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**LEGISLATIVE  
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**The Honourable Frederick Blake Jr, Speaker**

# Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

## Members of the Legislative Assembly

### Speaker

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

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**Mr. Ronald Bonnetrouge**  
(Deh Cho)

**Ms. Caitlin Cleveland**  
(Kam Lake)

**Hon. Paulie Chinna**  
(Sahtu)  
*Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs*  
*Minister responsible for NWT Housing Corporation*  
*Minister responsible for Homelessness*

**Hon. Caroline Cochrane**  
(Range Lake)  
*Premier*  
*Minister of Executive and Indigenous Affairs*

**Ms. Julie Green**  
(Yellowknife Centre)

**Mr. Jackie Jacobson**  
(Nunakput)

**Mr. Rylund Johnson**  
(Yellowknife North)

**Mr. Jackson Lafferty**  
(Monfwi)

**Ms. Frieda Martselos**  
(Thebacha)

**Hon. Katrina Nokleby**  
(Great Slave)  
*Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment*  
*Minister of Infrastructure*  
*Minister responsible for the Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission*

**Mr. Steve Norn**  
(Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh)

**Mr. Kevin O'Reilly**  
(Frame Lake)

**Ms. Lesa Semmler**  
(Inuvik Twin Lakes)

**Mr. Rocky Simpson**  
(Hay River South)

**Hon. R.J. Simpson**  
(Hay River North)  
*Government House Leader*  
*Minister of Education, Culture & Employment*  
*Minister responsible for the Public Utilities Board*

**Hon. Diane Thom**  
(Inuvik Boot Lake)  
*Deputy Premier*  
*Minister of Health and Social Services*  
*Minister responsible for the Status of Women*  
*Minister responsible for Persons with Disabilities*

**Hon. Shane Thompson**  
(Nahendeh)  
*Minister of Environment and Natural Resources*  
*Minister of Lands*  
*Minister responsible for NWT Power Corporation*  
*Minister responsible for Seniors*  
*Minister responsible for Youth*

**Hon. Caroline Wawzonek**  
(Yellowknife South)  
*Minister of Finance*  
*Minister of Justice*

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Box 1320  
Yellowknife, Northwest Territories  
Tel: (867) 767-9010 Fax: (867) 920-4735 Toll-Free: 1-800-661-0784  
<http://www.assembly.gov.nt.ca>

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**YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES****Friday, February 28, 2020****Members Present**

Hon. Frederick Blake Jr, Mr. Bonnetrouge, Hon. Paulie Chinna, Ms. Cleveland, Hon. Caroline Cochrane, Ms. Green, Mr. Jacobson, Mr. Johnson, Mr. Lafferty, Hon. Katrina Nokleby, Mr. Norn, Mr. O'Reilly, Ms. Semmler, Hon. R.J. Simpson, Mr. Rocky Simpson, Hon. Diane Thom, Hon. Shane Thompson, Hon. Caroline Wawzonek

The House met at 10:00 a.m.

**Prayer**

---Prayer

**SPEAKER (Hon. Frederick Blake Jr):** Item 2, Ministers' statements. Minister of Finance.

**Ministers' Statements**

**MINISTER'S STATEMENT 22-19(2):  
PAYMENT OF INVOICES**

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Mr. Speaker, the Government of the Northwest Territories wants NWT businesses to flourish. For small businesses in particular, prompt payment of invoices is critical to their financial health.

As Minister, I can assure you that the Department of Finance places a high value on maintaining a positive working relationship with the companies the GNWT does business with.

The Financial and Employee Shared Services, or FESS, is the division responsible for processing and issuing payment for all supplier invoices for goods and services provided to all GNWT departments, the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation, and as of last month, the Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority. FESS's goal is to process payment for all suppliers within 20 to 30 days of receiving an invoice.

Over the past couple of months, FESS has looked into the reasons why some payments are delayed. We have learned that changes that were made to how we process invoices may be causing unnecessary delays. In the past, suppliers sent their invoices directly to the GNWT departments and agencies they provided the goods and services to, rather than one central source. Over time, this shift has likely led to some confusion among suppliers on who they should be forwarding their invoices to, as well as uncertainty within departments and agencies on what to do when they receive an invoice. Mr. Speaker, it is the responsibility of the Department of Finance to make sure that suppliers clearly understand our

processes, as well as how to access support when they encounter issues. As a response, the department has updated its website to make certain that key information suppliers need is easily available, including where and how to send invoices, what information is required for speedy processing, and how to sign up for direct deposit instead of waiting for a cheque to be delivered through the mail.

Within the coming months, we will also be sending resources directly to our suppliers to ensure that they are familiar with our processes and know who to contact when they need support. We will also ensure that employees in the departments and agencies supported by Financial and Employee Shared Services know that they should forward any invoices they receive without delay.

Communications to vendors is one step in the process. We must also ensure that we are able to meet our internal processing deadlines. As you are aware, with the onboarding of the NTHSSA, the volume for FESS increased and as with any change, there are dips in production. We are continuing to monitor this, and over time, we will see these numbers pick back up.

Mr. Speaker, I am confident that enhanced communication from the Department of Finance to our suppliers, and within our government, continued monitoring of workflows, and internal streamlining of processes will help to address our suppliers' concerns about payment delays, and we will continue to monitor this situation to ensure that all invoices are paid within our 20- to 30-day target. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister. Ministers' statements. Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment.

**MINISTER'S STATEMENT 23-19(2):  
TAKING THE NEXT STEP IN NORTHWEST  
TERRITORIES FILM AND MEDIA**

**HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Each year the Dead North Film Festival inspires people from across the Arctic to get out and shoot short film creations in the depths of winter. It also brings Northerners together to

support the film sector and have fun at this horror and fantasy genre event.

This year marks the eighth year for the Dead North Film Festival. The GNWT's Film Commission, in the Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment, has been a supporter and sponsor from the beginning. The annual festival has become a staple in the Yellowknife film calendar, providing professionals and newcomers alike the chance to dip their toes in the creative economy. Since Dead North was established in 2012, over 170 short films have been produced, and audiences come out in droves to see the results.

As the Northwest Territories' presence on the global film industry continues to grow, this northern event has also become a jumping-off point for the participation of Northwest Territories productions in southern festival tours.

Mr. Speaker, this year's submissions for the Dead North Film Festival set a new record, and I would like to congratulate the festival's founders and organizers, the Artless Collective, for their vision, the work they have done, and the success that they have enjoyed.

As this year's Dead North Film Festival wraps up this weekend, I encourage Members to get out and take in the screenings and events. I would also like to use this opportunity to update Members on the work and investments we are undertaking to create even more opportunities for our film and media industry.

Five years ago, Mr. Speaker, the Northwest Territories Film Commission launched Take One, the territory's first film strategy. Through its implementation and our own government investments, the Northwest Territories has become known for award-winning films, circumpolar festivals, and one of a kind storytelling. Last year, the Northwest Territories Film Rebate Program leveraged almost \$2.3 million in economic spending in the Northwest Territories.

Mr. Speaker, it is time to update our film strategy and to take the next big step in the development of our creative economy. To do this, the department has launched the Let's Talk Film and Media campaign to consider what the next phase of film and media growth in our territory should look like. Together with the Northwest Territories Professional Media Association, Industry, Tourism and Investment will be hosting a visioning workshop with representatives from across the Northwest Territories' film sector. We're reaching out to leaders, municipalities, and stakeholders across the North to get their input. Through an online idea board and discussion forums, we have started a territory-wide conversation with Northwest

Territories residents about film and media development in our territory.

Mr. Speaker, in this government's mandate, we have highlighted the importance of increasing economic diversification by supporting growth in non-extractive sectors. Collectively, our vision is for a territory where there is rewarding work available for Northwest Territories residents across all sectors, and this includes film. Our territory is home to a vibrant screen-based media production industry built upon the dedicated efforts of both local and guest producers committed to telling our stories to the world. The product of their work and passion does more than generate employment and spending for actors, technical staff, and suppliers of goods and services. It also helps to showcase our incredible landscapes, cultures, traditions, and iconic landmarks to the world.

When it was introduced in 2015, the Government of the Northwest Territories' first-ever film strategy established two broad goals for the actions and investments it identified:

1. increase the number and quality of local independent film and television production with market interest; and
2. increase the number of guest productions that engage Northwest Territories residents and their services.

With success on both fronts, it is time to advance our growing industry to the next level. In the coming weeks, Mr. Speaker, Members may see or receive messages on their social media platforms saying, "Let's talk Film and Media." I encourage you to join the conversation and to share the opportunity with your constituents so that together we can share ideas on what the future of film and media looks like in the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister. Ministers' statements. Member for Monfwi.

## Members' Statements

### MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON TLICHO ALL-SEASON ROAD PROJECT BENEFITS

**MR. LAFFERTY:** Masi, Mr. Speaker. [Translation] Mr. Speaker, today, I would like to make a statement regarding the highway to Whati and how the contracts were given out regarding the employment. There is a lot of employment that will go into it. It is going to be a three-year contract. We are hoping that we include a lot of training on the job and also businesses. I would like to say a few things regarding that. [Translation ends]

Whati all-season road is a P3 project with a 20 percent Tlicho Government partnership with the main contractor North Star Infrastructure, a non-NWT company. The project includes expected construction costs of \$213.8 million, and project costs of \$410 million over a 25-year period. The project agreement for road construction is a three-year contract. Construction work started five months ago, approximately.

Mr. Speaker, with a P3 project of this magnitude, there is a requirement that nearby communities will benefit during the life of the project through employment, training, and business contracts. From the earliest planning stages, the territorial government assured the Tlicho that its residents and business would benefit. Sadly, Mr. Speaker, the local benefits provision of the Tlicho project agreement the GNWT and the contractor have not lived up to expectations. Behchoko is home to numerous qualified Heavy Equipment Operators, but after five months, the on-site contractor has not hired one of them. Instead, they watch in frustration as a van delivers non-northern and Yellowknife-based heavy equipment operators to the work site. I've seen it and witnessed it myself, Mr. Speaker. I've witnessed it. I drive the road from here to Behchoko on a frequent basis.

Mr. Speaker, it's time that business opportunities, most contractors are going to companies from outside of Behchoko, even outside the Northwest Territories. Mr. Speaker, this is not acceptable. The construction site is located in the heart of the Tlicho, between the Wek'eezhii Boundary and Monfwi Gogha De Niitlee Boundary.

Mr. Speaker, the window of opportunity is closing for the Tlicho. The new road opens in 2022, then the jobs, training, business opportunities will be gone. We must move now to rectify this unacceptable situation. Mr. Speaker, I am prepared to work with the Minister of Infrastructure to ensure that Tlicho is not left out. I will have questions for the Minister of Infrastructure at the appropriate time. Masi.

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

#### MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON MINISTERIAL DIRECTIVE ON ENROLMENT OF STUDENTS IN FRENCH FIRST LANGUAGE EDUCATION PROGRAMS

**MR. O'REILLY:** Merci, Monsieur le President. [Translation] I have spoken several times, though, in this House about the often strained relationship between the Department of Education and the NWT francophone community.

On July 2, 2019, the NWT Supreme Court ruled against this government in relation to constitutionally entrenched French-language rights. The Minister did not properly apply the policy on admission of non-rights holders. The Minister was directed to reconsider her decision while paying attention to the need for a restorative approach to French first language education.

I am disappointed with Cabinet's decision, again, to go to court. Why does our government continue to spend money on adversarial court proceedings rather than fixing the problem of a faulty ministerial directive that is out of date and too narrow?

The 2016 Ministerial Directive on Enrolment of Students in French First-Language Education Programs was not developed collaboratively with the francophone community or education bodies. It is much more restrictive than that is found in other jurisdictions, including the Yukon, and where authority has been delegated to the relevant education bodies with appropriate reporting.

Fix the root of the problem, a poorly conceived ministerial directive. I will have questions later today for the Minister on why we continue to devote resources to court proceedings rather than working with the francophone community and families to ensure that our children have access to an adequate francophone first-language school system. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [Translation ends]

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

#### MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON RACISM FACED BY INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

**MS. CLEVELAND:** Mr. Speaker, as I climbed into bed late last night I had a much different statement planned for today. One last check of social media led me to a story of racism that occurred in one of our schools yesterday. Earlier this week, we heard of racial slurs directed at an NWT student during a SAIT hockey game in Calgary. In both instances, young Indigenous women courageously took a stand against the racism. Mr. Speaker, it is 2020 and this is not okay.

First, it is time for racism to be a thing of the past. Every time we hear of racial tensions in the United States, we sit back, north of the border and judge in dismay; but, when it comes to our treatment of Canada's Indigenous people, we do not seem to draw the same comparison.

Second, Mr. Speaker, it is not the responsibility of our Indigenous children to stand up to racism. Indigenous people have been fighting for land, language, culture, and life for hundreds of years. It is our responsibility as colonisers to stand up for

our neighbours, friends, and family; to teach our children history and compassion, to build children who grow into adults who can take part in the change we are all fighting for and demanding here today.

Mr. Speaker, 90 percent of homeless people on Yellowknife streets are Indigenous, upwards of 90 percent of our corrections populations are Indigenous, and 99 percent of our foster care system is Indigenous. Our system is rooted in colonial, systemic racism, and we are working hard to change that here together, but what becomes of all our hard work when we are not doing the same work at home?

As much as it is our responsibility to stand up outside the home, it is our responsibility to have deep conversations in our homes. The transgenerational trauma of what was done to Indigenous people so that my ancestors could live in this country is raw, and it is my job to teach my children about history, racism, privilege, and responsibility. While we use the word reconciliation like a cool noun, it means nothing unless we are willing to stand up for change, to stand up for healing, and, as colonisers, let go. It means not fooling ourselves into thinking we have our finger on the pulse of our territory when we actually have our thumb on progress. As a parent, and as a politician, to be effective we have to be prepared to play the long game. The choices we make in this House, in our homes, and in social settings, all play into our success as Northerners. This change does not require more money to our education system, or more money to our healthcare network. This is a grassroots change that requires doing what is right, and what is required, for a better, stronger North. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Kam Lake. Members' statements. Member for Tu Nedhe-Willideh.

#### MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON SMALL BUSINESSES IN PUBLIC HOUSING

**MR. NORN:** Mahsi cho, Mr. Speaker. During our review of the mandate over the past few sitting days, one area of the mandate that stood out for me was the area where it said, "increase employment in small communities." Further to that, we spoke about an amendment under the NWT Housing Corporation policy which will allow appropriate home businesses to operate within our units. I think this is a great idea. We need to give our residents every opportunity to succeed and be self-sufficient. Our economy, right now, is not where it needs to be. We need to think of any and every opportunity to find more jobs and bring more money to our local economies.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I do have my concerns. My main concern is that we protect fledgling businesses to grow with minimal outside interference from the GNWT. There needs to be a laissez-faire, hands-off approach from our government in terms of business start-ups. My main concern is for individuals who depend on income assistance, for example, and live in the NWT housing units. I would like to see some sort of grace period in the neighbourhood of six months, for example, to help these said business opportunities to move ahead unhindered.

Again, Mr. Speaker, we are facing an economic crisis in terms of our economy, and we need to be innovative, help move along small businesses, and help create jobs. I believe this mandate item is a positive step forward, but we need a real and common-sense approach to help our small businesses thrive.

Here is an interesting statistic that might interest people; according to Statistics Canada, in 2014 small businesses in Canada contributed an average of 30 percent to the GDP of their province or territory. I have said before in this House that we need to keep every dollar we can in NWT, especially our small communities, and this amendment makes me feel hopeful on that front.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I really believe there are a lot of good business ideas out there in the North, and who knows, one of these business ideas could be the next Amazon or Apple. I will have questions for the Minister responsible for the NWT Housing Corporation and the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment at the appropriate time. Marci cho, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Tu Nedhe-Willideh. Members' statements. Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes.

#### MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON SUICIDE IN THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

**MS. SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to talk about suicide. Just by saying this, I feel like I'm doing something I shouldn't.

Growing up in the North my entire life, I have seen and heard of many suicides. What I never did was talk about it after a loss, or be given the tools on what to do, or how to talk about suicide after it happened. We seem to just to try to move on, and then it happens again. The families, or those close to the loved ones lost to suicide, never get over the loss of their loved ones. Sometimes, we think, "why didn't I do something? Why didn't I help them?" The thing is that there are many social and cultural factors that contribute to death by suicide, as well as underlying mental health conditions, and asking



for help can be extremely difficult for those, as mental health is not looked at the same way as physical health.

Suicide rates from the NWT Bureau of Statistics in 2018 show 11 out of the 239 deaths reported died by suicide. That's one in 22 deaths, Mr. Speaker. The NWT has a small population compared to other provinces, and everyone knows everyone, and one death is one death too many by suicide. The Public Health Agency of Canada released Suicide in Canada: Key Statistics on suicide, and it states that it is the second leading cause of death among youth and young adults, 15-24, and males are three times higher than women.

So, what can you do if you know someone who may be considering suicide as a permanent solution to a temporary situation? According to the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, suggest five steps. I won't go into details, Mr. Speaker, but I will read them.

- Ask. It's okay to ask them whether they are thinking about taking their own life;
- Keep them safe if they acknowledge suicide thoughts;
- Be there. Be willing to have the tough conversations. Listen to their distress;
- Help them connect. Help the person connect with a network; and
- Follow-up. Give a call, leave a message, text, drop by to see them. Your communication sends a message.

Mr. Speaker, our youth turn to each other for help. We need to equip them with the tools on what to do if someone discloses to them. As well, we need to ensure they also know how to seek help for themselves after disclosure. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON HIGHWAY SAFETY AND THE TRUCKING INDUSTRY

**MR. BONNETROUGE:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. I would like to talk a bit about the trucking industry in relation to safety on our highways. Mind you, they provide a valuable service in delivering cargo and goods to our communities, and to remote locations, via ice roads. Back when the Merv Hardie ferry was crossing the Mackenzie River at Fort Providence, there were times during the yearly freeze-up and spring break-up that all traffic came to a halt.

Mr. Speaker, we really miss those days of solitude and no truck traffic, specifically the semis with their prized cargo. Most Legislators will say, the days before the debt. What I've noticed the most since the Deh Cho bridge came into being is the exponential increase in truck traffic. In the spring and in the rainy, muddy days, the trucks kick up mud that covers up your windshield completely. This temporarily blinds you to oncoming traffic, and quite possibly the ditch. In the winter months, with all the snow around, when you pass a semi, then again you are blinded in the whiteout conditions from all the snow kicked up by the trucks. A lot of instances, the trucks are in convoys of two or more and following close behind each other, so that you just notice the headlights of oncoming traffic, trucks, and the zero-visibility conditions.

There are a lot of instances where I thank the good Lord that I had the sense to slow right down to almost stopping on the highway, waiting for the snow to clear. Just recently, there was a death due to a truck not slowing down and mindful of the traffic and situations on the road. Another semi hit a passenger truck near Big River Service at Fort Providence. That man was lucky to walk away, albeit shaken up and thankful for his life. There is a speed limit of 70 kilometres per hour from the south side of Big River, and the truck may have been going beyond the speed limit.

Mr. Speaker, it seems like the Wild West show on our highways. It may be a matter of time before this gets worse. There could possibly be more and more inexperienced semi-truck drivers on our roads. This begs a few questions. Mr. Speaker, I will have questions for the Minister of Infrastructure at the appropriate time. Mahsi.

