



**NORTHWEST TERRITORIES  
LEGISLATIVE  
ASSEMBLY**

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**1<sup>st</sup> Session**

**Day 77**

**20<sup>th</sup> Assembly**

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**UNEDITED HANSARD**

**Tuesday, February 10, 2026**

Pages XX - XX

**The Honourable Shane Thompson, Speaker**

This is an unedited Hansard

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# Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

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UNEDITED HANSARD

## YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

Tuesday, February 10, 2026

**Members Present**

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

The House met at 1:32 p.m.

**Prayer or Reflection**

---Prayer or reflection

**SPEAKER (HON. SHANE THOMPSON):** Please be seated. Before we get into it, I'd just like to wish my twin daughters a happy birthday. So they turn 29 for some time, the addition, but I will just leave it at that. So happy birthday, my girls, Deborah and Nancy. I'd like to thank Ms. Cleary for the opening prayer and reflection.

Ministers' statements. Minister of Infrastructure.

**Ministers' Statements****MINISTER'S STATEMENT 174-20(1):  
WINTER ROAD AND ICE CROSSING  
IMPLEMENTATION**

**HON. VINCE MCKAY:** Mr. Speaker, today I want to talk about the importance of our winter road system and acknowledge the hard work being done by Government of the Northwest Territories staff in the construction, maintenance, and operation of these winter roads.

The Government of the Northwest Territories is responsible for building and maintaining several public ice roads, winter roads, and ice crossings, spanning across 1,300 kilometers, roughly the same distance it takes to drive from Hay River to Calgary. This vast winter road system connects nine northern communities that otherwise do not have access to the all-season highway system.

Mr. Speaker, the work to inspect, construct, and maintain these roads requires teamwork from different departments within our government. Despite assumptions about winter road construction, it goes beyond simply waiting for temperatures to drop and a path to be cleared. Our crews are constantly monitoring weather conditions and measuring ice thickness and snowpack levels. When conditions are not optimal, they adjust, often flooding the surfaces to build thicker layers of ice or fill gaps to ensure safe operations on all our ice and winter roads.

Once safe road conditions have been constructed, these roads are opened to certain weight limits. Weight limits are increased over the season as conditions change and the ice grows thicker.

Maintenance crews are consistently planning and adapting to issues brought on by fluctuating weather temperatures and climate such as water overflow or extreme snowfalls that can present safety challenges for drivers. Proactively maintaining these challenges helps ensure the safety and life of our winter road system and is essential to the success in each season we have. Many residents rely on these roads for the delivery of critical goods and services.

Mr. Speaker, activity on our winter road system continues to increase each year. The movement of fuel, cargo, and dry goods across these roads is an essential part of our supply chain.

The provision of materials across the North is a priority for the Department of Infrastructure. For example, our fuel services division plans for the delivery of nearly 10 million liters of various fuels to 12 communities every winter utilizing ice roads and winter roads. The Government of the Northwest Territories staff collaborate with northern businesses throughout winter road season to report road conditions, strategize and compensate for road capacity to move fuel supplies and freight. This collaboration not only strengthens relationships between government and industry; it also creates a network of information sharing. Our staff maintain an open dialogue with fuel suppliers to make sure the added weights on the roads do not deteriorate the roads. Simultaneously, regional crews are compiling information on road conditions to make sure they are reflected in official reports on our highways map on DriveNWT.

Mr. Speaker, our winter road system serves many purposes: Supporting community accessibility, economic growth, and provision of goods and services. The Government of the Northwest Territories champions the importance of winter roads, and we encourage everyone to stay up to date on road conditions by visiting the DriveNWT.ca website before they embark on their trip to keep themselves

and others safe while traveling these important road systems. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister of Infrastructure. Ministers' statements. Mr. Premier.

**MINISTER'S STATEMENT 175-20(1):  
MINISTER ABSENT FROM THE HOUSE**

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Mr. Speaker, I wish to advise the House that the honourable Member for Kam Lake, the Minister for Industry, Tourism and Investment, will be absence from the House today, tomorrow, and Thursday to attend the Arctic 360 Conference in Toronto, Ontario. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Premier. Ministers' statements. Members' statements. Member from Monfwi.

