have any big fish in the territory when it comes to organized crime. We get a lot of the flunkies and some of the folks who couldn't cut it down south perhaps get sent up this way. And so it is to deal with the day-to-day organized crime, the folks on the ground actually, you know, causing harm to our residents that we are looking at addressing with this funding. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Member for Range Lake.

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you. No, and, you know, we have to tackle all. This is just the -- the kind of underlying stuff, the underlying conditions of crime, the poverty, the drug addictions, all that, like, there needs to be a broader thing but we do need these resources in place because the problem's gotten just as bad. So I do appreciate that, and I think all those flunkies report back to someone and they, of course, get resourced by people in southern Canada sending them here to cause mayhem in our communities.

Is this where we could find a resource to put social workers or people with those kind of skill sets on patrol with police or community safety officers? That's a model that's had success in the past, Madam Chair. It's something that I know during the election we were asked about, and it's something I certainly support. But it seems like resourcing that is always difficult because our Minister of Health and Social Services will tell us that the social services is stretched pretty thin anyway. So could we -- as we've been flexible with some of this funding towards youth programming and other things, could we find some money here to pilot that

kind of project or support that? I know the RCMP are supportive as well. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Minister of Justice.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. So in this pot of money, it is subscribed. Often when we get these funds from the federal government, there's an action plan that we're required to submit and then we all sign off on it. And so that's -- that work has been done. And so in this, you know, \$800,000 which might sound like a lot, there's not a lot of free money to stand up a program like the Member's talking about although I have tasked the Department of Justice and health on working together to look into figuring out how we can bring one of those programs to the territory. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Member for Range Lake.

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you for that. Thank you, Mr. Premier -- thank you to the Premier, Madam Chair. The men's healing program, real quick, how are the numbers looking for that? I know this is something the Minister and I worked with -- worked on way back in the day, and it's definitely important to our communities and to -- and in particular Indigenous folks who are, you know, as much victims in the system and cycle of violence as anyone else. This is a really good thing. I'm glad to see it in here but is it seeing success? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Minister of Justice.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you. Yes, the men's healing program, it's gone through some changes since it was first introduced. We've allowed -- or made multi-year agreements available and so for a number of years, it was fully subscribed. Perhaps I can get Mr. Bancroft to speak on this one and talk about some of the numbers involved and -- yes, I'll leave it at that. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Mr. Bancroft.

**MR. JAMES BANCROFT:** Thank you, Madam Chair. So the agreements that we've signed with Indigenous governments for the men's healing program, one of the things we heard back was consistency of funding. So we've gone from one-year agreements to two-year agreements to ensure that there's more consistency with that funding in the communities. So just to recap for 2024-2025, we've contributed \$653,000 over seven different funding initiatives. And for next year, we have \$520,000 over the same organizations. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Thank you. Now, I have Member for Monfwi.

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Thank you. Public Safety Canada, where this place -- the program is piloted still, so I just wanted to ask about the crime rate where this program is being piloted. What's the crime rate like now that since they have this program in their community? Hearing of crime of -- you know, of things that's happening in the Northwest Territories especially where there -- we don't have this public safety program or piloted project, Fort Smith. We hear crime in Hay River, Yellowknife, Behchoko, you know, along the highways. And my colleague's from her -- in her riding too as well, you know, but we don't have this so I just wanted to know what is the crime rate like where this program is being piloted? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Minister of Justice.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. So across the territory, including in Fort Liard, the crime rate is increasing. The number of calls for service from the RCMP are increasing. And so despite the fact that we have some community safety officers in this community, similar to how we have additional RCMP officers in some communities it doesn't necessarily mean the crime rate is going to be reduced. In many instances, they're fighting an uphill battle.

That being said, the community safety officers do do a lot of work. They responded to 600 incidents from September 2021 to December 2024, things like providing safe rides, mental health checks, supports for people who are intoxicated maybe just walking down the street. Those are important things that, you know, do impact the crime rate and public safety. They work with the RCMP on check stops. They've provided assistance during floods and wildfire evacuations, supporting elders. And so there's more to what this group does than just the numbers reflected in the crime rate. I just wanted to get that out there. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Member for Monfwi.