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

#### MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON MARINE TRANSPORTATION SERVICES

**MR. JACOBSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The sealift is a vital lifeline from the remote coastal communities in my riding, Mr. Speaker. It is the only way families can lower their food bills once a year, by ordering large amounts of food that bring everything into the communities that you could imagine, such as dried goods, building materials and supplies, cars, trucks, heavy equipment, and bulk petroleum; you name it. If someone can order it, then I guarantee you it has been delivered on a sealift to Nunakput.

In 2016, the Northern Transportation Company, a subsidiary of the Inuvialuit Corporate Group, announced the company was folding. That's the year that GNWT purchased NTCL assets and established Marine Transportation Services in the

Department of Infrastructure to continue providing vital services in goods marshalled out of Hay River through barges up the Mackenzie River to the Beaufort Sea.

Mr. Speaker, the 2018 sailing season was a disaster for Nunakput. MTS was unable to deliver freight to Paulatuk. They blamed high water, ice blockage in the Beaufort Sea, and a lack of fuel for the cancellation. In fact, however, ships that were supposed to be resupplying Ulukhaktok and Sachs Harbour were actually late in returning from private contracts, Mr. Speaker, which set everything back. This was shown on the coast guard's tracking system. MTS was criticized for prioritizing private contract with essential resupply to the communities.

Mr. Speaker, this cost our government \$3.9 million to fly in essential goods to the communities. Those who had materials from equipment vehicles on the barge had to wait another year to arrive into the communities. When the materials did arrive, they were spoiled from sitting on the barge.

I am raising this concern, Mr. Speaker. I want the Minister of Infrastructure to know how important it is to make sure that MTS does resupply our communities, and the planning is now for the upcoming sailing season. I am really happy that the department sent out their 2020 sailing schedule. It is good to see, but I am encouraging the Minister responsible for MTS to come to Nunakput and meet with my mayors and my constituents on the MTS situation on the 2020 sailing season. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON SEXUAL ABUSE IN SPORTS

**MS. GREEN:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Last year, I rose in this House to draw attention to a CBC investigation about sexual abuse in sports. Before I get into the details, I want to note the tireless work by many coaches and volunteers who protect, train, inspire, and teach our children. This is not about them or the great work that they do. My statement today is about protecting our children from the abusers among us.

Mr. Speaker, the CBC investigation found that at least 222 amateur sport coaches in Canada have been convicted of sexual offences in the last 20 years. Those convictions involved more than 600 victims under the age of 18. Because sexual abuse is an underreported area, experts say there could be thousands of cases we don't know about. No sport or individual is immune. Convictions have come from roughly 37 different sporting activities.

It seems that the onus is still on individual organizations to vet prospective coaches and educate their athletes on what constitutes inappropriate behaviours and how to report them. Most organizations do not have the capacity to handle all of this in-house, leaving the justice system to address this issue once something has already happened.

Anti-abuse policies exist at the national and subnational levels, but transparency is lacking. There is still no list maintained at the territorial or federal levels which tracks volunteers and coaches who have been banned, charged, or convicted. We need easily accessible ways to report and track suspected abusers.

Mr. Speaker, all of this makes me wonder what the situation is here. There are clear common-sense steps that can be taken that do not require a lot of resources to implement. MACA, working with Sport North and other organizations, could supply clear rules around sexual abuse prevention and promote training for coaches, parents, and players. We need to ensure our players are protected from psychological and emotional trauma that comes with abuse. I will have questions for the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON NORTHWEST TERRITORIES FISHING INDUSTRY

**MR. ROCKY SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to continue the discussion on the NWT fishing industry. On September 21, 2018, the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and Canadian Coast Guard announced the establishment of a ministerial advisory panel to examine alternative governance and ownership model for the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation which better reflects the environment and marketing conditions in today's industry. The panel was directed to explore models that support collaboration and cooperation amongst fishers and involve them in decision-making. The report also stressed the change in governance of FFMC: "Increase fisher participation in FFMC by drawing board members from fishers and fisher organizations. Fisher board members should be chosen to reflect the regional geographic diversity of FFMC operations and the demographic pattern of Indigenous participation in the fishery."

After our government received this document, and I am assuming they never read it, as they made a decision to do the exact opposite, this government removed the NWT representative from FFMC, who

is a fisher, and replaced them with one of our own bureaucrats.

Mr. Speaker, this government talks about building relationships and working in partnership with our homegrown industries, fishing being one of them. In actuality, what is happening is that we are dictating to them and saying we know better. This may be true when it comes to slowing down a process or not providing a timely delivery of projects; we do excel in that area. When it comes to industry itself, it is the fishers who know best. It is the fishers who are putting their lives on the line to keep the industry alive.

Mr. Speaker, I need to know, and the fishers need to know, that approximately \$9 million to be spent on a fish plant is based on sound and factual data. I understand that we have someone on the east coast providing a redesign; however, Mr. Speaker, this is not the east coast. This is the NWT. The importance of having an actual fisher on the Board of FFMC is imperative, and having NW fishers part of revitalizing our fishing industry is a given. If we ever expect to maximize financial return to the fishers for the product they deliver, we need their support and participation of all levels in a business case. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON NORTHERN BUILDING STANDARDS

**MR. JOHNSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We need to establish territory-wide building standards to meet the cost of climate changes today. While the standards of the national Modern Energy Building Code are required, there are no assurances that these standards are met due to the lack of small-community inspections and enforcement systems.

Project management capacity at the community level is also a concern, Mr. Speaker. For example, there is no guarantee that a new community building won't be sited on permafrost for lack of a geotechnical survey. This raises major concerns. Public safety can be put at risk. Without standards, there is no assurance of operational quality, energy efficiency, durability, or security of investment, because the best expertise for northern construction resides with our northern architects, engineers, and consultants. Lack of standards can allow our public dollars to leak south to those unfamiliar or under-qualified with northern requirements. We need to ensure GNWT funds transferred to communities are used to build long-lasting and efficient buildings, Mr. Speaker.

The NWT Association of Communities has long called for the creation of an NWT-wide building and inspections capacity, and pass resolutions pointing to the needs for improved construction. The Northwest Territories Association of Architects has repeatedly brought forward the needs for standards and compliance. The Northwest Territories Greenhouse Gas Strategy and new ministerial mandates call for NWT building standards to assist communities in reducing their energy costs via efficiency.

A northern building code would meet our responsibility for addressing these concerns, but we will also need to help our communities and citizens meet these standards by establishing an advisory and inspection capacity and by establishing systems to require professional assurances that standards have been met. We need to aim higher by ensuring our NWT standard for energy efficiency recognizes our northern conditions and exceeds southern standards.

Mr. Speaker, last week, I plagiarized a Member's statement by my predecessor, Mr. Cory Vanthuyne. The Member's statement I just read practically word-for-word was plagiarized by my predecessor's predecessor, Mr. Bob Bromley, in 2011. This issue should have been addressed a long time ago. It is the start to get the ball rolling, and once again, the simplest and most effective tools in implementing our Energy Strategy is a building standards act. I will have questions for the Minister of Infrastructure, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Yellowknife North. Members' statements. Item 4, returns to oral questions. Item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member for Kam Lake.

#### Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery

**MS. CLEVELAND:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to just take this time to recognize some Pages in the House today. From Kam Lake, we have Cyra Dizon and Isha Jha. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Kam Lake. I, too, would like to recognize Dayle Cole from Tsiigehtchic, one of the Pages, and also Brittany Kendo, who is with us. They have been with us all week, and I thank all of the Pages for all of the work that you have done for our Members in this House. It's very much appreciated. Mahsi. Item 6, replies to the budget address (day 4 of 7). Member for Yellowknife North.

#### Replies to Budget Address

MR. JOHNSON'S REPLY

**MR. JOHNSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to thank our Minister of Finance for our budget address this week, and before we move it into Committee of the Whole, I wanted to provide my response.

In reply, I want to pose some fundamental questions for this Assembly, questions of what kind of territory we want to be and our place within confederation. I want to share some thoughts on where we're at as a territory and what I believe we must do to move forward. I will focus my address on the question of what it means to be seated here in this House and what it means to be a Northerner.

Given this is a budget address, I want to begin by talking about a quarter. Not a quarter of a million dollars; a 25-cent piece. Mr. Speaker, when you look at a quarter, what do you find? On one side, you see an aging monarch who lives thousands of miles from here. On the other side, you see a caribou, an animal whose future becomes more and more precarious each year. How do we in this House self-locate, even as our currency seems to simultaneously represent, overlook, and mock our interests?

The contrast is emblematic of the position we are in today: constituents of one of the wealthiest nations on earth, yet we govern a territory too often forgotten and left to deal with economic and social crises threatening a way of life. Mr. Speaker, the grand bargain of northern participation in the confederation that was Canada would be that people would have a standard of living found anywhere else in Canada. Mr. Speaker, that bargain has failed. Our climate, our economy, our education, our housing, even our actual caribou, are in crisis, Mr. Speaker, and the Government of Canada remains similar to a monarch: too slow to invest in the transformational change this territory needs, even as tens of thousands of Canadians struggle too far out of sight for outsiders to understand.

Mr. Speaker, this is not a new story. For decades, we've seen investments in the grand bargain for Arctic sovereignty fall off. Our communities remain disconnected, lacking physical and digital infrastructure most Canadians have taken for granted for years. Our people struggle with staggering rates of mental illness and intergenerational trauma, and our most vulnerable often face these struggles without roofs over their heads, and we face one of the greatest housing shortages in the developed world.

These aren't problems that can be solved with the transfer payments that trickle in each year, and, in fact, that's not what they were ever designed to solve. To tackle the big issues of the day, we need transformative investment, the sustained multi-

billion-dollar kind, which our tiny tax base could never expect to afford as we pay our bills, and with the fresh scars of colonialism affecting generations of the Indigenous people in this territory, exasperating every issue, I believe it is a moral imperative for Ottawa to put that kind of money behind making it right and putting the North on even footing with the rest of Canada.

However, Mr. Speaker, I have to say I don't place all the blame on the federal government for not opening their wallets. Part of the blame lies with us, with successive governments who didn't articulate a clear enough vision of who we are as a territory. We negotiated devolution, and yet, for six years, we've hit the wall in fulfilling its true vision of further devolving powers to Indigenous governments. We've released strategies to renew children in care and to deal with our education crisis, and then the federal government via the Auditor General made it clear that we are letting too many children fall through the cracks and inflate our graduation rates. Most recently, we've answered a housing crisis by failing to put 42 inexpensive units at risk because we couldn't get our ducks in a row.

How do we get beyond the narrative of stasis? We need to tell our story, Mr. Speaker. We need to present a vision for what this territory can be, and we need to back it up. What's the biggest story I believe we can lead in this Assembly? Mr. Speaker, it's reconciliation, and, as blockades line the tracks across our nation, we in the North have a chance to show our country how to bring people together and break down the barriers dividing us.

We have already come a long way compared to our peers. We have settled a lot of big land claims, and, as those claims were settled, we saw the potential of our Indigenous governments unleashed. The Inuvialuit Regional Corporation is paving the way with hundreds of millions of dollars in assets. Communities like Deline are finally self-governing, setting their own path forward for the future. The Gwich'in jumped us by seven years on electronic voting. The Tlicho are world leaders in mine logistics.

Mr. Speaker, I could go on, but we all know we have so much more to do. We need to settle the Akaitcho and Dehcho claims. For too long, we've seen too many stories of how our government is standing in the way. It's self-defeating, Mr. Speaker. The vision after devolution was to get our house in order and continue to devolve powers and resources to Indigenous governments across this territory. The vision was to realize a Denendeh and Inuvialuit where public and Indigenous governments interacted nation-to-nation, and it's not just about finishing this long, painful process. It's about untying our hands and embracing the economic opportunities settling these questions

would bring. Akaitcho believes there's \$1 billion on the table when their process ends. The Deh Cho is a home to unbelievable sites and minerals. We need to get UNDRIP on the books during this Assembly. After a century of damage, we need to show we're ready to make the next step in decades of healing.

For the people who have lived on this land for thousands of years, their relationship with Canada has been devastating more often than it has been beneficial. We in Canada have much work to do in reconciliation with Indigenous peoples and reconciling what our identity is as a whole. Mr. Speaker, I want to emphasize that I am a patriot, a word not often used by people of my generation, and I may not sound it at times, but I am, in fact, strongly committed to this venture that we call Canada, something, very understandably, many Indigenous people are not as committed to. That is understandable, and, if I were Dene, I am sure that I would have few nice things to say about our federal government.

As a Canadian, it is my role to acknowledge our history and our present. In the face of this reality, I am not here to give up or feel guilty. I am here to take some responsibility and amend the wrongs. This is what reconciliation truly is. It is about hope for this nation and hope for the people of the North. It is not a hollow buzzword, but a reshaping of Canadian identity. Right now, all across this country, you can hear young Indigenous people on the steps of their legislature yelling, "Reconciliation is dead." This is because people in power failed to acknowledge our history and, in turn, failed their people.

Mr. Speaker, you will hear me speak over the next four years about colonialism. I say this not for shock value, but it is the reality at the heart of northern identity. The history of Canada is one of colonialism by definition. Canada was a colony of Great Britain and, in turn, the French colonists were conquered by the British colonists. This land we are now in was given to some man named Rupert, who is even less relevant than that monarch on our money. In turn, that land was given to the Hudson's Bay Company, and finally, what is left is the Northwest Territories, a territory that was carved off, and is only northwest in its relationship to Ottawa. From where I stand, Mr. Speaker, it is exactly where it needs to be.

Mr. Speaker, the introduction of resource extraction from the North, with profits sent to other territories, took an Indigenous way of life that had sustained itself for thousands of years and forced it into a commercial and industrial system, whereby a nomadic way of life was no longer sustainable. The taking of northern resources to benefit foreign corporate entities is something we are still

reconciling with today. This land, the Northwest Territories, must find a path forward, must be a leader in Canada, Mr. Speaker. I believe we must also take a strong political stance to push all other governments in Canada to do so. Northerners, better than anyone, should understand the right not to be controlled by those who don't understand the reality on the ground.

Now, Mr. Speaker, why am I speaking about all this history? It is because it is of fundamental importance that we all understand how we got here in order to understand how to move forward. For those of us who love the North and wish to move forward as part of a united and prosperous Canada, we must first remedy the wrongs of the past. That is done through our current land claim process, in which Canada, through the Crown, returns to the land to the Indigenous peoples to whom, in fact, it always belonged.

It is my hope in time, Mr. Speaker, that all Indigenous people will be proud to call themselves Canadian and view themselves as part of this country and be able to comfortably walk with a foot in both worlds. Yet, that is something I have no right to ask any person until their proper rights have been restored. You cannot use the withholding of rights as a bargaining chip in reconciliation, Mr. Speaker. The only way true northern unity can occur is willingly and with a passion to progress forward together.

Canada has often asked Indigenous people to join into this Canadian identity at the expense of their own. Mr. Speaker, reconciliation by force is a paradox. If one party remains unwilling or can't enter on their own terms, then it isn't reconciliation. It is assimilation at best. I want to emphasize that my goal in the small part I have to play is to build a strong North and a strong Canada that, in turn, builds strong Indigenous nations alongside of it. This is the complexity of northern identity that we all must reconcile, and the only way to do that is through trust, Mr. Speaker.

I must also emphasize that we are together in the midst of a large social contract. As we settle land claims and self-government to give Indigenous governments more power to be free, more power to be independent, I also hope that through that independence will come unity.

Now to the lawyer in me, Mr. Speaker. Reconciling with Canada comes with certain inalienable conditions, and this is the point where much of the tension will exist going forward. All Canadians, Indigenous and not, must respect the rights and responsibilities of our charter. All Canadians must respect the law and the institutions we use to enforce them. Mr. Speaker, I emphasize that respect does not mean one cannot be frustrated by

them or work to change them. I myself am frustrated by the rigidity of many of our institutions and the resistance to change that they perpetuate. This is exactly why I stand here, Mr. Speaker, to bring about change to our institutions from within.

If Canada is going to succeed and the North is going to prosper, and I am going to be proud to call this place home, I will spend the next four years and, in fact, the rest of my life building relationships so that everyone prospers and is truly welcomed on their own terms into this weird and beautiful creation called the Northwest Territories. Maybe we could change the name, but I'm not going to go there, Mr. Speaker.

In this right, I would call upon this government, along with our Indigenous governments, to begin the push to once again enter into constitutional reform. For too long, this country has been tied up in disputes about federalism, with everything an argument about provincial or federal jurisdiction, a dispute that fails to address territorial or Indigenous rights. It is time for Canada to amend its constitution and rightfully place both Indigenous governments and territories in it. We are leaders in the North in this regard, and we must pressure Canada to do so. We are stronger united, we are stronger when we go to Ottawa with one united northern voice, and we are stronger when we demand the world take meaningful action on climate change, which disproportionately affects us, with one voice.

Mr. Speaker, the North is on a precipice. When that monarch on our money dies, to whom we all pledged allegiance, will her son or grandson unite the North? When we speak of the honour of the Crown in negotiations and courts, does anyone other than lawyers really buy into such a concept? If the Bathurst caribou herd disappears, is that caribou on our money something to be proud of or just a testament to our collective failure?

For far too long, the only reason Canada paid any attention to this place was one of resources, first furs, then gold, and now diamonds; but as our diamonds come to an end, and the NWT identity is not directly linked to resource extraction, some very pressing economic realities come into play.

Firstly, Mr. Speaker, the NWT is a fake economy. Our economy is entirely dependent on federal funding, so when we live in a fake economy, where it makes more economic sense to just stop fighting a losing battle, pack up, and move down south, all of us must ensure we have a convincing answer as to why the rest of Canadian taxpayers are paying for all of this when there is no fur, gold, or diamonds for them in the deal.

The answer to this, Mr. Speaker, lies in the inalienable rights of all Canadians, the right to be provided with adequate services wherever they live in Canada. If economic efficiency were the only factor in nation-building, we would all simply live in urban centres where the reality of economies of scale make providing services significantly cheaper. Yet, Canada, in exerting control over these lands historically, has an obligation to both reconcile Indigenous rights to the land and support those who call this place home with the same level of service that a Canadian anywhere else gets, regardless of cost, Mr. Speaker.

This, Mr. Speaker, is the nature of public government. Given our small population, we may, in fact, spend millions of dollars providing services to a single person, but that is part of the Canadian social contract. We provide the same level of healthcare to all Canadians, no matter the cost.

Mr. Speaker, I am convinced that the federal government has forgotten that this is the heart of the social contract. We took on devolution as an interim measure to undo colonial control from Ottawa, but such power must inherently be used to undo colonialism at all levels.

The resources in our land are our savings for the future, and to only allow our continued existence to be contingent on the resources we send back to Ottawa is unjust. Canada needs to stop using the North and its symbols as a uniting cultural aspect without providing the people who live in the North an adequate level of government service.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you all for listening to me. I hope this address can spur some larger conversations about what the NWT is and where it is going. I also ask any who may disagree to please come and speak to me. First and foremost, it is all of our jobs to listen more than we speak, something that is a little ironic, given that I just spoke for 20 minutes, Mr. Speaker; but I believe that it goes without saying that the only way to reconcile and build a united and prosperous North is through healthy dialogue. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Yellowknife North. Item 6, acknowledgements. Item 7, oral questions. Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes.