**Members' Statements**

**MEMBER'S STATEMENT 850-20(1):  
ARCTIC ECONOMIC AND SECURITY  
CORRIDOR MEMORANDUM OF  
UNDERSTANDING**

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Tlicho diversification:

Recently, I learned of an important development in northern Ontario where three First Nations have entered a landmark partnership with Canada Nickel to advance a major mining project in their traditional territory near Timmins. This agreement includes preferential access to an estimated \$2.5 billion in contract opportunities, ensuring that Indigenous governments are true partners, not just observers in resource development.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to compare the Ontario Nickel-First Nations agreement with the MOU announced at the AME roundup in Vancouver. This MOU was concluded with the Government of the Northwest Territories, the Tlicho government, and Yellowknife Dene. It binds the parties to work together towards the Arctic Economic and Security Corridor. This MOU is a good start but does very little to make mines reality. Today, economic activity in the Tlicho is concentrated in mining, construction, and resource development, yet very few of these opportunities have translated into real lasting benefits for the communities. The region's economic context is clear.

One, Mr. Speaker, the closure of diamond and Gahcho Kue will have a significant impact on Tlicho communities, and today the GNWT has no meaningful alternative. That being said, and

as many Tlicho citizens often said, we have a lot of resource minerals on our land; Fortune Minerals nickel project is just one of the several potential developers. Infrastructure gaps hinders the development. A road from the Tlicho Highway to Gameti with future connection to the Sahtu, possibly the Arctic Ocean, could create a transformative trade and development corridor. A diversified mineral development corridor could attract multiple industry while supporting cultural resilience and traditional land.

Mr. Speaker, seizing opportunity requires strategic partnership -- Mr. Speaker, can I have unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

---Unanimous consent granted

Mr. Speaker, the time to act is now before mine closures deepen economic hardship. My vision is for connected prosperous Tlicho region that leads northern Canada in mineral development and Arctic trades. Mr. Speaker, we may not have a Ring of Fire but we could have a Frosty Circle. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MEMBER'S STATEMENT 851-20(1):  
MACKENZIE VALLEY HIGHWAY  
COMMUNITY SESSIONS**

**MR. RODGERS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about the community engagement sessions that are taking place across the Mackenzie Valley on the proposed Mackenzie Valley Highway. Mr. Speaker, my colleague, the MLA from the Sahtu, is currently attending these sessions alongside members of the strategic infrastructure, energy, and supply chains' team.

These sessions give residents a chance to hear where the project is at, what work is being planned, and what the next steps are for the project and communities. They also give people a chance to ask questions and share their views directly with the project team.

Mr. Speaker, the proposed highway would extend from Highway No. 1 at Wrigley to Tulita and Norman Wells and create a road with year-round access. This project has potential to improve access and travel to currently remote communities along the corridor, support and grow local economies, and make it easier for people to access services.

Mr. Speaker, as the MLA for Inuvik Boot Lake, I am glad the long-term vision for this project looks beyond phase one with the plan to eventually extend the highway north through

the Mackenzie Delta to connect with Inuvik and on to Tuktoyaktuk. While the current environmental assessment focuses on the Wrigley to Norman Wells section, this bigger picture matters, Mr. Speaker. It shows how this project could strengthen supply lines, improve regional connections, and support Arctic security. The Minister responsible has let me know that the project team had a good turnout in Norman Wells yesterday, and meetings are continuing this week in Deline, Tulita, Fort Good Hope, and Colville Lake, with another session planned in Fort Simpson in early March. Mr. Speaker, I encourage residents to attend, learn more, share their thoughts. Hearing directly from communities is important as this project moves through this regulatory process. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 852-20(1):  
COMPASSIONATE ACCOMMODATION FOR  
MEDICAL TRAVEL

**MR. TESTART:** Mr. Speaker, since the Minister of health has declined to hear from my constituents about the struggles they face under broken medical travel policies and her continued refusal to grant meaningful exceptions, I will share their experiences with this House.

Last year, a constituent's health crisis left her critically ill with a serious kidney condition. She was quickly medivaced to Edmonton and intubated, yet denied an escort, forcing her husband to cover flights and a week's of accommodation out-of-pocket while she fought to stabilize. After extensive communication with the Minister of medical travel, the family received coverage only for the final days of the emergency as she returned to Yellowknife.

Another constituent had just tragically lost her husband and suddenly found herself a single mother of two children. While grieving and adjusting to this new reality, she had to travel to Edmonton for essential medical care. She asked for her children to accompany her to help ease the situation during this difficult time, but again and again she was denied. No accommodation, no compassion and, worse, she was accused of trying to get medical travel to cover her child care.

Now my office is assisting a family of a young girl who survived a rare eye cancer. Her treatment was in Toronto where she formed a close bond with her doctors. She now needs regular fittings for her prosthetic eye which, as any parent can imagine, is a traumatizing

experience. Yet medical travel refuses to send her east anymore, cutting her off from the doctors she trusts. As she grows, she may soon need a new prosthetic but with EHB now income-tested, the family could face thousands of dollars on top of the trauma of struggling with unfamiliar professionals against doctors' advice.