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Thank you. Yes, I know in many of the small communities we've been hearing lots since, you know, the drugs. We have a lot of drug issues, addiction issues. Before it was always alcohol but it's not as much. Everything is associated with drugs now. So even in my community, we have security, peace officer. I'm not too sure if they are being funded through territorial or through federal, but I want to ask the Minister -- or the

Premier to see if there's a plan in place to extend this pilot project to other communities in the NWT in the future. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Minister of Justice.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you. So there's a couple of factors there. I don't believe those positions the Member referenced in her community are funded by the Department of Justice. But when looking at whether or not to expand this program, we need to look at how well it's working, and so there is the evaluation that will be undertaken. And we also need to look at available resources. And so right now I believe this is -- was initially 100 percent funded by the GNWT. The federal government did come in in 2023 and contributed 52 percent of the total cost, and so about a 50/50 split with us. We have just learned from the federal government that we will no longer be eligible for any federal contributions for community safety officers after next year. And so that sort of hinders our plan and ability to expand this program to additional communities. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Member for Monfwi.

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Okay, thank you for that information, Premier, or -- yeah.

Another one too is, you know, there's a lot of good programs in here that I know -- like, the men's healing program. There's a lot of programs here that I know my community access, that they use to help our young people even, like -- and I really do appreciate the friendship centre, Tlicho government, and then TCSA. All these organizations, they are doing their best to help our young people. Not just the young people, but the unhoused people, people with the addictions. So I'm sure -- you know, like, some of these programs here, we see it in the community, which is good. So with that in mind, like, some of these programs are there year-to-year basis, or is there a multi-year agreement for some of these programs? Because they are very useful and -- like, the men's healing program, we have that in our community. You know, like, we have that in other communities. And there's other things that the community are doing to help fight the crime, you know, especially against drugs and alcohol. And there's a lot of things that are happening in our small communities. And even with -- with what happened in the news recently, there was 33 that was -- a 33-year-old charged, you know -- it was in the news where pimping a 13-year-old or 15-year-old girl. So if that's happening, like what's happening in small communities, we are not too sure, but that's

different topic. But it's just that many of these programs, it's very useful and I'm glad that the Indigenous government or organizations are implementing and providing programs that they think will work for their people instead of -- just like the Minister said that, you know, it's -- they're taking it all -- you know, they're taking it upon themselves of helping their people. So it's good. You know, I like that. But it's just that the multi-year, you know. Like, it would be nice if we had a -- like, a multi-year because I think there are some program that, you know, it goes from year to year and they're not too sure -- because they're doing so well that they're not too sure if they're going to be funded next year, you know. So that's what we're looking for is that, a multi-year to reassure the community that they can carry on and, you know -- because it says that, you know, according to the residential school survivor that to be healed, it's going to take seven generations. And I think we've passed some of the seven generations and -- so, you know, we don't know the stats. And when we look at it in a community, the problem is still there. It's beyond seven generations. So that's why I'm just asking if there -- if it's year to year and/or multi-year. I think the multi-year is more beneficial for many of the community members, organizations. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Minister of Justice.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. And for the most part, we have multi-year agreements. That being said, we do want to be flexible and sometimes communities only want a single year agreement. And so we are open to working with the communities to determine how to best support them. So, for example, we moved the men's healing fund to a multi-year agreement. And I know that's been appreciated for the reasons the Member has stated. And, yes, we're going to -- we'll continue to be as flexible as we can given any restrictions that the federal government might put on any of these funds that are part of a federal agreement, but thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Member for Monfwi.

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** There's three legislations that's outstanding -- I know it's going to pass, but do you know, like, SCAN legislation, do you know when it's going to be introduced in the House to pass? Because I know a lot of people have been asking. A lot of people are -- even I'm sure the housing Minister have heard lots too, you know, like who are the tenants. And we've been getting a lot of phone calls too from tenants. So I think they want some action right away. They keep asking, like

when is it going to be passed. So, you know, like, is there a timelines of when this legislation will be introduced and passed to implement? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Minister of Justice.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you. So right now the plan is to, in the spring, go and do public consultation and then produce a legislative proposal by the summer and after that is approved, we can start drafting a bill which means the bill could be introduced in the winter sitting of next year. So either the February/March or maybe the May/June sitting. And then it would be with committee. So it would be sometime next year hopefully that it would be passed. And it's -- you know, it is painfully slow often, the development of legislation, because it is complex, there's loss of research that needs to happen and, you know, we have limited resources. So I think that all of us would have liked to get some of these pieces of legislation done the first year. Unfortunately wasn't the case. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Member for Monfwi.