### Oral Questions

QUESTION 111-19(2):  
MENTAL HEALTH AND SUICIDE RESOURCES  
FOR STUDENTS

**MS. SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. Will the Minister of Education tell me or provide me with what programs and supports

are currently being provided to junior and senior high students in our territory related to mental health and suicide, peer counselling, or anything like that? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes. Minister of Education, Culture and Employment.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There is curriculum in the school that deals with this, as the Member is well aware, and I believe she referenced some of it earlier. If not, I know that she's spoken about it before. I can get a list of those programs or those courses for the Member.

This has been an issue for a while now. One of the issues I find with the school curriculum is there are a lot of things that we should be teaching, and there are only so many hours in the day. When you talk to schools, they want to teach what they need to in order to take students to the next level academically, but also teach the type of life skills that students need. It's a struggle to find that balance of what we can fit in and where we can fit it, because there are only so many hours in the day. We do work on that. As for the particular courses and the particular programs, I can get that information for the Member. Thank you.

**MS. SEMMLER:** Will the Minister commit to providing ASIST, the Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training that the health department offers, or some type of peer counselling geared for students who have been taking on this role in person and through social media by default by not having anyone consistent that they can talk to but each other?

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** I will definitely look into that. We had a conversation about this yesterday. It is a very real issue that students are facing. They become counsellors, peer counsellors, who are dealing with heavy, heavy issues. That weighs on someone. People internalize that, and that becomes an issue for them. I am committed to looking into this.

**MS. SEMMLER:** I believe that the rates of suicidal ideation, which are thoughts of suicide, in our youth are higher than we want to believe. We as parents are struggling alone, thinking that we are the only ones dealing with this issue, but more and more I am talking to more parents and more educators; we are having a crisis that is not being brought to the surface. I want to ask if there is a way that the Minister of education can work with the health department to really capture how many of our young people are struggling with suicidal ideation.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Absolutely. I can work with my colleague, and we can look deeper into that. It

is an issue. It is a recognized issue. That is why, in partnership with Health and Social Services, we are rolling out child and youth counsellors across the territory, because we recognize that this isn't something we can ignore. Schools are places where you go to learn, but you can't learn if you are dealing with so many other very, very serious concerns that are consuming all your time and are very emotional. I will do that work with my colleague.

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

**MS. SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The last question: I just want to see if there is information for parents if they have to support their kids with suicide that can be distributed because I know a lot of the teachers do mail-outs and things, just to keep alert on key things to identify, as some students are struggling and their parents aren't aware. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** One of the things about this job is there is a lot. There is a lot in ECE. This is something I have an interest in, a personal interest, but I haven't gotten to the level of detail, yet, that I would like to. I appreciate the Member bringing this up. It is going to spur me and my department to look further into this. As for those resources, I will look into that.

I want to say, too, that, in the last Assembly, whenever we had a youth parliament or whenever I engaged with the youth, this was one of the biggest issues they spoke about, the mental health crisis among our youth. We are aware, people are aware of it. This is a great opportunity for me to help, do what I can to address some of those concerns I hear from the youth. We always want to hear from the youth, so we say. Then what do we do about it? This is my chance to do it, so I am committed to working with Health and working with all the Members to help tackle this issue. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 112-19(2):  
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES COMMERCIAL  
FISHING INDUSTRY

**MR. ROCKY SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. These questions will be for the Minister of ITI. I would like to ask the Minister if she has had the report prepared by the Minister of the advising panel and also our NWT commercial fishing strategy. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Hay River South. Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment.

**HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. No, I have not read those two documents. I do commit to the Member to getting to them as soon as possible. I have had some scheduling constraints that have made delving into every departmental item quite difficult. I will commit to the Member that I will take a read of those items. Thank you.

**MR. ROCKY SIMPSON:** I was hoping she was going to say yes because I was just going to quiz her to make sure she knew what was in them. I thank her for that. The question I have is: does the Minister believe that we need to involve NWT and not southern fishers in revitalizing our commercial fishing industry?

**HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY:** It is my understanding that, when I speak with the department, they are looking to encourage other fishers to come from outside, to relocate to the Northwest Territories and be actual Northwest Territories fishers. At this time, I am not going to say one way or the other. I do recognize, again, the importance around the larger discussion of keeping Northerners employed and making sure our money is used for Northerners. However, it is my understanding that there is a bit of a strategy within the department that they do want to encourage the movement or relocation of fishers from the South to the North. I commit to the Member that I will look into this and maybe provide a more fulsome response in writing.

**MR. ROCKY SIMPSON:** I thank the Minister for that answer. The next question is: will the Minister commit to replacing the current NWT representative sitting on the board of FFMC with somebody who is actually a fisher?

**HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY:** While I would not like to speak to that specific instance or person, as that is not appropriate for me, we have been having a larger conversation about the composition of our boards in the Northwest Territories and making sure that they more adequately and accurately reflect the people who they are supposed to be making decisions for. I commit to the Member that I will review the appointment of our board member and look into ensuring that that person is more representative of the people who they are speaking for.

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

**MR. ROCKY SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One of the things I believe in is that it is important to get the straight goods, and the only way to do that

is one-on-one with the people in an industry. There is not a lot of people in the fishing industry. I would ask the Minister if she would commit to meeting with the fishers on a one-to-one basis and discuss their vision for the industry and any concerns that they may have with it. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY:** As the Member is aware, I have already started to have discussions with fisherpeople out of Hay River. I do commit to the Member to continue having those conversations. The Member has requested that I come down and meet some of the businesspeople in Hay River soon. We are trying to coordinate that meeting. I would be more than happy to meet with the fisherpeople at the same time. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 113-19(2):  
SEXUAL ABUSE IN SPORTS

**MS. GREEN:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs responsible for amateur sport. CBC's revelations about sexual abuse in amateur sport was really a call to action for prevention measures given the large number of children affected. One clear and obvious precaution is a requirement for a criminal record check for persons who are working directly with amateur sports players. Can the Minister tell us whether there is a requirement for a criminal records name check, whether that is for coaches, for every adult involved in these team activities? What kind of criminal record check requirement is there? Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Yellowknife Centre. Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs.

**HON. PAULIE CHINNA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would just like to report that all organizations that receive sport recreation and physical activity funding from the department will also be required to have the new policies and practices in place by 2021 in order to continue the eligibility for funding. The department is not undertaking the establishment of registry related to abusers for this, as this would be a criminal justice system matter. I am committed to be working with my colleague from the Department of Justice and look at this further. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MS. GREEN:** Lots of good information in that answer. Can the Minister tell us more about the new policy that is being developed, what areas it will cover?

**HON. PAULIE CHINNA:** The Department of Municipal and Community Affairs and partner



organizations work to support the Northwest Territories athletes, and take their responsibilities related to the protection and wellbeing of young athletes very seriously. The Red Deer Declaration approved on February 15, 2019, has committed all governments and sport organizations to make improvements to make sports safer, more inclusive, and free from abuse and harassment. The department is taking steps through the development of the Northwest Territories sports, physical activity, and recreation framework, and the associated Western Canada lottery funding policy, to work with the Northwest Territories' sports organizations to update and develop their policies and programs in these areas, to make sure these athletes are safe from harassment experiences during their sports activities.

The department is in cooperation with Sport North in planning a safe sports summit in Yellowknife at the end of May. The summit will include sports organizations across the Northwest Territories.

**MS. GREEN:** Thank you to the Minister for that response. One thing that I've heard consistently is that implementing new policies within volunteer organizations can be challenging because they are volunteer organizations. Has the Minister given any consideration to how the new policy that is being developed will be implanted within these volunteer organizations?

**HON. PAULIE CHINNA:** I'd like to inform the Member that, as we go forward, we will be developing these policies and including the surrounding sports organizations, including, I don't know them at the top of my head, but we will be working in conjunction with each other.

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

QUESTION 114-19(2):  
SMALL BUSINESSES IN PUBLIC HOUSING

**MR. NORN:** Mahsi cho, Mr. Speaker. I just wanted to speak a little bit about my Member's statement earlier about the NWT Housing Corporation allowing appropriate small businesses to operate within their units. It's great, you know, when we did our round table, I always mentioned that we need to humanize our policies right across the board. I couldn't figure out a word to describe it, but I think my colleague from Yellowknife North really, in his address, mentioned that a lot of our policies are rigid. There is too much rigidity there, so, I'm happy to see that we're moving forward and being more proactive in changing our policies. On that, I have a question for the Minister responsible for the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation, and that's: will the Minister be open to give the tenants

affected by this amendment a six-month grace period on their rent scale?

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member. Minister responsible for the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation.

**HON. PAULIE CHINNA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is a new approach that the Housing Corporation is looking at right now, looking at the small businesses to be operating out of public housing units. It does require a lot of information-seeking, and looking at the six-month grace period, I would really have to look at this case-by-case, because, if the client is going to be entering into a business program, they are going to end up having to access a number of our government grants. Right now, I'm not going to commit to the six-month grace period because we need to review this further.

**MR. NORN:** Thank you for the response from the Minister. I kind of feel like I got a contact hit with a bat; not quite a home run, but that's something. I want to make sure that the public is aware of this, too, so my next question is: will the Minister commit to putting a communications plan in place to let the public know, who are living in these units, to be aware of this new program?

**HON. PAULIE CHINNA:** This is a new initiative the Housing Corporation is taking to task. There is going to be a lot of conversation discussing how we are going to be delivering this program. I am a supporter of small businesses within the communities, and looking at enhancing is existing right now. I will be communicating with the territory and keeping them up to date on what it is we are bringing forward. I will keep the Member informed as we have further discussions within our department.

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

QUESTION 115-19(2):  
MARINE TRANSPORTATION SERVICES

**MR. JACOBSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My statement today was on MTS, and providing services to our communities on the coast, and making sure that the MTS is a lifeline to our three communities; Sachs, Ulukhaktok, and Paulatuk. Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to make sure that the Minister is committing and ensuring the schedule for the planning 2020 sealift is under way. They have a schedule out, but where is this Minister standing in regard to talking with their department on going forward with the 2020 season? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Excuse me, here. Marine Transportation Services continues to improve capacity to upgrade a professional and reliable marine shipping service in a challenging Arctic environment. It remains committed to providing the best possible service to all customers. I am currently looking to instruct my department to provide me with a fulsome summary of the marine transportation system so I can have a better understanding of how it all operates, so I can ensure that it is moving forward in the proper manner. I can commit to sharing information with the Member as I receive it, and we can have further discussions going forward, so that he can see that we're moving forward on track. If he has concerns, he can raise them in real time with me, and then we can make sure that they're addressed prior to it impacting our season.

**MR. JACOBSON:** I just want a commitment from this Minister in regard to putting contracts aside and making sure the people are served first. Is the Minister willing to commit to that in the House today?

**HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY:** Yes. It is my belief, personally, that the marine transportation system's first priority should be the resupply and refuelling of our communities, ahead of any charter or business interest that they may have. So, yes, I commit to the Member that the priority of MTS will be the resupply and not the business aspect of it.

**MR. JACOBSON:** That's my first yes, I think. I ought to thank the Minister for that, and letting the people know that we'll be providing service for the people first. Will the Minister come to Nunakput to meet with my leadership in coastal communities, which MTS provides that service to, and meet with them to see the proper sailing dates and stuff like that, that work that with the communities to ensure that, you know, for housing, if their material lists are coming in, and equipment lists, to make sure that they're providing the service?

**HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY:** Even in my former life, I had heard some concerns around the MTS, the shipping industry in the Northwest Territories, so, yes, I commit to the Member that I will come to his region and see it firsthand. It was unfortunate that, while I was up in the Beaufort-Delta, my schedule didn't permit for me to go and visit the communities as much as I wanted to, so I commit to making it to the Member's home communities as soon as I possibly can.

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

**MR. JACOBSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you Minister for that. I'm encouraged to see that we're all working together to help me to serve the people in my riding and making sure that that's one less thing they have to worry about. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY:** I note the Member's comment, and I thank him for his input. He has done very hard work in keeping the issues for his communities in the forefront of my mind and my attention. I agree; we need to make sure that people have security, and that they know that they're going to have fuel, and they know that they're going to have food, and that they're not paying through the nose, because we've had to fly all of that in, because there was some sort of a mix-up in the scheduling. I commit to the Member that we will work out the best way to fix this issue. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 116-19(2):  
TLICHO ALL-SEASON ROAD CONTRACT

**MR. LAFFERTY:** Masi, Mr. Speaker. [Translation] When I made my Member's statement, I touched on the road to Whati and how contracts have been given out. I would like to ask the Infrastructure Minister a question. [End of translation]

Mr. Speaker, I spoke earlier about the construction of the all-season road to Whati. I am just wondering: what are the local, regional benefits provisions of the agreement that was signed between the GNWT, the Tlicho government, and North Star Infrastructure relating to this project?

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Monfwi. Minister of Infrastructure.

**HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The northern and local requirements in the project agreement are:

- Local business construction requirement: pay at least 30 percent of total capital costs to Tlicho businesses and northern businesses, with at least 25 percent going to Tlicho businesses;
- Tlicho construction labour requirement: pay at least 35 percent of total construction labour costs to Tlicho citizens and/or workers procured by a Tlicho business;
- Local business operations requirement: pay at least 25 percent of annual OMR costs to Tlicho businesses and northern businesses, with at least 20 percent going to Tlicho businesses;

- Tlicho operating labour requirement: pay at least 55 percent, increasing progressively to 75 percent, of annual OMR costs to Tlicho citizens and/or workers procured by a Tlicho business; and
- Tlicho training requirements: meet the Tlicho training requirements, which were included in section 2.5 of schedule 20, including hiring and training for the list of jobs that are also included in the agreement.

I can commit to the Member that, if he would like a copy of the agreement, I can provide him with that. Thank you.

**MR. LAFFERTY:** Obviously, I was hoping to share that the numbers were much higher instead 30 percent, 35 percent, because we have a southern firm, the main contractor at the site. It's unfortunate that it's around 30, 35 percent, during the construction phase. The Member alluded to other figures, but that's during the life of the road. I'm not talking about a particular area; I'm talking about the construction site. If the targets are not met, is there a penalty attached to that agreement between the parties?

**HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY:** Yes, there are penalties in the contract, if I'm reading correctly. Rather than maybe reading off a whack of numbers here, I could just provide that as a written response to the Member, and then he would have it for his records.

**MR. LAFFERTY:** As I stated earlier in my Member's statement, I drive the road on a frequent basis and I see different vehicles that go to the site. One of them happens to be a water and sewer truck and the van, of course, I talked about, the cargo van. I understand the service contracts for water and sewage and for shuttling workers back and forth to Yellowknife were awarded to an outside firm. Can the Minister explain why the water and sewer contract was not awarded to the Behchoko community government?

**HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY:** I cannot speak to why negotiations happened prior to myself being involved with them. I'm not sure why those services would not have been included in the contract and made to go to local businesses. However, I can assure the Member that the Tlicho government is a partner in this project, one of the P3s, and we negotiated our quotas and our requirements for the contract with them in mind and that we are meeting those targets.

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

**MR. LAFFERTY:** Masi, Mr. Speaker. This is a mega project, and it's right in the heart of the Tlicho,

the Monfwi Gogha De Niht'l'e area. My citizens, my Tlicho citizens, have every right to know why the contract wasn't awarded to the community of Behchoko. We do provide those services, and instead of going all the way from Yellowknife, just imagine the cost of delivering that service. If I can ask the Minister to further look into this matter, because it is an important matter that has been addressed to me by my constituents, even the workers at the site. On this particular water and sewer contract, why it wasn't part of their agreement, I would like to know, Mr. Speaker. Masi.

**HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY:** Yes, I will commit to providing the Member with a synopsis or summary of why this contract was not included. It may just be a matter of it wasn't asked for, and therefore it didn't come up; I'm not quite sure. However, I would like to assure the Member that this contract, as well as every contract that we are going to be looking at going forward, will be looked at with the lens of the priorities of our mandate and of the 19<sup>th</sup> Assembly, which includes increasing contract opportunities for northern and Indigenous businesses and retaining our money in the north. I can assure the Member that all of his concerns are noted by me and that I will be using them going forward as I work on our procurement system. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### QUESTION 117-19(2): AFFIRMATIVE ACTION POLICY

**MS. CLEVELAND:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions today are for the Minister of Finance in regard to the Affirmative Action Policy. My understanding is the Affirmative Action Policy last went through an official review in 1994. I am wondering what the findings of that review were and if any changes were made to the policy as a result. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This policy has been subject to two reviews over the past 20-some years, and what I would suggest and commit to do is to engage with the appropriate committee in a technical briefing on this, so that we can start to have a dialogue on the work that has been done on the policy and on its contents. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MS. CLEVELAND:** I appreciate that offer from the Minister. My second question would be: does the Minister feel that the Affirmative Action Policy, as it currently stands, is meeting its objectives, given the relatively stagnant Indigenous hiring statistics over the course of the policy's lifetime?

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** I think the Member has perhaps answered her own question ultimately on this particular matter. I understand that that is maybe rhetorical and directed at me for other reasons. I acknowledge that we are continuing to face challenges to have a workforce that is truly representative of the people of the Northwest Territories. That remains the goal of human resources. That remains my goal as Minister, and I believe it's reflected in the mandates that we were given here to increase employment opportunities across the Northwest Territories.

I would note that the Affirmative Action Policy is only one tool that the human resources department uses. There are a number of programs that I have spoken about in the House previously that we are also rolling out. In addition, there are efforts under way right now to work with some of the Indigenous governments so that human resources can better support the growth and development of the human resources capacities and some of the Indigenous governments across the Northwest Territories. Work continues, and hopefully, by engaging the committee in that technical review, we can advance this forward over the next few years.

**MS. CLEVELAND:** I appreciate the Minister's words. Earlier today, she delivered a Minister's statement in regard to prompt payment, and that's the subject that the Minister and I have been discussing at length over the course of our term. I have absolutely no doubt that the Minister is on this and will carry through, as she has already shown to me.

My next question for the Minister is: would she be able to explain some of the constitutional challenge, vulnerabilities of the policy to us today? Because I know that has been a concern of the GNWT for many years. I'm just wondering how the department feels that maybe some of these can be addressed, or if the Minister can speak to that.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** The constitutional landscape of Canada is ever-shifting. It has been described as a living tree. Obviously, we have to fit our tools and our policies and our rules within that tree, and do our best to ensure that everything within the GNWT is constitutional. That is always our effort. That is always our goal. To the extent that there are technical issues or concerns around that, I will ensure that that's an element or an aspect of the briefing that I propose to engage with the committee, so as to ensure that we are doing the best, both to serve the people of the Northwest Territories and having a representative workforce, and doing so within a way that is reflective of the constitutional landscape of the country.

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

QUESTION 118-19(2):  
MINISTERIAL DIRECTIVE ON ENROLMENT OF  
STUDENTS IN FRENCH FIRST LANGUAGE  
EDUCATION PROGRAMS

**MR. O'REILLY:** Merci, Monsieur le President. My questions are for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. In my statement earlier today, I mentioned the often-strained relations between our government and the NWT francophone community over education. Can the Minister tell me how many applications for admissions by non-rights holders have been reviewed in total under the 2016 directive, and how many have been approved? I did give the questions to my friend across the aisle earlier today. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. Minister of Education, Culture and Employment.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Member doesn't want me to say, "I don't know." Well, I do know. There have been 29 individual student applications. Twenty-three of those student applications under the 2016 directive have been approved, which means that those children, as well as, for the most part, most of their siblings, are now eligible to attend. Thank you.