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Thank you. Can I still go on, or -- like, because I think my time -- yeah.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Next I have Member for Great Slave. Thank you.

**MS. REID:** I only have, really, one core piece of questions for the Minister on community justice, and he's aware I've been interested in this for many months, so I have -- I've had many questions from a constituent about this. And I really do appreciate his office working with me to understand the supports that are available for survivors of sexual violence, for folks who are offenders. But my interest is also in providing these services and availability to these services to folks who haven't offended but recognize that they need help.

The Minister has explained to me that in his other role that integrated service is working to connect residents with supports that they need. Those supports exist mainly in the health and justice spaces. So what I'm asking the Minister today is there a way that we can look for a more concentrated coordination of efforts around addressing trauma, which is one of our priorities and in the mandate, and include access to these programs for folks who are not yet offenders, but recognize that they need supports to not become offenders, to the programs that he has in justice? Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Minister of Justice.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you. And there's definitely a lot of overlap between, you know, all government departments, but health and justice in particular, and so there's types of supports for people who are not in the system yet or not yet -- are not offenders yet, those generally sit with health. We do have some examples in justice. For example, the men's healing fund, which in the last government I tried to put over to health because I thought it was more appropriate to be in health. But for the most part, we provide services to people in the system. That being said, I just spoke about proactive engagement with youth to try and keep youth out of the system. So the lines are sometimes blurred. But, yeah, I guess that would be an area I would just leave it that would be more suited to be with health. Perhaps the deputy minister has something to add, though. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Deputy minister Doolittle.

**MS. CHARLENE DOOLITTLE:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes, our department is heavily mandated and legislated, so we don't have a lot of discretionary areas. Community justice is one of our areas where we do do a lot of good work, but it's discretionary and it's small. We do have the men's healing program like the Minister mentioned, but we also do a lot of training in our corrections facilities with victim services workers, community justice committees in trauma training, and that type of work. So trying to be as proactive as we can. But, again, we deal with folks in the system, unfortunately at the end of the system, and it's hard for us to find a lot of resources to focus on folks who are not yet in the system since that is our mandate. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Member for Great Slave.

**MS. REID:** Yeah, thank you. And I respect that quite deeply. I recognize that it's kind of a -- you know, you have a certain mandate and you can't really escape that mandate. But I think some of the resources that justice has, and some of the training opportunities that justice has, there is some opportunity for cross-pollination, perhaps, around training, trauma-related supports. It just -- in any way that we can -- and I don't -- we say this so much in this House and I don't know if it has any meaning anymore, but thinking outside of the box around how we're supporting people who are trying to heal from their trauma and are trying desperately to live a healthy lifestyle and not continue intergenerational trauma. I just

urge the Minister to think of ways that those connections can happen, and if he has any thoughts on that I would appreciate them. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Minister of Justice.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Yes, thank you. We're all about doing things differently and thinking out of the box, just like every other Assembly. But, you know, I don't know if I have much more to add than what I've stated before. That's one of the issues I see with government departments, and generally when you say this department does this and this department does this, there's going to be an area where we have -- don't have overlap because of, you know, the realities of mandates and, you know, funding and things like that but where there clearly could be things on either side of that border, it could be with health, it could be otherwise. And I agree, we're -- we need to be working together. Breaking down silos, I'll add that to the list of, you know, common things that every Assembly wants to do. And so we'll continue to work with health and find opportunities to do that type of work that the Member is talking about because I recognize the importance of it. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Member for Great Slave.

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Well, I'm sure I will continue to talk to the Minister offline about this. And I appreciate those comments. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Thank you. No further questions, we'll go to -- please turn to page 307.

Justice, community justice, operations expenditure summary, 2025-2026 Main Estimates, \$7,902,000. Does the committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Thank you. Moving on to corrections, beginning on page 310 with information items on page 313. Are there any questions? Member for Yellowknife North.

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I have a question about part of the business plan that I think might fit into this section, but it might span across a couple sections. It's around targets to establish first a baseline of numbers of prolific offenders, so, you know, offenders who keep repeatedly offending, and to define what that means and then report data on it to help identify appropriate interventions, so trying to look at people who keep coming back

through the system over and over and over again and then figure out what are better ways to address this as opposed to continuing to just arrest them, you know, put them in jail, keep cycling them through the system. So can the Minister explain a bit more about what steps the government is going to take on this and if you have any timelines on that work. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Minister of Justice.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Perhaps I can hand it to deputy minister for some more information on that. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Deputy minister Doolittle.

**MS. CHARLENE DOOLITTLE:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes, this is a new mandate commitment for the Department of Justice. And for us, it speaks of prolific offenders, really what we're talking about in the Northwest Territories is repeat and violent offenders, largely repeat offenders. We see the same people coming through. So we are working with our RCMP partners to help identify these frequent repeat offenders in the Northwest Territories, which is our issue, trying to support them better once they come out of the correction system if they are in one of our facilities, connecting them with supports, probation officers, integrated case management, you know, housing, that sort of thing. So just trying to identify these repeat offenders, support them, have them on our radar, and try to reintegrate them as best we can. As of now, we don't have a really good way of tracking these folks so that's the idea with this mandate item. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Member for Yellowknife North.

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Madam Chair. And so many other jurisdictions, including Alberta and BC and Ontario, they form, like, special teams with representatives from police and corrections and prosecution services, but also non-profit groups, to help try to create, like, individualized plans for a prolific offender based on whatever their particular needs might be. I wonder if -- is that part of the vision or the plan of this government around dealing with prolific offenders? Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Minister of Justice.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you. So the department is looking into what other jurisdictions actually do and how we can adopt or adapt any of those models or what lessons we can learn. And so that is all part of it. And I'll

say that this is sort of a -- you know, we're talking at a territorial-wide level here. Within communities as well, RCMP detachments have their own prolific offender databases and that they work locally as well. So on many -- on multiple levels, this work is happening. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Member for Yellowknife North.

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I know at some points in the past there had been the establishment of some different forms of interagency groups. At least within the city of Yellowknife when I was over at city council, I know there were times when groups were established that included the RCMP but also, you know, staff from ambulance services and staff from bylaw and just to try to coordinate their efforts. Because often it was the same person, you know, moving between those different services and if people could better understand what was happening with a particular person and what they were going through, it could be more effective than each of those agencies just dealing, you know, separately, not understanding the circumstances that that person was in. Is that something that this government has been looking at, or are there barriers that have been identified to try to revive that sort of interagency approach to dealing with people who are struggling and may be involved with the criminal justice system but certainly are also -- might be frequently accessing the hospital or various other services? Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Minister of Justice.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you. So, you know, much of what the Member is talking about is what the department of EIA is seized with in terms of looking at the whole system and how a single person might move through it. And so there's individuals who work with the integrated case management unit when they're dealing with multiple different departments, and they try to play a coordinating role there as well.

In communities, there's community justice committees which are often integrated with the community and have relationships with the RCMP, other NGOs. At EIA, we're working on -- working with NGOs to try and get everyone on a similar database so that we can actually share information and so that we know about the clientele that we're working with.

There's also considerations with the -- our privacy legislation. And so the review of the ATIPP Act and the Health Information Act, I've asked that those things be taken into



consideration so we're not hindering our ability to actually help people in the way that makes sense because we have this legislation in place. So, you know, lots of that work is happening, and as the Member knows -- I know she has extensive non-profit background -- sometimes groups don't want to work together and sometimes interagency groups fall apart because personalities or different priorities at the time. So it's an ongoing -- I'll say it's an ongoing struggle. That sounds negative, but it's an ongoing effort to ensure that we're all working together and we are putting in an honest effort. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Member for Yellowknife North.

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Madam Chair. So if we focus back on prolific offenders, would it be the department or would it be the RCMP that would take a lead on, you know, identifying and keeping track of or reporting on prolific offenders? So what role exactly would the department play? Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Minister of Justice.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you. So it would be the RCMP who actually maintains that database and has that information, and the department would work to support them. I'm not sure if the deputy minister has anything to add to that, but I can hand it to her, Madam Chair. Thanks.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Deputy minister Doolittle.

**MS. CHARLENE DOOLITTLE:** Thank you, Madam Chair. That is correct, we work together and with the RCMP who holds information, and we help correct these repeat offenders to resources in the community and throughout the territory to, you know, help them reintegrate and rehabilitate better into the community. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Member for Yellowknife North.