**MR. O'REILLY:** I want to thank the Minister for that information. Given that our government has ended up in court at least four times regarding francophone first-language education rights, can the Minister give us an estimate of how much money has been spent on these court proceedings by our government?

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** The money spent on court proceedings pursuant to the 2016 directive is \$220,000.

**MR. O'REILLY:** I want to thank the Minister for that response. I can think of lots of other ways to spend that \$220,000. The NWT is the only place in Canada where admissions to francophone first-language schools is still directly controlled by a Minister; at least, that's my understanding. Does the Minister agree that it is time to review the ministerial directive from 2016?

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** If the directive is winding up in court or is putting us into court proceedings, obviously, it can be improved upon, and I'm very live to this issue. I'm from Hay River, where we have a French first-language school, and I've been looking closely at this file. I'm not looking at a formal review right now, but I am personally reviewing it. I am having conversations. I had a conversation this morning, or rather yesterday morning, about this, and I'm having further conversations.

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** Merci, Monsieur le President. I want to thank the Minister for that. I understand it's not a formal review, but I appreciate his interest in the file. He sat in the House last year, or in the last Assembly. He's from a community that has Ecole Boreale, so I'm glad to hear he's started work on this. Our government needs a better approach to collaboration with the francophone community over implementation of education rights. I'm wondering: how will the Minister ensure this relationship changes as we begin the 19<sup>th</sup> Assembly? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** I'm trying to build the best relationships I can with all the education leaders in the territory. To that end, I phoned the chair of every DEC or regional authority in the territory when I first took office. I've had conversations with all but one of the members of the board of the French schools. Again, yesterday, I reached out to the chair and I'm setting up a meeting so that we can have a discussion, myself and the board, with no one else in the room, no one from the department, no employees of the board, just the elected officials, to figure out how, as reasonable people, we can come to a reasonable solution, because my conversations with everyone on the board have been great. Everyone wants the same thing. Everyone wants quality education for the students, and I'm sure we can come to a solution. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 119-19(2):  
NORTHERN BUILDING STANDARDS

**MR. JOHNSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Earlier today, my Members' statement was on the building standards act. In our mandate, we are committed to implementing the 2030 Energy Strategy, something that I am very excited about, Mr. Speaker. Object 5 of the 2030 Energy Strategy is to increase residential, commercial, and government buildings' energy efficiency, by 15 percent. My question is for the Minister of Infrastructure: will the implementation of the action plan for the 2030 Energy Strategy include developing a building standards act such that we can ensure that those buildings meet that 15-percent target?

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Yellowknife North. Minister of Infrastructure.

**HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Meeting this target does not require the development of a building act, so the target will be met through grants and rebates that we are

provided under the 2030 Energy Strategy. These will include the support for larger-scale building energy efficiency using the greenhouse gas grant program for building with industry, with almost \$8 million in grants available over the four years. We are going to support community-building energy efficiency through the greenhouse gas grant program for governments, with over \$7 million in grants available. We're going to support residents, businesses, and communities through Arctic Energy Alliance, and we have more than doubled their budget over the past two years. The Government of the Northwest Territories, the Housing Corporation, we all support the achievement of this target by ensuring that all new government buildings exceed the national energy code for buildings. In addition, we have \$3.8 million per year for energy retrofits in the existing government buildings. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. JOHNSON:** That is a great list of programs, and I'm happy we're going to meet that target regardless of whether we have a building standards act. I am very happy to see our GNWT best building practices followed. They are great practices. The reality on the ground is, if you are in a community, you can build whatever you want because no one comes and inspects it and no one enforces any of the building codes. Given this reality on the ground, is the Minister of Infrastructure willing to work with the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs and begin the work to develop a building standards act?

**HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY:** I commit to the Member that I would definitely look into whether or not a building act is needed here. I do want to remind the Member that, at times, Northerners and northern engineers and geoscientists are involved with creating the federal standards. There have recently been four building standards that were released. There is the guideline for foundations, geotechnical investigations and foundations and permafrost-rich soils. There is a land farm one that has come out recently. I do want to state that the national codes or standards do have northern input.

I recognize what the Member is saying, that the enforcement and inspection aspects of living in the North don't seem to be adequately addressed. I definitely commit to the Member to looking into that. We can definitely continue to start talking about this, but I don't want to commit that the government will be actually developing this act going forward.

**MR. JOHNSON:** I recognize, perhaps, the Minister can't commit to developing a piece of legislation right now, but to pretend like this hasn't been happening for years; I've read a statement today from my predecessor's predecessor in 2011 requesting this. The department has the information. This involves the Housing Corporation.

It involves the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs, and the expertise lies in Infrastructure. What I am looking for from the Minister of Infrastructure is to reach out to all the relevant parties, all the professionals, and get back to the committee with a plan on how we are going to get this done.

**HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY:** I don't think I pretended anything, but we can have a conversation about that outside of this. One of the things we've been hearing a lot is, A, we have no money; and, B, we need to reduce the red tape. Should we go forward with the buildings act, we would then have another layer of regulation that we would need to adhere to, when we already would still be forced to adhere to Canada codes. As well, there is a cost that would come with developing this act that we potentially don't have the funds for. I do commit to the Member to start the discussion with the departments that he's mentioned and see where this can go, and I would also then include the architects' association, as well as the engineering and geoscience associations, and other interested stakeholders for their input on whether or not that an act would definitely be required. I do acknowledge, though, again, that there are issues with building inspection and whether or not things are being built to code.

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

**MR. JOHNSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate that the Minister acknowledges that there are problems with the building inspection. However, I think the argument that this would create further red tape, when there is simply no enforcement or inspection occurring, is not a valid argument, Mr. Speaker. It's a free-for-all right now, as soon as you leave Yellowknife, in regard to building standards. We have a number of codes and guidelines, some are enforceable, some are not, but at the end of the day, there is no one there to enforce this at a territorial level. Mr. Speaker, my question for the Minister of Infrastructure is: in implementing the energy strategy, and working with those departments, can we leave here at the end of four years enforcing those standards?

**HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY:** As an engineer, a professional engineer, I take an oath to protect public safety. That may be something that's not as out there as the doctors, who take their oath to protect people, but, yes, I am very concerned to hear that buildings are being built to a substandard level, and I will commit to the Member to doing the best that I can do in the next four years. As we've all been saying, this is a very, very large ship to change course on, so I'm not sure exactly how much I will be able to change. However, I commit to doing everything in my department as safely as a I

can, and I will carry your concerns forward to my department. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 120-19(2)  
HIGHWAY SAFETY AND THE TRUCKING  
INDUSTRY

**MR. BONNETROUGE:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Hopefully, the Minister of Infrastructure is not all tuckered out yet.

---Laughter

My questions are related to my Member's statement on the trucking industry and the safety on our highways. Can the Minister tell me how the department regulates the trucking industry? Specifically, when they are on our highways, keeping in mind the safety of the travelling public? Mahsi.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Deh Cho. Minister of Infrastructure.

**HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There is a Motor Vehicles Act that would be enforceable on our highways, so I'm assuming that would be one of the ways in which we do enforce the safety. Currently, as well, though, I did want to let the Member know that the Government of the Northwest Territories is working with our federal, provincial, and territorial colleagues to develop a common minimum training standard for commercial truck drivers across the country, so we are providing input and feedback to the federal government and our counterparts on where we see that there needs to be improvements. We've also been taking on a number of highway upgrades and will continue to do so. I know there's an area of concern on the highways with chipseal not being very good, or the quality of the roads not being very good, which also impacts driver safety. We're going to continue to apply for and receive federal funding to upgrade our roads. There's a lot of work being planned in the next four years on Highway No. 1 and Highway No. 3.

We're also going to be looking to do an implementation of the Intelligent Transportation Systems. This is an application of communication, computer, and system technologies, to make the transportation in the territory safer. There will be many benefits for this. It should increase the traveller information that we're collecting as a department; it will give us real-time data; it should be helping us to become better informed to make decisions. We have a budget of approximately \$3.5 million over the next five years for this system, and we're currently on the work of putting out a request

for proposals to complete the various components of the system. This is going to occur over the next several years as we roll it out.

**MR. BONNETROUGE:** I thank the Minister for all that information. I'm not sure if they are specific to the trucking industry; that's the industry that I'm discussing today. I mentioned the dangers of flying mud, rocks, and snow coming out of the trucks when you pass them. I've driven on the highway for quite a number of years, since 2008, when I had to work out of Hay River, going back and forth to Fort Providence. I've experienced a lot of that. Now, my time coming up to Yellowknife for the sittings. There's lots of, you know, flying mud, rocks; the mud covers your windshield totally. The snow is very, very bad. It's scary to get out there. Can the department engage the trucking industry to come up with new technology for the tire mud flaps so nothing flies out to oncoming traffic, which is posing serious risk to the travelling public?

**HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY:** I'm not sure if my department would be engaged to provide feedback to the trucking industry. However, we could definitely look into some ways and see if there is an opportunity, or a forum that maybe we need to become a member of, in order to be providing that. I did want to say, with respect to the mud and the rocks, and such, we are trying to implement, as much as we can, chipseal programs on roads that are not currently paved. Chipseal is basically a type of asphalt or pavement. We are looking to reduce the number of gravel roads that we have; however, again, very expensive. We also have a lot of issues to do with melting permafrost that makes having paved roads a lot more difficult to maintain and keep in an adequate manner. I commit to the Member that perhaps we need to do some education, as well, ensuring that trucking companies are ensuring that their truckers do have the appropriate flaps, et cetera.

I just wanted to ask, just to clarify the point before: you had referenced the fact that this wasn't about the trucking industry specifically. The mandatory commercial truck driver training that we're working on nationally is for the trucking industry.

**MR. BONNETROUGE:** Like I mentioned in my Member's statement, we're seeing an increase in truck traffic. You know, when I was coming up here last weekend, on the Sunday, I met up with six trucks on the road, and they were following very close to each other. It's a good thing it wasn't snowing; I probably would have hit one of them. That's what's happening. It's just a big increase with truck traffic on the highways, and we're not really regulating them. We don't see highway patrols out there. They're just running down the highway, you know, wanting to splash mud all over you in the summers, and whatnot. It still happens with the

chipseal stuff. I'm just wondering if the department can meet with the suppliers, businesses, and mining executives to determine their needs and stockpiles in trying to decrease the amount of truck traffic on our highways?

**HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY:** I would like to point out that, if we were to advance the Taltson hydro expansion project, we won't have as many diesel trucks on the road, and that would maybe solve some of the trucking issues that we have. I take into note the Member's concerns, and yes, I will commit that as part of our development of our strategies going forward for highways. We will most assuredly, and I believe we already do, engage the trucking industry and get their feedback. As we've been speaking again, as a larger group, we do want to improve our systems and process as a government by ensuring we are listening to the people who are using our products and services. I commit to all of the Members right now that, every single thing I'm doing, I am collecting end-user feedback as best I can and will continue to do so.

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

QUESTION 121-19(2):  
ARNICA INN TRANSITIONAL HOUSING  
PROJECT

**MS. GREEN:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. We received notice yesterday that the Minister responsible for the NWT Housing Corporation was meeting with the Yellowknife Women's Society yesterday to talk about the Arnica Inn application. I wonder if the Minister could provide us with an update on that meeting? Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Yellowknife Centre. Minister responsible for the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation.

**HON. PAULIE CHINNA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday, the Housing Corporation did meet with Arnica Inn, and we did come to a conclusion that Arnica Inn will be meeting with their consultant who completed their application to get clarification as to why the application -- it was not denied; I do not want to elaborate on that, but there were concerns for amendments and for the application to be resubmitted. The Northwest Territories Housing Corporation is committed to following up with them next week, and we will be working in conjunction together to try to help and support the application going forward. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MS. GREEN:** I appreciate the answer from the Minister. My question is: who is talking to CMHC? It was ultimately them who turned the application back because of a number of deficiencies. Who is working with CMHC to figure out what those

deficiencies are and how they can be addressed in the short term?

**HON. PAULIE CHINNA:** The application is a federal application, and we don't administer it at a territorial level. We are subject to a funding source for these applications going forward, and the conversation would have to happen between CMHC and the applicant. To be honest to the Member, we have not seen a copy of the application, and I have requested that Arnica Inn provide that to us and have a conversation going forward. I know that it doesn't sound fair, but honestly, this is CMHC's program. The Northwest Territories Housing Corporation is not involved in the process, but we do support the applicant and assist them in completing the application.

**MS. GREEN:** Yes, this is a difficult process, obviously, and the Yellowknife Women's Society is committed to making this work, because we need the housing. Can the Minister tell us what lessons have been learned from this first of 12 applications to the co-investment fund about how the Housing Corporation could be involved in a different way so that applications go in where everybody is informed about the intent and the potential problems?

**HON. PAULIE CHINNA:** The Member is correct. This is a new application and a new funding source that is provided to the Northwest Territories from the federal government. In administering and seeing this application go through to the second phase, we have noticed that we need to make improvements with this application process. I am in conversation with my department to establish a position that would be able to work between the Housing Corporation and CMHC to make sure that the application process is clear and communication is flowing.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister. Member for Yellowknife Centre.

**MS. GREEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the Minister for that. One of the lessons learned for me is that communication is really poor around this application process. Is there a way for the NWT Housing Corporation to receive the application as a copy, knowing that there is no adjudication by the Housing Corporation; it's up to CMHC, but can you at least receive the same information that they receive so that you understand what's being requested and how you can support it? Thank you.

**HON. PAULIE CHINNA:** Thank you to the Member. The application is completed between the client and CMHC, and going forward, it's at the discretion of the applicant if they want to share that final information with the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation. Going forward, this is going to be something that I am going to encourage. We do

need a working document, because the applicants and the clients are going to be looking for financial support from the Housing Corporation. We need something to work off of when they come forward with their ask, but going forward, I will be encouraging a copy of the application to be submitted as well to the Housing Corporation. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 122-19(2):  
INCOME ASSISTANCE POLICIES REGARDING  
OPERATION OF SMALL BUSINESSES

**MR. NORN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Going back to what I was saying in my Member's statement about allowing small businesses into NWT Housing Corporation units, I have some questions for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. For some context here, I'm keeping in mind these parents struggling to support their families who are on Income Assistance to get their small businesses up and running. My question to the Minister is: will the Minister commit to having a six-month grace period for individuals with their small businesses to have their Income Assistance not be affected while their business gets up and running? Mahsi cho.

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

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is part of a broader discussion that we have been having about how we can better use Income Assistance to get people into the workforce or support self-sufficiency. The Member spoke earlier about a laissez-faire approach to business, and some of the concerns around this are, if Income Assistance is paying for rent as well as income while someone is starting a small business, that puts them at advantage over other people who have other expenses, to pay for office space, and things like that.

That being said, the Member makes a very good point. You can't get back on your feet if, as soon as you're making a bit of money, you're knocked down. People who collect Income Assistance are not automatically disqualified once they start a small business. If they still meet the requirements, they are still eligible for Income Assistance.

That's a long way to say that this is a bigger question than just saying yes right now. The review that we're doing in terms of Income Assistance is a big review. It's looking at what we want this program to accomplish. I can't make this commitment, because it's going to cost money to do what the Member is asking. That has to go through



the Financial Management Board, and it has to go through this Assembly. That being said, I am looking at ways to reform the system to make sure that we help people get ahead and don't contribute to keeping them down. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. NORN:** Thank you to the responding Minister. That's encouraging. Again, I'm hoping to see more of our other departments working with each other, because this is a multidepartment issue. I am hoping to hear from the Minister whether he's willing to work with the other departments to get this done and have a policy moving forward that makes sense, that will encourage small business owners to get on their feet.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Absolutely. This government is all about collaboration and breaking down silos. I have to work with the Housing Corporation, as I've stated before. When we're talking about small businesses, I have to work with ITI. I am absolutely going to do that, and I am going to have to work with the committees of this Assembly, as some of the changes that are being discussed would require legislative changes that would have to go through the committee stage.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister. The time for oral questions has expired. Item 9, written questions. Member for Monfwi.

### Written Questions

#### WRITTEN QUESTION 5-19(2): TLICHO ALL SEASON ROAD PROJECT CONTRACTS

**MR. LAFFERTY:** Masi, Mr. Speaker. [Translation not available]

I have a couple of written questions for the Minister of Infrastructure. Can the Minister of Infrastructure please provide a breakdown or detail of all the contracts and subcontractors at the Tlicho all-season road construction, and please provide addresses for these contracts and the length of their contracts. In addition, provide some details of O and M contracts and subcontracts after the construction is completed in 2022. Masi, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Monfwi. Written questions. Item 10, returns to written questions. Mr. Clerk.

### Returns to Written Questions

#### RETURN TO WRITTEN QUESTION 2-19(2): AURORA COLLEGE PRESIDENT

**CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer):** Mr. Speaker, I have a Return to Written Question 2-

19(2) asked by the Member for Yellowknife Centre on February 6, 2020, related to the president of Aurora College and associate deputy minister of post-secondary education renewal.

I would like to advise you that the executive search firm hired to assist in finding qualified applicants for this position was paid a total of \$80,224.08 for their services.

Deputy Head salary ranges are publicly available on the GNWT website and range from \$182,805 to \$279,289 per annum effective April 1, 2019. I can confirm that the salary offered and accepted was within this pay range.

Provisions for relocation expenses are outlined in the Senior and Manager's Handbook, page 16, and can include transportation, accommodations, meals, and incidentals, excess baggage, packing, storage of effects, real estate, and legal fees. It should be noted that deputy heads may negotiate further provisions as part of their individual contracts. The average cost in 2019-2020 to move a senior manager to Yellowknife from all locations Canada wide was \$21,600.

Although the question posed was not for the direct severance provisions included in a specific individual's contract, the standard provisions would too closely reflect Dr. Weegar's conditions of employment. This type of disclosure is prohibited under the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act

Additionally, as the privacy protections of the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act do not allow the release of specific compensation information in relation to an identifiable individual, we believe disclosure of the standard compensation formula provided for in the severance provisions included in a deputy ministers employment contract and the standard severance cost of ending a deputy ministers employment contract at the one year mark would be releasing information that is protected under the act. Although the Member's request is made from a standard perspective, the requested information is clearly tied to Dr. Weegar's employment given the reference to Dr. Weegar's title and when he was hired. In this context, we believe we would be publicly disclosing information that is protected under the act. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

#### RETURN TO WRITTEN QUESTION 3-19(2): INDIGENIZATION OF PRISON POPULATIONS

**CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer):** Mr. Speaker, I have a Return to Written Question 3-19(2) asked by Member for Monfwi on February 6, 2020, regarding the Indigenization of prison populations.

1. In the past 10 years, what programs and initiatives has the territorial government launched to keep Indigenous people out of jail, and what do the evaluations of those various programs and initiatives conclude about effectiveness of each?

The GNWT has supported diversion for youth and adults since 1994, including the implementation of the NWT Youth Justice Act, solidifying our commitment to diversion as a fundamental part of providing an alternative to custody for NWT residents who have committed certain types of offenses. The Department of Justice Community Justice Program provides funding for restorative justice programming at the community level, as well as the facilitation of formal diversion of matters from the traditional justice system.

Community justice coordinators and volunteer committees work together in communities to provide these services from their unique local perspective. Committees consist of volunteers who represent the community and assist the Coordinators with formal diversions, community service, and local crime prevention initiatives. The Community Justice Program is focused on collaboration and inclusivity, culturally relevant and responsive to specific communities as the programs are delivered by sponsoring agencies in those communities. These efforts were included in a 2011 review of the Community Justice Initiative. NWT Community Justice Review: Together We're Better "Looking Ahead" was tabled in the Legislative Assembly on May 19, 2011.

For eligible offenders whose cases do go to court and who take responsibility for their actions by pleading guilty, the NWT Wellness Court and the Domestic Violence Treatment Options or DVTO Court provide alternatives to conventional court that focus on the offender rather than the offence. Wellness Court applies a model that seeks to address underlying issues of drug and alcohol addiction, mental health and cognitive challenges. Social program departments and agencies support the Wellness Court and are participating as necessary to implement the case plans of Wellness Court clients. The DVTO Court is an option for low to medium risk offenders who agree to attend an eight-module program. Successful completion of either court program is a mitigating factor in sentencing. The Department of Justice is preparing to complete an evaluation of specialized court programs in the 2020-2021 fiscal year.

2. What proportion of territorial prison staff are Indigenous, broken down by employment

category, especially management, program delivery, and guards?

Across all NWT correctional facilities, 58 percent of Corrections managers consisting of all levels of wardens and supervisors are Indigenous Aboriginal. Similarly, Indigenous Aboriginal employees also constitute the majority of all employees at both the South Mackenzie Correctional Centre, where 20 out of 34 or 59 percent of employees are Indigenous Aboriginal and the Fort Smith Correctional Complex where 19 out of 37 or 51 percent of employees are Indigenous Aboriginal.

At the North Slave Correctional Complex or NSCC in Yellowknife, the proportion of Indigenous Aboriginal employees is lower at 18 percent, but equal to that of Indigenous non-Aboriginal employees. NSCC is the largest correctional facility and the higher numbers of staff there affects the overall proportions of Indigenous Aboriginal corrections officers at 23 percent and program delivery staff, at 37 percent, which includes case managers, instructors, traditional counsellors, and psychologists across NWT corrections.

All NWT correctional facilities integrate Indigenous culture and traditions with input from elders, traditional liaison officers and the participation of other Indigenous staff.

3. What proportion of territorial prison staff is dedicated full time to counselling, vocational training, and educational upgrading for inmates, and what share of the total correctional system appropriation is allocated for those purposes?

It is difficult to quantify the proportion of staff in NWT correctional facilities that are dedicated full time to counselling, vocational training, and educational upgrading for inmates because such duties are inherent in the work of all frontline corrections staff through the practice of direct supervision of inmates in a living unit. Direct supervision ensures staff visibility and constructively interact with offenders toward a safe working and living environment for all. It involves consideration of factors that affect an offender's behaviour and interactions, including mental health concerns, and the recording and sharing of such factors with specialized staff. Direct supervision by corrections staff supports offenders to engage in pro-social and responsible behaviour.

All correctional officers and staff receive mental health first aid and conflict resolution training by certified instructors. Case managers support offenders in their learning journey in the correctional facility, helping to select appropriate

programming and to build a supportive network toward rehabilitation and community reintegration.

The breakdown of specific positions by facility is as follows:

- At the North Slave Correctional Complex dedicated positions are two psychologists, four case managers, one traditional counsellor, two institutional teachers in the adult unit, and one institutional teacher in the youth unit;
- At the South Mackenzie Correctional Centre or SMCC dedicated positions are: one psychologist, five traditional counsellor positions of whom one is focussed on addictions counselling, and one case manager. Services of a literacy teacher are provided on contract. The SMCC is transitioning to a therapeutic community to offer even more holistic supports to eligible offenders; and
- At the Fort Smith Correctional Complex dedicated positions are one counsellor and one institutional teacher.

In addition, several dedicated program delivery officers in correctional facilities and in community corrections deliver programming to address the needs of offenders such as violence prevention and building healthy relationships.

4. What has our correctional system done to enhance access to screening, diagnosis and treatment of offenders suffering fetal alcohol spectrum disorder, and similarly, what non-traditional approaches have our courts adopted for dealing with such offenders?

The Department of Justice is well aware that many people who come into contact with the criminal justice system suffer from Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder or FASD or cognitive disabilities brought about through adverse life experiences. These individuals require supports appropriate to their needs and circumstances.

The Department of Justice has taken an approach beyond just FASD to look at the needs of people who may live with FASD and other cognitive challenges affecting daily functioning. This removes the burden of having to secure a diagnosis under the fetal alcohol spectrum or another medically identified condition. In 2011, Justice established a functional assessment committee tasked with identifying tools that determine the level of functioning of offenders related to social skills,

daily living skills, and basic indicators for mental capacity. This led to the piloting and implementation of mental health screening tools for men and women that are now used in all NWT correctional facilities.

In corrections, the specific needs of each inmate are identified on admission to custody or community corrections. These needs are reviewed throughout the period during which the individual is under the supervision of NWT Corrections. This includes the option to refer inmates to the new territorial adult FASD diagnosis and support program established in January 2020 by the Department of Health and Social Services.

However, an FASD or other medical diagnosis is not required for an offender with complex needs to access adapted services and supports in NWT Corrections.

NWT Corrections uses an inclusive approach and provides services and supports to offenders and inmates with cognitive difficulties and other complex needs on a case-by-case basis. Individuals with suspected FASD, but not necessarily diagnosed, would fall into this group. Inmates in NWT correctional facilities who are unable to participate in criminogenic programming due to cognitive limitations may be considered for an alternative individual program on a case-by-case basis.

As mentioned in response to the first question, the Department of Justice community justice program provides funding for restorative justice programming at the community level, as well as the facilitation of formal diversion of matters from the traditional justice system. Within the court system, the NWT Wellness Court provides an alternative to conventional court for eligible offenders not yet sentenced and who take responsibility for their actions by pleading guilty.

5. What progress has the Minister's department made in response to the 18 separate "calls to action" contained in the federal Truth and Reconciliation Commission report relating to justice and correctional matters?

"Meeting the Challenge of Reconciliation: The Government of the Northwest Territories Response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action" highlights the many steps that the GNWT has already taken to strengthen relationships with Aboriginal peoples, help restore and heal Indigenous communities, and ensure that Indigenous cultures and traditions are recognized and valued. This GNWT initial response was tabled on October 5, 2015. An update on the GNWT

response to the calls to action was tabled in the Legislative Assembly on March 8, 2017.

The Department of Justice continues to move forward with related work, including working with other provinces and territories in federal, provincial, and territorial justice forums, to ensure action is taken. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Clerk. Returns to written questions. Item 11, replies to commissioner's address. Item 12, petitions. Item 13, reports of committees on the review of bills. Item 14, reports of standing and special committees. Item 15, tabling of documents. Item 16, notices of motion. Item 17, motions. Item 18, notices of motion for first reading of bills. Item 19, first reading of bills. Item 20, second reading of bills. Item 21, consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters: Tabled Document 30-19(2), Main Estimates 2020-2021; Tabled Document 43-19(2) Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 1, 2020-2021. By the authority given to me as Speaker by Motion 1-19(2), I hereby authorize the House to sit beyond the daily hours of adjournment to consider the business before the House, with the Member for Yellowknife Centre in the chair.

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

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** I now call Committee of the Whole to order. What is the wish of committee? Mr. Norn.

**MR. NORN:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Committee would like to consider Tabled Document 30-19(2) Main Estimates 2020-2021, starting with the Department of Finance.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Mr. Norn. We will proceed with that item after a short break.

---SHORT RECESS

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Committee, we have agreed to consider Tabled Document 30-19(2), Main Estimates 2020-2021. Does the Department of Finance have any opening remarks?

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Yes. Thank you, Madam Chair. I am here to present the 2020-2021 Main Estimates for the Department of Finance. Overall, the department's estimates propose an increase of \$21.3 million or 8.1 percent over the 2019-2020 Main Estimates. These estimates support our government's objective to prioritize responsible and strategic spending while matching the modest expected revenue growth over the coming year.

Highlights of these proposed estimates include:

- \$7.8 million in forced growth, which includes \$4.5 million in short-term debt servicing requirements and \$3.3 million in UNW collective bargaining increases;
- \$10.6 million for the delivery of rebates created to offset the cost related to the implementation of the Northwest Territories Carbon Tax; and
- \$3.6 million in restatements, which includes \$1.4 million to support the Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority's conversion to the System for Accountability and Management and the transfer of those functions to Financial and Employee Shared Services, and \$2.2 million for the transfer of amortization expenses for technology assets that were transferred to the Department of Finance as a result of the creation of the new Information System Shared Services Branch.

These estimates continue to support the priorities of the 19<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly by:

- Streamlining the financial processing for all GNWT departments and the newly integrated Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authorities;
- Supporting and managing the GNWT's information security and technology resources through the Information Systems Shared Services branch; and
- Ensuring that GNWT departments have the support they need to manage both human and financial resources appropriately.

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

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Minister of Finance. Does the Minister of Finance wish to bring witnesses into the House?

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Yes, Madam Chair. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you. Sergeant-at-Arms, could you please escort the witnesses into the Chamber. Would the Minister please introduce her witness.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Madam Chair, thank you. To my left, I have Sandy Kalgutkar, the deputy minister of the Department of Finance.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you. We will proceed to review the departments for the budget, starting with the Department of Finance. I will now

open the floor to general comments on this particular department. Thank you. If there are no opening comments, does the committee agree to proceed to the detail contained in the tabled document?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Committee, we will defer the departmental summary and review the estimates by activity summary, beginning with the directorate, which starts on page 137 of your main estimates item. Members, we will now turn to page 138, where we will have one round of questions per activity area for 10 minutes of questions per Member. In the Finance Department, directorate, operations expenditure summary, program detail, \$77,681,000, do Members have any questions? Thank you, Member for Yellowknife North.

**MR. JOHNSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Beginning with a general question: can the Minister of Finance provide the total cost of our debt servicing in these main estimates? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Member for Yellowknife North. Minister of Finance.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Madam Chair, I certainly can provide that number. I'm not sure that I can point it to the Member right this moment on this particular page. I can provide some other general statistics in terms of knowing that it is within the financial responsibilities policy and that we are compliant with that. In fact, we're very low; we're under 2 percent for the coming year, but the actual number, Madam Chair, I will have to get back to the Member.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Minister of Finance. Member for Yellowknife North.

**MR. JOHNSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I recognize, perhaps, that was in the summary part that we passed by, so I will just take it as a commitment from the Minister to provide a breakdown of the total cost we are paying to service our debt as projected in these main estimates. That's my only question, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Member for Yellowknife North. Member for Frame Lake.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Madam Chair. Yes, I do have a few questions around this section. On page 138, the contribution to the NWT Housing Corporation, if you compare 2020-2021 to the actuals or revised estimates from previous years, it actually shows a reduction. Can someone explain to me why we would be reducing our contribution to the NWT Housing Corporation, given the increasing need for more housing and better housing? Thanks, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. Minister of Finance.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Madam Chair. The higher value in 2018-2019 was as a result, as I understand, of the contribution made to RCMP housing, and that program then sunsetted and is not currently included in the 2020-2021 Main Estimates. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks. Can the Minister provide me some assurance, then, that this is not a declining contribution from our government to the NWT Housing Corporation? Thanks, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. Minister of Finance. If you could use your loud voice, that would be great. Thank you.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I am more than happy to do that. Madam Chair, no, there is no intention to have any sort of ongoing reduction to the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation. This was simply a reflection of a particular one-time program, and of course, it remains the commitment of this government to continue to seek out opportunities for more programs of that nature to hopefully bring in similar opportunities. There is a continuing intention to maintain funding to the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Minister of Finance. Member for Frame Lake.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Madam Chair. How is this contribution actually calculated? Is it just based on whatever budget the Housing Corporation comes up with, and the money is transferred, then, from the Department of Finance? Thanks, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. Minister of Finance.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Madam Chair. The Housing Corporation does go through the business planning process, and their documents are vetted by the relevant committee. Through that planning process, they will be subject to the four-year planning process that the Department of Finance is developing templates for right now, and that is how those values are tabulated, and then the money is run through the Department of Finance's budget. Ultimately, it will go through that same planning process and business planning process as every other department. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Minister of Finance. Member for Frame Lake.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Madam Chair. I want to move on to a different issue, if I can. This is the, I guess, part of the Department of Finance that is supposed to be administrative leadership for GNWT and so on. Presumably this is the part, the deputy minister's office, as well, that relates to the federal government. I have been after previous Ministers of Finance for some time now to raise the issue with the Canada Revenue Agency about the Northern Resident Tax Deduction. I know it was increased one time. Has there been any progress made on indexing of the Northern Resident Tax Deduction? Thanks, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. Minister of Finance.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Madam Chair. The federal government's budget will be coming out, obviously, next month, and I think, in terms of the northern residents deduction, we will have to look and see what has been included there. I can assure the Member that I am alive to what he is raising and that we will continue to engage with the Department of Finance from the federal government to work toward the best possible value and outcome for the people of the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Minister of Finance. Member for Frame Lake.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Madam Chair. I am glad to hear that the Minister is on this issue. The other one that has caused huge consternation for Northerners is the calculation of the lowest return airfare and the extremely high rates of audit that we seem to get subjected to. Has there been any movement on having the CRA actually fix the amount and tell people what it is so they don't have to try to guess about it? Has there been any progress made on that issue? Thanks, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. Minister of Finance.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Madam Chair. We do engage regularly with the Canada Revenue Agency. I haven't had that opportunity to have that engagement as of yet, but I would assure the Member and commit to the Member that, when that opportunity does come up, I will raise at that point whether or not a more efficient system can be found to ensure that it saves time, really, for everybody. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Minister of Finance. Member for Frame Lake.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Madam Chair. Yes. I look forward to hearing back from the Minister when she raises this issue with her federal colleagues. I want to move on to a different issue that is Shared Corporate Services. This was sort of a new unit that was created within the Department of Finance to do a bunch of things across various departments. Previous Ministers had promised that there would be an evaluation done of how effective that function and centralizing those resources within the Department of Finance has gone. Can the Minister share that evaluation with us now? Thanks, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. Minister of Finance.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Madam Chair, Shared Corporate Services is a communications function that is shared with the EIA, Executive and Indigenous Affairs. I wonder, though, if perhaps what the Member is seeking more information about is Information Shared Services System, which is a newer initiative and there is an ongoing evaluation process. If I could just confirm, Madam Chair?

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Minister of Finance. Member for Frame Lake, could you clarify what you are asking for, please?

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Madam Chair. The Minister is great because she has actually anticipated my next question. If we haven't done an evaluation on Shared Corporate Services, what kind of assurance can the Minister give me that the ISSS, or whatever we want to call it, is actually working as it has been touted? I want to know whether the evaluation was done on the Shared Corporate Services unit and if that can be shared with us. The next question, which she has anticipated, is: what is the evaluation framework for the ISSS, or whatever it is called? Thanks, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. Minister of Finance.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Madam Chair. The Shared Corporate Services unit has not been subject to any sort of evaluation. Given the commitments that we have already made and the commitment of the Department of Finance specifically to enhance our evaluation services and programs, which we will be doing internally, I certainly can make the commitment to at least consider and look into whether or not this is the best opportunity and the best program to be starting with or one of the first to be starting with or if there are perhaps competing priorities. That is something that I can have further conversations with the Member about specifically to make sure that we are

using our evaluation services in the most effective way possible.

With respect to the Information Shared Service System, ISSS, there is an ongoing evaluation. I think that specific program is reflected elsewhere in the mains, but for the sake of this question, there is a performance evaluation under way right now. It is not finalized. I don't have a final copy of it at this point. I certainly will provide it to this House when the evaluation is complete. It has only barely been a full year, if I am not mistaken, that it is been in operation and is still moving forward. The evaluation is being planned, and it will be conducted, I expect, within the next year with that information to come back to the House in due course. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Minister of Finance. Member for Frame Lake.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Madam Chair. I see the clock ticking down. I do have a number of other issues that I am going to raise in other sections. I am just going to give the Minister a heads-up: carbon tax reporting; Mackenzie Valley fibre link; revenues; and the Heritage Fund. I think most of those are found in other sections. That is all from me for now. Thanks, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. Are there any further questions on Department of Finance, directorate, key activity? If not, I will call this page. Finance, directorate, operations expenditure summary, \$77,681,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Members. We will now turn to the human resources activity, beginning on page 141 with an information item and then the numbers on page 142. Are there questions on the human resources key activity? Member for Frame Lake.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Madam Chair. One of the things that we have heard about in terms of human resources that has caused some concerns are the number of direct appointments. Can the Minister commit to provide a table showing the number of direct appointments by year and by department, say, for the last couple years, and if there is some overall rationale as to why direct appointments are done? That would be very helpful to get. Can the Minister commit to provide that and table it in the House? Thanks, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. Minister of Finance.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Madam Chair, I will commit to providing the rationale that underlies

all direct appointments. I certainly can provide that in fairly short order. With respect to the number of direct appointments that have occurred, I would like to first confirm that this wouldn't result in any information-sharing that would be inappropriate. For example, in a small community, I wouldn't want this to wind up with somebody having their personal information shared about the nature of their employment. I will return to the Member with a response as to whether or not I can, in fact, make that commitment on the other half of the request. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Madam Chair. Just to be clear, I am not asking for the information by community. I am asking for it by department. I guess I will let the Minister go and sort out whether there is a breach of privacy in providing that information. I don't think there is any kind of public notice or anything attached to when a direct appointment is made, that I am aware of. If she wants to go away and think about it. Great for me to get this information. I want her to make it public, though. There is an annual human resources report that is prepared by the department. That is probably the most appropriate place for that kind of information to be found, but here, I have to ask about it in the budget review. Okay, the Minister is going to go away and think about that. I have some other questions here around staffing appeals. I would like to know what percentage of employees who apply on GNWT jobs are actually eligible to file an appeal. Thanks, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. Minister of Finance.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Madam Chair, I am informed that, in 2019-2020, we had roughly 75 appeals in total, but I can't say what the total percentage that is as compared to total applications. I will commit to getting that number for the Member. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Minister of Finance. Member for Frame Lake.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Madam Chair. Yes. I have had this issue brought to my attention by some constituents, as well. When someone is not successful in a GNWT competition, are they actually informed of whatever appeal rights they may have? Thanks, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. Minister of Finance.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Not every person who applies has appeal rights. Those who do have appeal rights, I

believe the intention is that they should be given that information. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Madam Chair. Yes, I think part of the issue here is the restrictions on the ability to file appeals. It's a very, very high bar to get over in the first place. I don't know how many job recruitments took place, but to say that we only had 75 appeals in a given year, that's not very many. I don't think it's necessarily just a result of us having a great staff, as we do, but I think it's an issue of the restricted ability to actually access the appeal process. My question for the Minister is: have we actually had the staffing appeal process ever reviewed independently by a third party? Thanks, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. Minister of Finance.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Madam Chair. The appeal process itself is actually done by a third party. With respect to whether the overall process has ever been reviewed, not to my knowledge. This is an area that I already, in only the short few months that I have been a Minister, have had many enquiries from Members about staffing appeals, so I am alive to the fact that this does seem to be an issue that is coming back to all of the Members in this House. While I can't right now commit necessarily to a full review of this particular program, I certainly can commit to going back and making some further enquiries myself about whether, in fact, we are making best use of the staffing appeal process for people who are looking for GNWT positions. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Madam Chair. I appreciate the commitment on the part of the Minister. That's more than we got out of the previous Minister of Finance, who was not even prepared to admit that there was an issue or a problem, so that's good. I would suggest that the Minister start with reviewing some of the correspondence and reports from the Standing Committee on Government Operations from the last Assembly. I wasn't even a member of the committee, but I did sit in on some of their deliberations, and this was a source of some contention, and those issues were brought to the attention of the previous Minister without much resolution. That's more of a comment, Madam Chair. I don't have any further questions, but I appreciate the Minister's commitment to look into it, and she knows that I'll keep raising it. Thanks, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. Did you want to comment, Minister?