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Madam Chair. And so if it's the RCMP that primarily is, you know, holding that database and keeping that information, are there any issues that the Minister sees with information sharing between the RCMP and the government to be able to identify appropriate interventions and supports for people, or is that sort of completely sorted out how information would flow back and forth or be shared between RCMP and the department? Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Minister of Justice.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you. From my experience in working in this system for the last number of years, there's always problems sharing information. It's always difficult to do that, and it always takes effort. And so we are going to -- we are working on how we can enhance our ability to share information between ourselves and our partners, like the RCMP, and that -- you know, they have their own privacy legislation. And so it might require amendments to our legislation. It could just require different interpretation or different agreements to be put together, but it is something that is definitely front of mind. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Member for Yellowknife North.

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Nothing further. I appreciate the amount of information that is being shared about that, and I look forward to continuing the conversation.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** No further questions, please turn to page 311.

Justice, corrections, operations expenditure summary, 2025-2026 Main Estimates, \$39,839,000. Does the committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Thank you. Moving on to court services, beginning on page 314 with information items on page 316. Are there any questions? Member for Great Slave.

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Just a quick question. I note in the main estimates that this activity has -- provides free public access to the legal research material in the M.M. deWeerd Public Legal Resource Centre. Can the Minister please tell me if that research centre is staffed by an information professional. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Minister of Justice.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you. No, there's no staff. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Member for Great Slave.

**MS. REID:** Thank you. So there is now active collection to that resource centre by means of purchasing new materials? Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Minister of Justice.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** I'll pass it to deputy minister. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Deputy minister Doolittle.

**MS. CHARLENE DOOLITTLE:** Madam Chair, yes, there are resources still being purchased in the resource centre which is on the fourth floor, I believe, of the courthouse. It's FOB access to -- and available to the public and to lawyers. As well, there's a move to online resources as well which are available there. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Thank you. Member for Great Slave.

**MS. REID:** Thank you. And if it's not staffed, who supports the services that are provided? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Minister of Justice.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Court services. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Member for Great Slave.

**MS. REID:** Do the staff have training in legal databases and the like? Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Minister of Justice.

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

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Member for Great Slave.

**MS. REID:** That's all for now. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Thank you. No further questions, please turn to page 315.

Justice, court services, operations expenditure summary, 2025-2026 Main Estimates, \$18,421,000. Does the committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Thank you. Moving on to legal aid services, beginning on page 317 with information items on page 319. Are there any questions? Member for Yellowknife North.

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I see there's a further reduction in the line for Office of the Children's Lawyer, even more than last year. There's another reduction of about \$45,000. Can the Minister explain what the further reduction is about. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Minister of Justice.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you. That's a residual reduction from last year. It's just the final amount over the final time period that is being reduced. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Member for Yellowknife North.

**MS. MORGAN:** Is the Minister able to share with us any statistics on the number of children that are being served by the Office of the Children's Lawyer? For example, numbers between -- you know, over the last three years, you know, while there's been reductions in the Office of the Children's Lawyer. Is the Minister able to share with us the number of children that have continued to be served up to 2024-2025? Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Minister of Justice.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you. So I have them broken down by calendar year. So in 2025, there have been eight children. 2024, 38. 2023, 34. 2022, 38. 2021, 31. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Member for Yellowknife North.

**MS. MORGAN:** Okay, thank you, Madam Chair, for those stats. So given the fact that I believe -- according to the last annual report of child and family services, there were at least 106 children in permanent care. Can the Minister clarify whether all children that are going into permanent care have access to the Office of the Children's Lawyer or why -- and I know the Office of the Children's Lawyer is not just for children in care but it might be one major area where the office provides services. Can the Minister clarify why the number of children is relatively low that are being served by the office compared to the number of children that are actually in permanent care? Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Minister of Justice.

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

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Deputy minister Doolittle.

**MS. CHARLENE DOOLITTLE:** Thank you, Madam Chair. So a youth who is under care of child and family services and require -- who requires legal representation can apply directly themselves to the office for legal assistance. So this implies somebody of more of a mature age

and not a toddler, for example. So this is without the need for a court to appoint legal counsel. Child and family services often requests that children and youth that are under the care receive legal advice relating to court procedures. So youth can apply themselves and if not, that can be brought to the attention of the court. But a very, very young -- a baby or a toddler, perhaps, may not be -- counsel may not be sought for them, but that would be in the purview of the court and child and family services or the lawyer representing that family to raise that matter. Thank you, Madam Chair. I apologize (audio).

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Thank you. Member for Yellowknife North.