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

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

**MR. JOHNSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I am looking at a human resources policy, the pay for performance, and I see in there that we are allowed to apply bonuses to our excluded employees. Is that budgeted for at all in our main estimates?

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Member for Yellowknife North. Minister of Finance.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Madam Chair, thank you. Any bonuses paid out by a department have to come from within that department's internal funding. There is nothing on a main estimate line that will show an amount for bonuses. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MR. JOHNSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair, and that's exactly the problem, is that we're essentially encouraging senior management to go and find cuts, and then pay themselves bonuses. Can you provide the total amount that we paid for in pay for performance bonuses?

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Member for Yellowknife North. Minister of Finance.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Firstly, the ability to provide bonuses to senior employees is really one of the only opportunities to provide some ongoing increase or benefits to those senior employees who are not anymore on the same step grade as other GNWT employees. Certainly, I would dispute the idea that this is an opportunity to find cuts. Every department's variance reports are available and can be looked at by the Members, including the Ministers, and I would think, if there were ongoing cuts being used inappropriately, that should come to light through a variety of other routes and tools and mechanisms.

That said, I understand the frustration with what is a policy or a process that is, perhaps, one with which people are not familiar. I mistakenly thought I actually had some numbers in front of me. I apologize, Madam Chair; I don't, so I will have to get back to the Member with some specific values, and I wonder, although it's a small issue, it is one that I can see would come up and would be a source of frustration, it may be one on which the



appropriate committee wants to sit down with the Department of Finance to review in more detail, and to have a bit more of a discussion around the background and why this is there, and some of the policy rational that restricts the payment of those bonuses. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Minister. As the deputy chair of the relevant committee, I will take that into consideration. Member for Yellowknife North.

**MR. JOHNSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I recognize that, when we want to attract good talent, we have to pay bonuses. My concern is that there is no transparency in how much those are. They're not even budgeted for. I would like a commitment from the Department of Finance that we will publicly disclose what we paid last year for bonuses, and we can get some sort of transparency going forward on what that amount is.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Member for Yellowknife North. Minister of Finance.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I would certainly commit to improving the transparency of the process, the transparency of the decisions made around bonuses. As to exactly the payment of the bonuses, I'm going to take that one away under advisement. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MR. JOHNSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'd like to switch here to the Affirmative Action Policy. Does the department have any plans to update the Affirmative Action Policy?

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Member for Yellowknife North. Minister of Finance.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Madam Chair. That policy, specifically, I have very recently committed to offering a technical and confidential briefing to the relevant committee to look at that policy in greater depth and to look at some of the reviews that have been done of that policy, and to determine the best course forward in lockstep with all Members of the House or with Members of that committee. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MR. JOHNSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. One of my issues is we keep getting commitments to have technical briefings with confidential committees, and the whole point of sitting in this House is to be more transparent. I believe the Affirmative Action

Policy has turned into the sacred cow that we're all afraid to touch due to the fact that there's a potential Charter challenge for people who reside in the Northwest Territories to have preferred status. That is not Indigenous people, that is indigenous to the North; Indigenous, not Aboriginal. It is the fear of that Charter challenge that has prevented us from ever updating our Affirmative Action Policy, which is not working. I would like a commitment from the Minister of Finance that they are going to take the steps that no other Minister has wanted to do, and updated the Affirmative Action Policy.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Member for Yellowknife North. Minister of Finance.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Madam Chair, I am not going to commit to taking steps to update something until I know whether it needs to be updated, or perhaps if there are other tools that will actually accomplish the goal at hand. Madam Chair, in my view, the goal at hand is to have a representative workforce and to improve the representation of the workforce. My commitment is to make sure that we look for the best possible way to achieve that goal. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Minister. Anything further on Finance, human resources? Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

**MR. NORN:** Mahsi cho, Madam Chair. I disagree with some of the Minister's comments. When I looked at this, I still get some complaints from my constituents about this policy. I said before, if you look at any government department across the country, they try to make it so that their working population is the reflection of the population it serves. Not so, the way it is here right now. That still upsets me. I think we could still make some changes. I think there are some real changes we can make here, I believe, if we take the commitment from a legal standpoint, because I heard there might be a Charter challenge; let's get through that. I do have one main question here. I know that a large part of our Affirmative Action Policy is the aspect of self-reporting, where new employees or employees have to declare what status they are. My question is: how is the Minister going to review this and see if the reporting is accurate as they say it is, for lack of a better word, Madam Chair?

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh. Minister of Finance.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I acknowledge and accept the Member's frustration that the workforce in the GNWT continues to not be as representative as we would all like it to be. I expect that is going to be something that I am tasked to accomplish in the

next few years, to at least try to make some movement on that dial and to improve the percentages and the numbers to be more truly reflective of the population that we serve.

Madam Chair, the tools with which we will do that, and the way that we will accomplish that, simply is not something that I am prepared to speak to on the fly in this context. It is something that is going to occupy, I have no doubt, a large part of the time that I spend in the Department of Finance working with the Department in Finance, since human resources is a significant portion of what they do.

Again, I am certainly going to commit to the fact that I expect to have to spend time on that, to develop the proper system, to ensure that we have the right tools, whether it's in the Affirmative Action Policy or otherwise, and whether that requires re-examining the self-reporting or if there's some other way that we can achieve the goal of truly representing who people are in our work force. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Minister of Finance. Member for Tu Nedhe-Willideh.

**MR. NORN:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Just a quick comment, I guess, about this policy, too, as well, like, the self-reporting aspect. My biggest fear is, from what I have seen, I believe that there is a significant portion of our government workforce who are not reporting properly, and I feel that a lot of people are falling through the cracks who should be getting jobs and aren't. That's where I was going with this. That's all I have to say on this. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Member for Tu Nedhe-Willideh. Next on my list, the Member for Deh Cho.

**MR. BONNETROUGE:** Mahsi, Madam Chair. I realize there are some protections in place for GNWT employees. The 2019-2020 business plan indicated that labour relations would be working on improving the implementation of the Harassment Free and Respectful Workplace Policy in regard to adding capacity for mediation or alternative dispute resolution mechanisms and supporting training. Does the Minister know what the status is of this work? Masi.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Member for Deh Cho. Minister of Finance.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I know there have been some improvements in terms of increasing the capacity to undertake that work. I would like to get back to the Member with a more specific answer around whether or not there is anything left to do and, perhaps, be able to provide more detail with respect to what may be happening in different regions. That

is not something that I have in front of me. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Minister. Member for Deh Cho.

**MR. BONNETROUGE:** Mahsi. If she can include with that how many investigations were undertaken in 2018-2019 and how does this compare with previous years, if she could include that with that report. Moving on to the staffing appeals process, the Public Service Annual Report did not report any number of appeals. The 2018-2019 annual report indicates five out of 71 appeals were upheld. The department is asserting that the low number of staffing appeals upheld is a reflection that the department is doing a good job administering its staffing process. The question, I guess, is: what percentage of employees who apply for GNWT jobs are eligible to file an appeal? Mahsi.

Oh, you asked that already? Seeing that the question may have been asked already, my mistake; I don't know if he asked the next one. What information is an unsuccessful candidate who is eligible to appeal provided to enable them to form the grounds for an appeal?

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Member for Deh Cho. Minister of Finance.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I don't have the annual human resources report in front of me. Specific numbers are something that, I said earlier and I'll say it again, I'll certainly get the specific numbers of the total percent that were eligible to file appeals and some breakdowns in terms of what I may be able to provide additionally about the outcomes on appeals. I'm a bit challenged to describe the specifics of any appeal, because, obviously, the specifics of what makes for an appeal are the specifics of each appeal, but we may be able to put an aggregate together to describe, perhaps, the top few reasons why appeals are brought and then, perhaps, the top few reasons of why appeals are successful. That might help clarify what kinds of appeals are being brought and which ones are successful, so that there is some clarity around that. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Minister. Member for Deh Cho.

**MR. BONNETROUGE:** Maybe just a final comment on that. Internally, within the GNWT, because I was there myself, we apply to jobs that are internal to a department. When we are unsuccessful, we are not notified of anything. We're not given any notification whatsoever of why we were denied the positions and stuff like that. I think we need to improve in that

department, anyways. I just wanted to make that comment. Mahsi.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Member for Deh Cho. Are there any further comments on the Department of Finance human resources? Member for Hay River South.

**MR. ROCKY SIMPSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I had a concern from a constituent last week, and it had to do with internal job postings versus advertised. The person was outside the department and applied, but the job was actually, I guess, filled internally. I am wondering how many of the positions that become available are filled internally by the departments. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Member for Hay River South. Minister of Finance.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I will be able to get that number and provide it to the Member. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Minister. Member for Hay River South.

**MR. ROCKY SIMPSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. The next one is affirmative action. That's a tough one for me, because I guess I'm always concerned about changing things that have been in place for a while. We talk about things being grandfathered in, because if you change something, it does open up a can of worms. That one, we have to give some thought to. In terms of P1 hires, are there any stats on the number of positions that have been filled that have both P1s and non-P1s applying for it, and what the percentage of successful P1s were, and how many of those P1s who were unsuccessful challenged or appealed? Two parts. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Member for Hay River South. Minister of Finance.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Madam Chair, I am going to apologize in advance. I think I was busy getting part number one settled and may not have entirely caught number two, but let me do my best. New hires that are P1: the percent total is 24.1 percent in 2019, April 1 to April 31, 2019, so not a full year. That's 24.1 percent. The second part is gone. I apologize, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Minister of Finance. Member for Hay River South.

**MR. ROCKY SIMPSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. If there was 24 percent that were successful, of the remaining percentage, which should be 76 percent, how many P1s actually applied in that 76 percent, and how many, if they were unsuccessful, appealed those hires? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Member for Hay River South. Minister of Finance.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I don't have my numbers broken down that way, but I'm confident that we can provide that information. I'll do so. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Minister. Member for Hay River South.

**MR. ROCKY SIMPSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. The next point is, I guess, on bonuses. I can see the value in paying bonuses, but at the same time, I see the value in housing people on the street, as well. It's kind of a hard position for us to be put in. I'm just wondering if the department has talked to the employees receiving bonuses, and I'd like to know how important it is for those employees to receive those bonuses? Would it mean that, if they didn't receive it, they would be gone the next day? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Member for Hay River South. Minister of Finance.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Madam Chair, to my knowledge, that kind of interview has not been conducted. Again, I have heard this issue raised now by Members on more than one occasion, so it is clear that we will have to provide, and as I've said, I will commit to providing some more transparency about the process, the considerations that go into the payment of bonuses, and how it's done. Again, I certainly can assure the Members, at least for this point, that it's not done by way of taking funds out from other programs. It's meant to be funded internally, and there are caps on the total amount that is able to be spent on any one senior-level, and it is low. It's certainly not the Ministers. I will provide that transparency, Madam Chair, and see if I can't help clarify. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Minister. Member for Hay River South.

**MR. ROCKY SIMPSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I just want to go back to the P1s again. Thinking about that, say you've got two people, you've got a P1, and the other person is not. It comes down, and the P1, if they have the minimum requirements for the position, will they be hired? Is that what we can expect, or is there something else in there that would stop that from happening? Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Member for Hay River South. Minister of Finance.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes, if a P1 has applied on a position, meets the requirements, and the passing

grade for the various positions are set in conjunction and collaboration between human resources and departments, and if a P1 passes whatever the passing grade is, taking into account all of the qualifications, then the P1 gets the position, even if a non-P1 has a higher grade. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Minister. Member for Hay River South.

**MR. ROCKY SIMPSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. What is the hiring process? What is involved in it? I understand that there may have been some changes, where there are some tests that are administered, whether it be, I don't know, writing essays, I'm not sure? How does that happen? I guess I've never had a government job, so I don't know. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Member for Hay River South. Minister of Finance.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I've also never had a government job until now, and my process was a bit unique. Perhaps this a conversation I can have with the Member not in this forum. I don't have hiring information in front of me; I only have the budgeting main estimates in front of me. It will depend on each job. Technical jobs will have very different hiring processes than a less technical job; there may well be exams for certain technical requirements, may well be essays, language testing, et cetera. So, it will vary quite a bit. I expect there may be some specific contests that the Member is most concerned about, and so it would make the most sense to me to have that conversation directly to ensure that I'm answering that question on whatever most relevant job it is that he's concerned with. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Minister. Member for Hay River South.

**MR. ROCKY SIMPSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Just a comment now, and that's with respect to the P1. I think it's very important that, when we look at hiring P1s, you know, there's a reason why you have that in place. I had told one of my colleagues in the last two days, if you're an Indigenous or an Aboriginal person, a lot of times what happens is, even if you've got a lot of education and a lot of experience, it's overlooked. They'll say, well, we can't hire that person just because they're Aboriginal. Sometimes they don't actually look at what you have for qualifications, and I think it's important that we do that, and that we direct the hiring people to do that as well. Just a comment, thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Member for Hay River South. Minister of Finance, do you want to respond?

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Madam Chair, challenges have been expressed. The hiring process that we have is meant to be one that is objective, that includes opportunities for objectivity in terms evaluating qualifications. The race to ensure that objectivity can make the process seem arduous, so I understand that there are some frustrations. I'm alive to it. I appreciate getting the comments from the Member. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Minister. Further questions on the human resources activity in the Department of Finance? Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes.

**MS. SEMMLER:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm just looking, related to the budget here, under management and recruitment services, there is the strategic human resources. The main estimates this year, compared to the main estimates last year, are very, very similar. There's not much change in there. We talk a lot about investing into getting more staff. I know that those things may come later, with our priorities, but one of the things that I want to know is, in the strategic human resource section, when you break down that budget, it talks about the 20/20: A Brilliant North, NWT Public Service Strategic Plan. We have the Affirmative Action Plan, we've got the 20/20: A Brilliant North, and that one was done in 2009. It's a 10-year plan about fixing the foundation and using the Affirmative Action Policy.

My question is: with the budget that we have here, and knowing that this action plan is over, and we haven't brought up any of our stats, and looking if we look back at our history of bringing up Indigenous managers, I think some of the areas in the different departments were falling behind. I'm just going to ask the Minister: if that strategic human resource, which provides a lot of the support to new managers, or providing support to training on the job to new managers, getting Indigenous people to move along in the workforce, if that's effective? Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes. Minister of Finance.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Madam Chair. The Member is quite correct. There is not a large forced growth estimate in terms of the resources that are in strategic human resources, which doesn't speak to the work that's ongoing in that department to ensure that we are achieving the goals of a representative workforce. Between April 1<sup>st</sup> and December 31<sup>st</sup>, for example, 357 courses

were being delivered online and in-person, so there is a lot of effort going on there. There's a long list of different programs that are administered at the GNWT.

I do know, Madam Chair, that, if you compare the actuals, some of the programs aren't being utilized with as much uptake as is available. They have more capacity to take more people in and to provide, in fact, more services than what are being availed of. That is one opportunity. I do recognize that exists, that if we have these programs, that we have to make sure they are being adequately utilized, whether that's a communications need or whether it's making sure that the eligibility for getting into those programs is properly attuned. I remain hopeful that with that greater uptake, with being conscious of the uptake of the programs, and with continuing to develop the training programs that are available, that we will be moving forward in a positive direction. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Minister. Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes.

**MS. SEMMLER:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Would you be able to elaborate on some of the reasons why, and I know I'll probably hear it, because we are bad communicators, but can the Minister explain why the uptake of these programs are not being utilized? Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes. Minister.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Madam Chair, I think all I can say to the Member at this point is that that question has already been asked, and I will commit to get back when we have a more fulsome response. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Minister. Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes.

**MS. SEMMLER:** Just one last question. The only reason that I am highlighting this is because it was quoted in the strategic human resource line item that falls in this report. I'm just wondering if there is a review of that report that came about, because it is past the 10 years, and it was a 10-year action plan. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes. Minister of Finance.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Not that I am aware of. I can certainly commit to finding out, and depending on the answer to that, of course, it may lead me to more questions in due course. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Minister. Are there any further questions on human resources key activity in the Department of Finance? Seeing none, I am going to call the page. Finance, human resources, operations expenditure summary, 2020-2021 Main Estimates, program detail, \$21,840,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, committee. The next key activity is Information Systems Shared Services, beginning on page 144. Are there questions on this key activity? Questions on key activity Information Systems Shared Services, starting on page 144. Member for Yellowknife North.

**MR. JOHNSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. One of my issues in going through these main estimates is that there is essentially a lack of detail in all of them, and I don't want to ask the department and the Minister to break down every single item. One of the issues that I have found previously is that contract services can include everything from photocopiers to some payment of some consultant. Can I get a breakdown of what the \$2,600,000 in Information Systems Shared Services contract services is?

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Member for Yellowknife North. Minister of Finance.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Madam Chair, thank you, and I certainly can commit to providing that to the Member. Yes, Madam Chair, I am going to have to commit to providing it to the Member. I have some information in front of me, and frankly, it involves acronyms that I think I would rather just make that commitment.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you for that commitment, Minister of Finance. Member for Yellowknife North.

**MR. JOHNSON:** No more questions, Madam Chair. I will take that as a commitment. I believe that I will have questions on that after being provided the breakdown.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you. Are there any further questions on Information Systems Shared Services? Member for Frame Lake.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Madam Chair. The activity description includes the words CRTC a couple of times, or the acronym. What do we actually do with regard to the CRTC, Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission? Thanks, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. Minister of Finance.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Madam Chair. On this occasion, I have the benefit of Mr. Kalgutkar here, who does support some of that work, so I am going to have him answer that question.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Minister. Deputy Minister Kalgutkar.

**MR. KALGUTKAR:** Thank you, Madam Chair. What this division does when there is a CRTC hearing in the Northwest Territories, or even elsewhere in Canada, that could impact the level of service in the territory, we do participate as an intervener in those hearings. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Mr. Kalgutkar. Member for Frame Lake.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Madam Chair. I sat on City Council, and City Council would spend money on this, too. What kinds of things are we actually advocating there, at the CRTC? We seem to pay the highest phone and internet rates in the world in the Northwest Territories, and I am just wondering what kind of things we actually are advocating for there. Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Madam Chair, thank you. I can certainly, on one hand, assure the Member that one of the things that we are doing is advocating to improve funding to the partners that would be delivering on last mile connectivity, and if I might just then see if there's anything further that the deputy minister wishes to add in addition to that?

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Minister. I would call on the deputy minister and ask him if he could speak up, please.

**MR. KALGUTKAR:** Thank you, Madam Chair. One of the things that we do want to protect as, part of the CRTC hearings, many of the large telecommunications providers in the South provide funds into a fund that allows the territorial service providers to draw on to improve their capital, and that allows our telecommunication infrastructure to stay fairly current and also helps us reducing the rates, because without that support for that funding, then, obviously, we don't have the client base to support that capital on its own. The residents would see a significant increase in their telecommunication rates if they didn't have that support from that fund. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Deputy Minister. Member for Frame Lake.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Madam Chair. I am not going to go on for too much longer. I am just trying to figure out how effective our efforts have been. I pay \$150 a month for internet access, which is totally ridiculous, and we haven't connected, as the Minister says, the last mile. We have the Mackenzie Valley fibre link that runs by a whole bunch of communities that don't have access to even medium-speed Internet, let alone high-speed Internet. What else are we doing to try to make sure that we actually allow our citizens to take full advantage of the Mackenzie Valley fibre link? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Madam Chair, the question is to how successful the Department of Finance is, and the GNWT more generally, in improving telecommunications. To properly answer that is a much longer answer than what, I think, the committee is looking for in the review of the mains. It is one of the commitments in the mandate to improve telecommunications connectivity. It is one that we will, therefore, have to be reporting back to this House on in terms of developing a plan to show that we are going to improve our connectivity. That will involve looking at a baseline of where we are now in order to measure where we get to in the future. I know there is work under way. The Department of Finance is already engaged on this issue, and I am hopeful that we will see progress so that we can come back and say that we have shown a measure of success. It's just a much longer and more complicated answer than what I can provide, other than to say that, in terms of the main estimates, we are moving forward, and we are prepared to start taking that action with the budget that is in front of the Members here today. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Madam Chair. Can the Minister give us a clear commitment that she will bring that plan to the appropriate standing committee? It's something that I have been asking for about four years now. Thanks, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. Minister of Finance.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** We can make that commitment, Madam Chair. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Minister. Are there any further questions on Information Systems Shared Services? Seeing no further questions, Finance, Information Systems Shared

Services, 2020-2021 Main Estimates, program detail, \$22,932,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, committee. The next activity is the Management Board Secretariat, beginning on page 147. Do committee members have questions on the Management Board Secretariat? Member for Frame Lake.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Madam Chair. I guess I will start on one of my favourite topics, and that's the lack of transparency with regard to the carbon tax. Here, on page 148, we have carbon tax offset for 2021 at \$22,988,000. On the next page, it's a different figure. It's out by maybe \$12,000 or something. Should those be the same? Thanks, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. Minister of Finance.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I was just confirming that the difference between the two that is the amount that is used for administration of the tax, so there is a portion that goes towards administration and not only to the offset. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Madam Chair. Maybe the main estimates are not the greatest place to actually lay out what money is collected and what it is actually used for, but where would I find in the budget what amount is actually rebated and what amount we actually retain? Is that anywhere here in the Department of Finance? Did I miss it somewhere? Thanks, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. Minister of Finance.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I think I have made a previous commitment in another forum to do a better job of reporting on that and to ensure that those reports are made in a timely fashion. Indeed, I also think that I may have made a commitment, at one point or another, to take the draft document before preparing the report to committee so that they can have some input on what that report is going to look like. I expect that commitment is going to be fulfilled very soon so that reporting can be done in a way that is transparent and is as useable and functional as possible. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Madam Chair. Just generally in here, though, I see that the carbon tax offset is about \$23 million, and some of it is, I guess, used for administration, or some portion of what is collected is used for administration. I guess, I look over at the revenue page, and maybe I'm not supposed to be looking over on page 134. I see it looks like we raise about \$28.739 million of carbon tax and that we give back about \$22.98 million in offsets. How much do we actually retain? How much are we actually going to retain this year, and what is it going to be used for? Thanks, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. Minister of Finance.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Madam Chair, thank you. I believe that there is approximately \$5.8 million in carbon tax revenue available that is to be directed towards investments that will reduce greenhouse gas emissions. However, at this point, the process of how those are being allocated is still part of the business planning process, so it's not allocated within the main estimates that are in front of committee right now. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Madam Chair. Thanks to the Minister for that. Does that money actually technically go into the consolidated revenue fund, or is it actually set up as a separate fund or revolving fund? I think I know the answer, but I just want to get this on the public record. Thanks, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. Minister of Finance.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It is part of the consolidated revenue fund. Thank you.

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Madam Chair. Yes, so this is part of the problem. I tried to get this fixed in the last Assembly, and it's not. This is basically money that is at the complete discretion of Cabinet and doesn't even have to be used for energy investments. It can be used for whatever Cabinet wants to use it for, I guess, as approved by this Assembly. Do we actually have any rules yet set out for how the grants are going to be accessed? I know I asked the Minister in the House back in December about this issue. Are those rules or guidelines in place yet for accessing the grant money that is available? Thanks, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. Minister of Finance.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes, I am alive that the Member has previously spoken about this topic, and I believe that I have previously made commitments to ensure that the draft materials for seeking those grants and for making application for those grants would be provided to committee for input before being finalized. I believe I will be completing that commitment in the very near future. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Madam Chair. I really look forward to getting that and some kind of improved reporting around the monies that we collect under the carbon tax, what it's used for, and then, how effective, if any of it is being reinvested, it is in terms of reductions in greenhouse gas emissions. I think that's what we owe to the public, and whether there is any sort of resulting change in fuel consumption behaviour patterns and so on, and, as a result of that, whether there are any greenhouse gas reductions. That is the kind of information that I think we owe to our public to report on.

There are some questions that I have on the Heritage Fund, Madam Chair, but I am going to leave that until we hit the schedule further down into the department. I think that is all I have for now. Thanks, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. Are there any other comments on the Management Board Secretariat? Member for Kam Lake.

**MS. CLEVELAND:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Let me know if I'm in the wrong section here, but I do notice that there is some mention of some P3s on here. We have the Mackenzie Valley fibre link on here. I am just wondering what the process is for us entering into any further P3 agreements. Is it solely at the discretion of the Minister? Is it a Cabinet decision? Does that decision ever come through this side of the House? Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Member for Kam Lake. Minister of Finance.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Madam Chair, there is a detailed policy, and it is a complex process, one that I have been familiarizing myself with, but in the interest of everyone's time, I will ask the deputy minister to provide some further detail. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Minister. Deputy Minister.

**MR. KALGUTKAR:** Thank you, Madam Chair. In addition to the policy, there is a P3 framework that guides the development of any P3 project that is being considered by the Assembly. The framework starts with the development of a business case to ensure that the proposed project qualifies or is appropriate under a P3 approach, and that triggers a fairly extensive consultation process with standing committee. At each major decision point, the Department of Finance is required to check in with standing committee to make sure that they are still supporting to proceed with the project. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Deputy Minister. Member for Kam Lake.

**MS. CLEVELAND:** Thank you, Madam Chair. As part of that process, does committee have the ability to discuss the quantity of northern contractors used in the P3? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Member for Kam Lake. Minister of Finance.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Madam Chair, yes. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Minister. Member for Kam Lake.

**MS. CLEVELAND:** Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you, Minister. My next question is in regard to the NWT Heritage Fund here. Within the act itself, it doesn't stipulate how much Cabinet will contribute to the Heritage Fund on an annual basis. Will this Cabinet commit to contributing 25 percent of the net fiscal benefit annually to the Heritage Fund for the length of this Assembly? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Member for Kam Lake. Minister of Finance.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Madam Chair, we will continue to comply with the agreement that established the Heritage Fund and that establishes the contribution levels. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you for that. Are there any further questions on the Management Board Secretariat? Member for Hay River South.

**MR. ROCKY SIMPSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. With respect to, I guess, the benefit transfer to Aboriginal parties, what parties are receiving that benefit? Which Aboriginal groups? All of them, or some of them? Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Member for Hay River South. Minister of Finance.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Madam Chair, it is Indigenous governments who are a party to the devolution agreement. Thank you, Madam Chair.



**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Minister of Finance. Member for Hay River South.

**MR. ROCKY SIMPSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. So the parties that are not signatories, are there monies set aside for those parties in anticipation that they will sign on? Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Member for Hay River South. Minister of Finance.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Madam Chair, I think perhaps Madam Premier could answer this from Intergovernmental Affairs.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Minister. Madam Premier.

**HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE:** Thank you, Madam Chair. We do save the royalties received for a period of one year, because we are still, and any Indigenous government that would like to sign on to devolution is welcome to do that, we're one party of it. We don't see ourselves as the controller. I see myself as one party. Then, after a year, we bring it back to the Intergovernmental Council and we let all Indigenous governments around the table decide what is going to be done with that funding. So, again, it is specific money delegated for Indigenous governments that sign on to devolution, and we're still open to having as many as possible join us. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Madam Premier. Member for Hay River South.

**MR. ROCKY SIMPSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. So who makes up the Intergovernmental Council? Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Member for Hay River South. Madam Premier.

**HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Before devolution went on, we had approached all of the Indigenous governments; before my time, so this is my understanding. We approached all of the Indigenous governments, gave them an offer to sign on. Those who signed on to devolution and agreed to be part of it share in the royalties that are obtained from devolution. Those who chose not to sign on do not get the devolution shares, but they might also get portions within their own self-government agreements or land claims, or just their own assets; but the devolution is specifically for those who signed on to devolution, and it is still open. Devolution is not finished; we're still in the process, so there are still opportunities for Indigenous governments to sign on. If anyone is hearing, that would be my biggest plea: sign on; be part of us. We want to share. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Madam Premier. Member for Hay River South.

**MR. ROCKY SIMPSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Would the Minister provide some insight as to why an Aboriginal group would not sign on to the devolution agreement? Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Member for Hay River South. I'm going to put this question out, but I think that we're straying away from the mains. So, one more round of this; thank you. Madam Premier.

**HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE:** Thank you, Madam Chair. There are a few different reasons, but the biggest reason that I understand is that some people, to this day still, believe that the GNWT has no place in any negotiations, and so therefore they refuse to sign on because they did not want the Government of the Northwest Territories to have any say in land and water issues. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Madam Premier. Do you have any further questions for the Minister of Finance, Member for Hay River South?

**MR. ROCKY SIMPSON:** No, that's all. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you. Any further questions for the Minister of Finance on the Management Board Secretariat? Seeing none, I will call this page. Finance, Management Board Secretariat, operations expenditure summary, 2020-2021 Main Estimates, program details, \$87,485,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, committee. The next activity is Office of the Comptroller General, beginning on page 151. Are there Members who have questions on the Office of the Comptroller General? Member for Yellowknife North.

**MR. JOHNSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. My question is to the just over \$1 million we spend on the Internal Audit Bureau, something that I think sounds great. Are any of the audits conducted by the Internal Audit Bureau public?

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Member for Yellowknife North. Minister of Finance.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Madam Chair, they are not. Thank you.

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

**MR. JOHNSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I believe I was well aware of that when I asked that question. Would the Minister be willing to share the reports or the work that the Internal Audit Bureau does with the appropriate standing committee?

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Member for Yellowknife North. Minister of Finance.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Madam Chair, I do recognize I think I've made a few commitments to various technical briefings today and, in the interests of making sure that that's done effectively, whether it's in conjunction with one of the others or whether it's on its own, we would certainly come back and better describe and explain the work of the Internal Audit Bureau, including appropriate examples of its work. I guess I'm hesitant to say that we would bring every audit done, but maybe I will work with the Member directly in advance of that briefing to ensure that what we bring forward provides enough information about the working of this division. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MR. JOHNSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I think it's clear I'm not going to get a commitment out of you, but once again I find myself, here I am, passing \$1 million to an Internal Audit Bureau, and I have no idea what they do. I have no ability to ever see any reports that they produce. I have no ability to know if they're good work, and I guess that troubles me. I think that it's a larger issue of, simply, if we are auditing ourselves, why is that not public information? I'll leave that as a comment, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Member for Yellowknife North. Are there further questions on the Office of the Comptroller General? Seeing nothing further, I'm going to call the page. Finance, Office of the Comptroller General, operations expenditure summary, 2020-2021 Main Estimates, program detail, \$73,169,000. Does the committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, committee. Committee, we have some information items following these areas. I'm on page 154; no, sorry. I'll go to page 155, Northwest Territories Heritage Fund. Are there questions on this information item? Member for Frame Lake.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Madam Chair. Maybe I can start with there is a mandated 10-year review required of the Heritage Fund Act that is going to take place during the life of this Assembly. Can the Minister tell us what her department is doing to get ready for that review? Thanks, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. Minister of Finance.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I apologize for the delay. At this point, significant planning has not begun for that review, but the good news with that is it gives an opportunity for the 19<sup>th</sup> Assembly to be involved in the planning of the review, and we will be engaging with the committee as we do begin those preparations. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Minister of Finance. Member for Frame Lake.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Madam Chair. It came to light in the last Assembly that the money in the Heritage Fund was actually starting to lose value because of the very, very conservative investment policies that were requirements under the act and the regulations at the time. It was actually starting to lose money against inflation and had to be topped up, I think, if I remember correctly. Can the Minister tell us what's happened since? Is this still losing money against inflation? Thanks, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. Minister of Finance.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Madam Chair. The fund has now become professionally managed. That has improved the returns that are being received on the fund. The projection on the rate of the percent of the fund that is now actually interest, as opposed to the principal, it's projected to be close to 5 percent in the course of this fiscal year. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Minister of Finance. Member of Frame Lake.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Madam Chair. So, we've contracted out the management of the Heritage Fund. What kind of management fees are involved in management of our Heritage Fund now? Thanks, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. Minister of Finance.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Madam Chair, I don't have that specific detail in front of me, but I know there is an annual report that is tabled, and I expect that that information will be available at that time. Thank you.

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Madam Chair. Is the Minister talking about the public accounts, or is there a separate report that's tabled in the House

with regard to the Heritage Fund on an annual basis? Thanks, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. Minister of Finance.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I may have just created an extra piece of work for the Department of Finance. It was part of the public accounts, but it certainly could be tabled on its own, or as part of the public accounts. I suppose that if there is a preference of the committee, we'd be open to hearing back from them. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Minister of Finance. Member for Frame Lake.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Madam Chair. I'm not sure it really makes much difference, but I guess I do think that we owe it to the public to be able to tell them, and disclose publicly, how much the management fees are that we are paying to a contracted party to manage our Heritage Fund. Can I get a commitment out of the Minister to provide that information publicly? Thanks, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. Minister of Finance.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Madam Chair, that's fine. I have no problem making that commitment. On the theme of there being some fees that are being paid for the management of the fund, I point out again that the fund is actually doing better as a result of that. So, it is my hope that that's going to be overall, that we will see a positive return on our investment for having sought those fees. Obviously, if that's not turning out to be the case, since that change is fairly new, then further change can be looked at. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Madam Chair. Moving forward, has the department put its mind to whether it's now time to have some kind of direct public oversight, or involvement in the management, of the Heritage Fund? At the end of this upcoming year it's going to be almost \$35 million. This was a criticism at the time the legislation came forward 10 years ago, and why I know is because I was one of the ones criticizing it at the time, the need for some kind of public engagement, or public involvement, in the management of the funds in account it with appropriate accountabilities, and that the revenue stream into it should be defined in legislation, not by convention, or agreement, or, the, pardon me, whim of the Finance Minister of the day. Are those things that are the radar for the department? Thanks, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. Minister of Finance.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Those are the kinds of questions I would think would be appropriate for the 10-year review. Given that that process will be undertaken within the life of this Assembly, I can at the very least, commit to ensuring that those kinds of questions are back as part of the process with the committee. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Minister. Are there any further question on the information item Northwest Territories Heritage Fund? Seeing none, page 156. Liquor and Cannabis Revolving Fund (information item). Any questions? Member for Yellowknife North.

**MR. JOHNSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Looking at the 2019 Main Estimates, there was \$65 million for the liquor and cannabis sales. I see that the actuals were \$54 million in 2018-2019. Now we are estimating \$54 million. Is that due to us simply selling less cannabis than we expected, or what is the cause for that?

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Member for Yellowknife North. Minister of Finance.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Madam Chair. The question I think I'm answering is: why the rates are low in terms of our profits? There have been reduced sales across Canada, in many jurisdictions, so, in that regard we would not be alone. I'm sorry, Madam Chair, if I did not fully answer the Member's question.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Minister of Finance. Member for Yellowknife North.

**MR. JOHNSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes, I guess I'm looking for a breakdown when I look at the Main Estimates 2019-2020, and then they were revised to be lower, and what the cause in that \$11 million drop is, and if that was due largely to lack of cannabis sales.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Member for Yellowknife North. Minister of Finance.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Madam Chair. That is correct, and it's a challenge that's being faced by other jurisdictions, as well. Which is not to say that a solution shouldn't be found, just that we're certainly not alone with the challenge. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Minister. Anything further? Next on my list I have the Member for Kam Lake.

**MS. CLEVELAND:** Thank you, Madam Chair. My questions are along the same lines as my colleague from Yellowknife North. Has the Minister of Finance entered into any kind of discussion with the Government of Canada in regard to the cost of cannabis? One of the reasons that we legalized cannabis was to provide for greater safety for our residents, in order to make sure that we were supplying them with a safe product; but, when the product is priced much higher than the black market, it doesn't accomplish that goal. So, are we having conversations about the cost of legal cannabis versus the cost of black market cannabis? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Member for Kam Lake. Minister of Finance.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Madam Chair. That is a topic of conversation that came up at the Ministers' meeting for Ministers of Finance, so again, as I alluded to in my first answer, some of these challenges are being faced by other jurisdictions, other provinces and territories. So, to that end, it is a conversation that's being had. One of the examples for it being for the regulated cannabis, some of the regulations require packaging and labelling that is, no doubt, of a stricter standard than what the black market would be. Again, there are some challenges being faced, but there are some jurisdictions that are finding their revenues are closer to what was projected. There is work to be done, and there is work that can be done. It will be something that I will have to continue to be engaged with at the federal, provincial, and territorial level. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Minister of Finance. Member for Kam Lake.

**MS. CLEVELAND:** Thank you, Madam Chair. My next question is in regard to private retailers. About a year ago, we heard conversations from the GNWT in regard to opening the market up for private retailers within the Northwest Territories. I'm wondering where we are within that conversation and how that will affect our cannabis sales that are reflected here in the main estimates. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Member for Kam Lake. Minister of Finance.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Madam Chair. The RFP process was due to come out early this calendar year, and it is behind schedule. I'm conscious that it's behind schedule, and the department is conscious that it's behind schedule. So, when is it due to come out exactly? At this point, I'm more hesitant to put a deadline on it, other than to say that, when we're already behind schedule, we don't want to be more behind

schedule. It's coming. It will be out in due course. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Minister of Finance. Member for Kam Lake.

**MS. CLEVELAND:** Sorry, just so that I'm clear: there is a request for proposal process? It's not a request for interest process? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Member for Kam Lake. Minister of Finance.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Madam Chair, thank you. There was actually a request for qualifications process that was under way earlier in the 2019 year. That process is complete. The next stage was for an actual request for proposals for the prospective retailers, and it's that second stage that has been delayed that was supposed to be out this January. That has been delayed somewhat. We are at stage 2. There have already been some anticipated retailers who met the qualifications, and they're now being invited back to bid on the next stage as soon as that is available. As I have said, again, I am alive to the fact that that has been promised now for some time. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Minister of Finance. Member for Kam Lake.

**MS. CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Just as a comment, that process might not be reflected as accurately as possible within the Liquor and Cannabis Commission's website, so maybe we could look at updating that so that it's clearer to people who are interested in pursuing that business opportunity. I am wondering when the Minister thinks that people will be able to look into opening retail stores for cannabis. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Member for Kam Lake. Minister of Finance.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Perhaps I will say that, within the course of the current session, if the situation hasn't improved, I will make sure that the Member is made aware of it, so that she has time to take me to task for it on the floor. I am hopeful that she won't have to do that. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Minister of Finance. Member for Kam Lake.