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Madam Chair. So if we're -- I mean, I understand that obviously a baby or a toddler is not going to apply themselves. But if we have a child that's, like, eight or ten years old, are we expecting that child themselves to apply on their own, or is there -- I mean, I understand this goes beyond Department of Justice to department of HSS, but how can legal aid or how can justice ensure that children actually have the support and access to -- meaningfully access the services of the Office of the Children's Lawyer given that we probably aren't going to expect an eight or ten-year-old to apply themselves and take the initiative to apply for a lawyer from this office. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Minister of Justice.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you. So the court system itself is actually tasked with that role, and they're the ones who would appoint legal counsel for the children. So we don't expect an eight-year-old to go and go to the legal aid office and take a number and wait in line and meet with a lawyer. The court would actually make that determination. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Member for Yellowknife North.

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Madam Chair. So can the Minister confirm that that's the only way, then, for children to access services of the Office of the Children's Lawyer, is that they have to wait for a judge to appoint that lawyer for them or to recommend the appointment for them? Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Minister of Justice.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you. No, so youth can also apply directly to -- they can apply directly. They don't have to wait for a judge to order it. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Member for Yellowknife North.

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I do feel like we're going in a bit of circle here. But I'll follow up further offline with the Minister. I do feel like there's still significant misunderstanding about how children can access the services of the Office of the Children's Lawyer because obviously if they're already in court, it feels like it might be too late to wait for the judge to appoint the lawyer. And if they're expected to apply themselves, that also feels like an unrealistic expectation. So I do look forward to following up afterwards to try to clear this up because I do think it's important that the public and people in general do understand how these services can be accessed and that all of the proper support people within the government and otherwise are able to assist children in doing that if that is what they need. So I'll leave it there. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Minister of Justice, do you want to respond to that?

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** So I'll just say that the court appoints legal counsel in two types of cases. The first is that involve a child protection matter initiated by child and family services, and the second is an access or parenting time dispute between parents. And in both of those instances, there's no obligation on a young child to, you know, try and navigate the justice system on their own. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Thank you. I have no further questions, please turn to page 318.

Justice, legal services, operations expenditure summary, 2025-2026 Main Estimates, \$8,078,000. Does the committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Thank you. Moving on to the Office of the Regulator of Oil and Gas Operations, on page 320 with information items on 322. Are there any questions? Member for Inuvik Boot Lake.

**MR. RODGERS:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Just firstly, I recall -- I'll ask the Minister, has there ever been any of these positions outside of headquarters? I believe at one point there was one in the Beaufort Delta, but I'm not 100 percent sure. Can the Minister confirm.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Minister of Justice.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you. I don't have that information on hand. I apologize to the Member.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Member for Inuvik Boot Lake.

**MR. RODGERS:** Thank you. Again, I was just curious and given what's happening -- and I understand that -- you know, the Office of the Oil and Gas Regulator supports the regulator on offshore, and given certainly the activity that's happening right now in the Beaufort Delta with the Inuvialuit and their new gas plant that they're firing up in the next year or so, as well as interest again, likely nationally, on LNG and what's happening, is there any -- given any thought to potentially having an office located outside of the headquarters, preferably, obviously, in the Beaufort Delta where most of the oil and gas is, Madam Chair? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Minister of Justice.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you. If the Office of the Regulator of Oil and Gas Operations would bring that forward, that would be something that would be considered. As it is, this is very much arm's length and, you know, as Minister, I don't interfere in their operations. But that said, we're always happy to have the conversations if they're raised. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Member for Inuvik Boot Lake.

**MR. RODGERS:** How often does the department then -- given that it is arm's length, there's obviously reporting coming through, how often does the Minister or the department communicate with the members at OROGO?

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Minister of Justice.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you. I don't. I never communicate with the folks at OROGO. Perhaps the deputy minister might want to speak to this. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Deputy minister Doolittle.

**MS. CHARLENE DOOLITTLE:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It's simply for administrative purposes. OROGO has complete policy and decision-making independence from the department. So we approve leave, we assist with some budgeting, but any policy and decision-making is with OROGO themselves. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Member from Inuvik Boot Lake.

**MR. RODGERS:** Thank you, Madam Chair. So the funding is flowthrough or no from (audio)

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Minister of Justice.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you. GNWT funds OROGO. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Member for Inuvik Boot Lake.

**MR. RODGERS:** Thank you, Madam Chair. No further questions.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Seeing no further questions, please turn to page 321.