**MS. CLEVELAND:** I appreciate that. It's just an opportunity to update people on business opportunities within our communities. No further questions on this one. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Member for Kam Lake. Are there any further questions on

the Liquor and Cannabis Revolving Fund? If not, we will return to page 133, the departmental summary. Are there any questions on the departmental summary? Member for Frame Lake.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Madam Chair. Presumably, we're dealing with all of these pages right now? I just want to get that checked. Thanks, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. Minister of Finance. My multitasking isn't working so well right at the moment. Member for Frame Lake.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Madam Chair. I'm just wondering if I can ask questions now about the revenue summary page and the borrowing plan page? This is the time? Okay, thank you. With regard to the revenue summary page, the Minister said in her opening address on the budget, I guess it was a couple of days ago or whatever, that she was prepared to go out and lead some public consultations around budgets in the future. I just want to get some assurance that that will include opportunities for the public and some ideas for the public to discuss around revenue options. Thanks, Madam Chair. Can I get that confirmed by the Minister? Thanks, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. Minister of Finance.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Yes, Madam Chair. I am happy to confirm that. We will prepare some sort of structure around those options and engage with the committee, and then, ultimately, the intention is to take that into a public forum so that we can have that kind of dialogue about revenue options. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Minister of Finance. Member for Frame Lake.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Madam Chair. I want to commend the Minister. This is a different approach. This is not what we saw in the last Assembly. I want to encourage her to do this, and I think that it is a great improvement. It was what previous Finance Ministers had done in the past. In fact, I think the last revenue options paper is still available on the Department of Finance website. I think it is dated 2016, although I don't really recall if there was much public engagement around that.

Will the efforts by the Minister, though, include some new ideas around raising revenues? I'm going to lay out some, and I would be curious to get her reaction to some of them, but clearly, we need to be able to keep more of our own-source revenues. That may mean renegotiating the territorial formula funding arrangement or reaching some new understanding with the federal

government that we get to keep more, if not all, of our own-source revenues. That's one thing.

Corporate taxes go up and down. Just look at this line item here on 134. Last year was expected to be \$23 million, and it's actually in a deficit of \$12 million. How does this happen? We cannot use corporate taxes as any kind of predictable revenue stream. It's just not the way that we can or should be capturing revenues from non-renewable resource development. Companies, and rightfully so, are going to file their corporate taxes in whatever place they can get the lowest tax rate, and that's usually not going to be the Northwest Territories.

Will the options paper also look at the idea of a capital tax or a resource tax? I just want to get a reaction to a few of those things that I have said, Madam Chair, from the Minister. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. I would ask you to focus specifically on the questions if possible, Finance Minister, please.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Madam Chair, thank you. I have been writing down the list, as I'm sure others are, in listening to what is being said. As far as what we are going to put in there, the point of bringing this up and creating a plan for examining revenues, and taking it to committee, and then taking it out to the public, is to ensure that we examine all of the options and to try to be creative about it, which is something that we committed to in the course of the budget speech. I don't want to limit myself, and I don't intend to limit myself. Perhaps a much longer conversation is going to have to be had to ensure that we are adequately and fulsomely looking at every option.

I would just note, Madam Chair, that, with respect to some of the more volatile areas that are on the current revenue page, including the corporate taxes, I know that sometimes when, for example, we're then looking at available expenditures, we're conscious of that when creating estimates and when creating projections of where revenues will be going. I know there are volatile areas in there, and we're conscious of that when we're then creating plans to go forward, but yes. The short answer is that we will make sure that the list is fulsome, and I am confident that the Member is going to involve himself in that process so that I am alive to the various options. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Minister of Finance. Member for Frame Lake.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Madam Chair. It's all good news. That's great. No, I appreciate the Minister's response. Just one more thing that I want to say on

this. It's not going to be the end of it, but when we are actually raising more money from tobacco and alcohol sales, cannabis sales, than we are from revenues that we get to retain from non-renewable resource development, there's something wrong with this picture, and I have said that in this House before.

Madam Chair, I want to move over to the borrowing plan, if I can. There is a line item in here at the bottom that says "loan guarantees." It's on page 135. Can someone tell me what those loan guarantees are about and who they are actually for? Thanks, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Yes. I would just ask for a pause here, please. Member for Frame Lake, the borrowing plan will be considered separately after this departmental review today. I'd ask you to defer your question. Do you have any more questions on the departmental summary?

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Madam Chair. No, I think I've blown most of my steam on those pages already. Thanks, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. Member for Kam Lake.

**MS. CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. My colleague from Frame Lake had some good traction with his conversation about revenue taxes under the corporate income tax line. I am wondering if the Minister can confirm for me if small-medium businesses fall under the corporate income tax line. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Member for Kam Lake. Minister of Finance.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Madam Chair, yes, they do. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Minister. Member for Kam Lake.

**MS. CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. My concern around that is our corporate income taxes for our large companies in the Northwest Territories are typically a lower percent than they are compared to the rest of Canada, and our taxes for our small and medium businesses are actually higher than they are for the average of the rest of Canada. I am wondering if the Minister of Finance is also willing to talk about our small and medium business income tax percentage as well over the life of this Assembly, and preferably this year? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Member for Kam Lake. Minister of Finance.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Madam Chair, and, Madam Chair, yes, the commitment is to do that, as well. We can look at areas where we are not giving best value to residents, where we are overtaxing, which doesn't mean that we're not also looking to be more creative in areas where there can be new sources of revenue. I think that conversation will go hand in hand. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Minister. Member for Kam Lake.

**MS. CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Also noting the grant from Canada that's our federal transfer payment there on the top of page 134, there was a 7.9 percent increase to our federal transfer payments where our population has remained fairly stable. I'm wondering if the Minister can speak to the percent increase of our federal transfer payments? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you. Member for Kam Lake. Minister of Finance.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** I am going to turn over to the deputy minister, please.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Minister of Finance. Deputy Minister.

**MR. KALGUTKAR:** Thank you, Madam Chair. How the TFF is designed is, if there is a decrease in loan source revenues like we have had in our corporate income tax, the territorial formula financing is fixed, about 70 percent of that increase up in future years. The increase for this year is a reflection of lower corporate income tax rates from previous years. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Deputy Minister. Are there any further questions on the departmental summary? Member for Hay River South.

**MR. ROCKY SIMPSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I just want to talk about the small business tax, as well. I think that rate, I'm not sure what it is, around the 4 percent or something like that, which is higher than, probably, anywhere in Canada. I know, the last Assembly, there was a move to try and eliminate that for a period of time, and it got shot down before it even hit the floor. I am wondering if this Minister is not only willing to look at the rate, but also looking at maybe eliminating it for a period of time to assist small businesses, which would allow them to use those funds to help spur the economy in their areas, in their regions? Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Member for Hay River South. Minister of Finance.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Madam Chair, thank you. I am alive to the fact that our small business tax rate is higher, and indeed one of the highest, at least in Western Canada. I don't disagree. I do want to differentiate that, perhaps, to lumping all corporate taxes into one group. I don't disagree with what the Member is saying, that there are small businesses that might benefit from a reduced rate, even as the conversations going on about other places to find revenue. As I have said already, I think that should be part of the conversation, but how it can provide impetus for small businesses and growth in small businesses, that may be one of the tools that we have in the toolbox. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Minister of Finance. Any further questions? Member for Hay River South.

**MR. ROCKY SIMPSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Just on other potential revenue, I guess what I would like to see the Minister do is to take a look at some of the loans that we have out there, and take a look at what they're for. If they are related to items that, the cost of living in the territories is high, and we've got hydro. We've got power. We've got fuel. We've got all that stuff that's fairly high. There are other costs, as well. What I'd like to see is the department take a look as to why we have loans, what are those loans for, and can we go to the federal government to try and get some dollars to reduce those loans on the basis that it's costly to live in the Northwest Territories; it's costly to operate in the Northwest Territories. I'm not sure if there's anything that can be done there, because that seems to be one of the areas that we could look at for additional revenue. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Member for Hay River South. Minister of Finance.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Madam Chair. As I had alluded to earlier, we've already had a Ministers' meeting for Ministers of all provinces, territories, and the federal government, and we've been following up, and we've continued to have dialogue and continue to have engagement with the federal government about the situation. I am alive to the degree of engagement necessary when you look at the source of the income that's on our page here, and where it comes from, and maintaining a positive relationship with the federal government is going to be important, and to have dialogue about our finances, and our Department of Finance's plan, and our fiscal plan going forward. I can certainly assure the Member that I will have fulsome conversations. As far as exactly what solutions might ultimately come from that, I'm going to need a bit of flexibility at this point to move those conversations forward. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Minister. Seeing nothing further, I'm going to call the page and the department. Department of Finance, 2020-2021 Main Estimates, departmental total, \$283,107. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, committee. We'll now turn to the government borrowing plan, which is the second blue tab in the main estimates. Are there any questions on the government's borrowing plan? Member for Frame Lake.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Madam Chair, and sorry for being out of step. The loan guarantees that are listed at the bottom there under other public agencies, can someone tell me what that is all about? Thanks Madam Chair?

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. Minister of Finance.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I will ask the deputy minister to fill in those details, please. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Minister of Finance. Deputy Minister.

**MR. KALGUTKAR:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I believe those are loan guarantees related to some debentures that were issued by one of the school boards in Yellowknife. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Deputy Minister. Member for Frame Lake.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Madam Chair. Do we normally provide loan guarantees for our education authorities? I'm just trying to figure out how this happens. Thanks, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. Minister of Finance.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Again, I'll let the deputy minister continue, Madam Chair. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Minister. Deputy Minister.

**MR. KALGUTKAR:** Thank you, Madam Chair. My recollection is, no, this was a one-time event, and it's not something that the Department of Finance typically does. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Deputy Minister. Member for Frame Lake.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Madam Chair. I think the Finance Minister in her budget address, and I'm sorry, I don't have that in front of me, said that we

would exceed our federally set borrowing limit, probably next year or this year. Is that what this amount is that's shown here, total government borrowing? Is that this line here that is going to exceed \$1.3 billion? I guess it would be in the next year, that's what the projections are. Thanks, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. Minister of Finance.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Madam Chair. At the moment, projections are for the next two fiscal years; we would be within the borrowing limit, but it's the third year of this life of this government that the current projection is that we would be at risk of exceeding it. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Madam Chair. What kind of contingency or sort of room is there for us, and what happens if we actually exceed the limit? Thanks, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. Minister of Finance.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Certainly, my intention is not to exceed that limit, period. We do have two years between now and when it's even projected. It's not something that is set in stone that we would. In the next few years, either the limit is increased at the behest of the federal government; if it is not and certainly not at the N<sup>th</sup> hour, if it is not, then we have to certainly reconsider the borrowing plan and the fiscal plan that we are in at the point in time. At this point, we certainly have solidly two years within which to make those considerations. I am, at this point, optimistic that that will not be a concern. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Madam Chair. I am not sure I should say if I am less or more optimistic than the Minister, but she's got her hands on the numbers. Have we actually written to or formally requested an increase in the borrowing limit? Thanks, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. Minister of Finance.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I think some of those conversations were perhaps already even under way before the life of this government. I can certainly assure the Member that it is something that I am already

engaging with our federal counterparts on. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Madam Chair. I don't even know what is involved in doing this. Has this Minister actually signed a letter to the federal finance Minister asking for an increase in the borrowing limit? Thanks, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. Minister of Finance.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Madam Chair, yes. I have personally been engaged on this issue with the Department of Finance federally along with a host of other issues. I think I have had telephone conversations, there have been letter exchanges, and we have had an opportunity to meet at the federal, provincial, and territorial finance Ministers' meetings. When I am saying that it is an act of engagement and dialogue, it has been that already, even in four short months. It is a dialogue and an exchange that is really more than just the federal debt limit. It is much more, also, about really looking to the federal government for their flexibility and for their investment in the North. To me, it is a conversation that is much bigger than just: what is the debt limit? It is really about: what are we going to do for the economy in the North, for the fiscal plan in the North? Those conversations absolutely have occurred. When I say I am optimistic, it is because I believe the conversations have been positive and that the relationship-building is under way. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Minister of Finance. Member for Frame Lake.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Madam Chair. Look, I just don't know. How close are the Yukon and Nunavut to their borrowing limits, and are they part of these discussions, as well? Thanks, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. Minister of Finance.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I have looked at their limits, but I don't know how close they are. I don't know what their internal fiscal planning might be. I am not basing our planning on the planning of the two neighbouring territories. Although we remain in contact, certainly, with our territorial neighbours, the North as a whole now has the Arctic Policy Framework to work from. There are some shared goals within that and some shared challenges within that. While we are all working as neighbours, I also am not going to be constrained, necessarily, by what they may or may not be doing with the federal government. Thank you, Madam Chair.



**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Minister. Member for Frame Lake, any further questions on the borrowing plan for the GNWT?

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Madam Chair. Just one more, if I can. When I look at these numbers, I just don't see how it is going to be possible for us to take on any of the three big infrastructure projects that are part of the mandate or the priorities that were identified by the majority of the 19 MLAs. How is it going to be possible to take on even one of those three large infrastructure projects if this remains the same? Thanks, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. Minister of Finance.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I have already had the benefit of investment from the federal government, partnered with the GNWT, to begin the process. The Taltson and the Slave Geologic Province are both at a point where they can begin the process toward environmental assessments. There is already support from our federal government partners to advance those projects. There is a lot of work that can be done in the course of three years to have them to be at a point where they would be then ready to proceed to a construction stage. A further injection of dollars at this point may not be necessary to actually see that advancement in the life of this government, a very significant advancement in the life of this government.

Beyond that, as far as creating, for example, a business plan for the Taltson and creating a partnership, if it is to be a partnership or a P3, again, that is work. That can go on right now. It doesn't necessarily require an injection of money to do that kind of planning. Similarly, developing partnerships with Indigenous governments who may want an equity share, that kind of engagement does not require an injection of money. Undertaking consultation with impacted areas, that kind of a process is definitely part of the GNWT's work already through EIA and through Indigenous Affairs. That, again, may or may not necessarily involve a significant injection of money. A lot of work can be done in the next three years that will significantly impact the advancement of these projects. We will bring them forward and have them at a stage where they would be ready to proceed with business cases, with partnerships. It is my view that we don't necessarily need to see significant increases to our debt load or certainly irresponsible increases to our debt load. That is not the intention, and it is not necessary to get these things moving. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Minister of Finance. Are there any further questions on the government's borrowing plan? Yellowknife North.

**MR. JOHNSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I believe I asked this question before, and perhaps this is the page to get it. I have trouble reading these numbers and making any sense of them. Perhaps you or your deputy minister can just give me an estimate. We are borrowing essentially \$1.2 billion here. I know it is over a number of projects. I know there is short term and long term. How much interest do we pay on borrowing \$1.2 billion?

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Member for Yellowknife North. Minister of Finance.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I think our total debt servicing payments, that includes both interest and principal, is \$33 million. That is maybe not entirely the breakdown that the Member is looking for, but that at least now is giving some collected number. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Minister of Finance. Member for Yellowknife North.

**MR. JOHNSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Okay, I understand. We are paying \$33 million a year. A percentage of that goes to principal, and a percentage of that goes to interest. Perhaps the Minister can commit to breaking down that further. I am just looking for some simple numbers I can repeat so I understand how much it costs us to keep borrowing this amount of money. Is that possible?

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Member for Yellowknife North. Minister of Finance.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes, I certainly will commit to do that. I don't want this to sound like I am suggesting that the Member hasn't read all the materials that I have provided over the last week, but I do believe in the Tuesday budget documents that the financial, the economic outlook, and the fiscal documents do include some breakdown of how our debt is structured. If I am wrong about that, then I will make sure to include it going forward and to make sure that the Member gets exactly what he needs to understand, to be assured that our debt is actually a fiscally responsible one. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Minister of Finance. Member for Yellowknife North.

**MR. JOHNSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate that. I am also always confused about what I know and what is public and whatnot. I was simply looking for something public. My next question is: can I have some explanation of what a debenture is for the NWT Hydro Corporation, specifically what these debts are that have interest rates 6.42 percent, 9 percent, 10 percent? Can

someone explain to me what that is and why would we ever be paying that amount of interest?

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Member for Yellowknife North. Minister of Finance.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Madam Chair, I am going to ask the deputy minister to assist me on this one. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Minister. Deputy Minister.

**MR. KALGUTKAR:** Thank you, Madam Chair. The debenture is just a fancy word for a long-term debt issuance. You could call it is bond. It is typically called a bond, but in this case, it is called a debenture. It is a form of a long-term debt issuance. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Deputy Minister. Member for Yellowknife North.

**MR. JOHNSON:** Thank you. I guess that doesn't answer my question of: we have here interest rate of between 4 and 6.42 percent, and then we even have interest rates between 9 and 10 percent. What is it about debentures, a long-term-held debt, that we're paying 10 percent on? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Member for Yellowknife North. Deputy Minister.

**MR. KALGUTKAR:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'll just use the 9.6 as an example. The 9.6 is made up of several different debentures, varying in different interest rates. The Power Corporation typically issues long-term debt to pay for refurbishment of some of their thermal hydro-generation assets, and to pay for a lot of their capital plan. So that's what these debentures, their long-term debt is associated with. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, Deputy Minister. Are there any further questions about the GNWT's borrowing plan? Seeing nothing further, I will call this page. Borrowing plan for the government reporting entity and establish borrowing limits for the Government of the Northwest Territories, total government borrowing, \$892,574,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, committee. Does the committee agree that the consideration of the Department of Finance is now completed?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** Thank you, committee. Thank you to the Minister and thank you to Mr. Kalgutkar for appearing before us. Sergeant-

at-Arms, please escort the witnesses from the Chamber.

I'd just like to take a moment while the Minister reseats herself to thank the Pages for all the great work they've done for us this week, keeping us going through some very long hours. Thank you, Pages.

---Applause

What is the wish of committee? Mr. Norn.

**MR. NORN:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I move that the Chair rise and report progress. Mahsi cho.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Green):** 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:** May I have the report of the Committee of the Whole, Member for Yellowknife Centre?

### Report of Committee of the Whole

**MS. GREEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Your committee has been considering Tabled Document 30-19(2), 2020-2021 Main Estimates, and would like to report progress. Mr. Speaker, I move that the report of the Committee of the Whole be concurred with. Mahsi.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Yellowknife Centre. Do we have a seconder? Member for Inuvik Boot Lake. All those in favour. All those opposed. The motion is carried.

---Carried

Item 23, third reading of bills. Mr. Clerk, orders of the day.

### Orders of the Day

**CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer):** Orders of the day for Monday, March 2, 2020, at 1:30 p.m.:

1. Prayer
2. Ministers' Statements
3. Members' Statements
4. Returns to Oral Questions
5. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery
6. Replies to the Budget Address (Day 5 of 7)

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 Motion
17. Motions
18. Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills
19. First Reading of Bills
20. Second Reading of Bills
21. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters
  - Tabled Document 30-19(2), Main Estimates 2020-2021
  - Tabled Document 43-19(2), Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 1, 2020-2021
21. Report of Committee of the Whole
22. Third Reading of Bills
23. Orders of the Day

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Clerk. This House stands adjourned until Monday, March 2, 2020, at 1:30 p.m. Thank you.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 2:41 p.m.