Justice, Office of the Regulator Oil and Gas Operations, operations expenditure summary, 2025-2026 Main Estimates, \$944,000. Does the committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Thank you. Moving on to policing services on page 323. Are there any questions? No further questions, please turn to page 324.

Justice, policing services, operations expenditure summary, 2025-2026 Main Estimates, \$66,290,000. Does the committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Thank you. Moving on to services to government on page 325 with an information item on page 328. Are there any questions? Member for Great Slave.

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I assume that the legislation division, the increase is due to collective bargaining, but I will also just take the opportunity to ask the Minister if he's been able to find some extra bilingual drafters. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Minister of Justice.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you. As of today, I couldn't tell you whether it's fully staffed or not. Throughout the year, the answer could be different that we're down one drafter or we're fully staffed. I'm not sure where we are today; I apologize to the Member. But we can try and find that out before we're done here today if all goes well. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Member for Great Slave.

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Yeah, no, this is another one of those perennial questions that I like just because I recognize that this is,

you know, a pinch point for all of us here in these jobs, being legislators, wanting to see legislation expediently. The Minister spoke to that himself earlier today in an answer to the question around the SCAN legislation. So I would just always encourage the Minister to, you know, use whatever means necessary to find more bilingual drafters. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Minister of Justice.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you. It's a pinch point all right, and we're doing our best. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Member for Great Slave. No, no more? Okay, seeing no further questions, please turn to page 326.

Justice, services to government, operations expenditure summary, 2025-2026 Main Estimates, \$15,536,000. Does the committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Thank you. Moving on to services to the public on page 329 with information items on page 331. Are there any questions? Seeing no further questions, please turn to page 330.

Justice, services to the public, operations expenditure summary, 2025-2026 Main Estimates, \$5,596,000. Does the committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Thank you. There are additional information items on pages 332 to 334. Are there any questions? Thank you, Members.

Please return now to the department summary found on page 301 and revenue summary information items on page 302. Are there any questions? Seeing no further questions, committee, I will now call the department summary.

Justice, operations expenditure summary, total department, 2025-2026 Main Estimates, \$162,606,000. Does the committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** Thank you, Minister, and thanks to the witnesses for appearing before us. Sergeant-at-Arms, please escort the witnesses from the chamber.

What is the wish of committee? Member for Inuvik Boot Lake.

**MR. RODGERS:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I move the chair rise and report progress.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mrs. Yakeleya):** The motion is in order. The motion is non-debatable. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried.

---Carried

I will now rise and report progress.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Member from the Deh Cho.

### Report of Committee of the Whole

**MRS. YAKELEYA:** Mr. Speaker, your committee has been considering Tabled Document 275-20(1), and I would like to report progress. And, Mr. Speaker, I move that the report of the Committee of the Whole be concurred with. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from the Deh Cho. Can I have a seconder, please. Let's go over to this side over here and find that young lady from Kam Lake. All those in favour? Opposed? Abstentions? Motion carried.

Report of Committee of the Whole. Third reading of bills. Orders of the day.

### Orders of the Day

**CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland):** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Orders of the day for Thursday, March 6th, 2025, at 1:30 p.m.

1. Prayer or Reflection
2. Ministers' Statements
3. Members' Statements
4. Motions
  - Motion 49-20(1), Compassionate Medical Evacuation Policy
  - Motion 50-20(1), Appointment of Person to Investigate the Critical Incident of Avery Burke, Wesley Marcellais and Hilary Norwegian
5. Returns to Oral Questions
  - Oral Question 530-20(1), Senior Envoy to Government of Canada
  - Oral Question 607-20(1), Coverage Exemptions for Uninsured Medical Procedures
6. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery

7. Acknowledgements
8. Oral Questions
9. Written Questions
10. Returns to Written Questions
11. Replies to the Commissioner's Address
12. Petitions
13. Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills
14. Reports of Standing and Special Committees
15. Tabling of Documents
16. Notices of Motions
17. Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills
18. First Reading of Bills
19. Second Reading of Bills
20. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters
  - Tabled Document 275-20(1), 2025-2026 Main Estimates
21. Report of Committee of the Whole
22. Third Reading of Bills
23. Orders of the Day

Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Clerk. This House stands adjourned until Thursday, March 6th, 2025, at 1:30 p.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 5:30 p.m.