There is a common theme here that all MLAs are too familiar with - trauma, incapacitation, and situations where young children and seniors must endure circumstances they cannot manage alone. This Minister has the power that no other Northerner has, and MLAs, along with their constituents, are calling on her to exercise this power. Stop standing in the way of doctors and families and make health care work for the people who need it most. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 853-20(1):  
CULTURAL SAFETY IN THE HEALTH CARE  
SYSTEM

**MS. MORGAN:** Mr. Speaker, in health care we've heard that the Minister's top priority is cultural safety and anti-racism, along with the small community model of care and medical travel. I've read two reports produced last year that were supposed to lay out a roadmap towards cultural safety in our healthcare system, honouring the voices of Indigenous peoples and the equitable access report. There's a lot of important feedback and ideas in there from Indigenous patients and families and the patient advocates who try to help.

My challenge for the Minister is to ask, do any of those steps towards cultural safety make sense without focusing first and foremost on stabilizing our health care workforce? Are we trying to build a beautiful new house on a foundation of sand? Is there any scenario where we could achieve culturally safe care without continuity of care, without a stable workforce of regular nurses and physicians who have a relationship with their patients, know their health history, and know the communities they're working in?

We've gotten to a point, Mr. Speaker, where there are literally thousands of temporary healthcare workers revolving through our system every year - locum doctors and nurses, agency nurses, contracted paramedics. Some of our frontline managers barely have time to do anything else besides plugging holes, always looking for new people to fill the schedule.

Could all those practitioners ever be properly trained in cultural safety and anti-racism? We don't possibly have the human resources or money or time. Our Indigenous patient advocates are already undersupported but with more temporary workers from down south, we see more patients feeling disrespected and misunderstood. It is just unsustainable to keep dumping more cases on these advocates and expect them to investigate and meaningfully address incidents.

The clear vision is for health practitioners to be working together in well-connected teams, but how is that possible with a revolving door of temporary workers? We need more focus on long-term health prevention and promotion in communities, but contracted paramedics that are brought in to plug holes are not trained in those specialties.

Mr. Speaker, health care workforce stabilization cannot be just another competing priority shoved down the list. It is foundational to the success of everything else. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MEMBER'S STATEMENT 854-20(1):  
BLACK HISTORY MONTH EVENTS IN  
YELLOWKNIFE**

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Black History Month celebrations in Yellowknife are about to begin and will last through February and into early March. I encourage us all to celebrate black culture and residents' contributions to the NWT year-round, Mr. Speaker.

Back Up North's events celebrate the diversity of the black community and their heritage across the NWT. Events this year feature food, culture, dance, music, learning, and celebrating community. This Saturday, Yellowknife residents are invited to a community welcome dinner from 4 to 8 p.m. at the Tree of Peace Friendship centre. The evening will feature African and Caribbean dishes. On Saturday, February 14th, from noon to 5 p.m., there will be a baking workshop at Ecole St. Patrick High School focused on teaching youth practical skills such as baking, cake decorating, and preparing snacks that they can make at home. Additionally, stay tuned for more information on a movie night in collaboration with Collège Nordique Francophone at its downtown campus. The culmination of these community events will be the annual Black History Month Gala on March 7th at the Chateau Nova. Tickets are on sale now and moving quickly,

and I invite all Members to enjoy a night of food and entertainment featuring the legendary Canadian singer Julie Black. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MEMBER'S STATEMENT 855-20(1):  
OPENING COMMENTS**

**MRS. YAKELEYA:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. [Translation] **INSERT\*** [Translation Ends]. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, mahsi.

Today my Member's statement is one of gratitude and commitment. I want to first and foremost thank the constituents of the Deh Cho for placing their continued trust in me. Mahsi. As their MLA, I will continue to bring forward the issues they raise, important issues like the economy, the environment, health, education, housing, and public safety. Additionally, I want to thank my family, especially my husband Norman, for their steadfast support. I would not be able to carry out my duties as MLA without their support.

Mr. Speaker, the needs in our communities are significant. For too long, the government has approached small communities with a top-down mindset, telling them how to live, what to prioritize, and how services should look. Unfortunately, this approach has not worked. We see the results of this in our health outcomes, our incarceration statistics, the growing impacts of addictions, and the raising rates of homelessness. Our communities know what they need, and they know what works for them. The government must create the conditions for small communities to flourish, starting with our youth.

We need our young people to graduate with both academic and practical life skills - how to cook, how to budget, prepare their own meals, and take care of themselves. They should be able to enter post-secondary education without years of upgrading. We need more housing, homes for people experiencing homelessness, homes that support independence and opportunities for homeownership that build pride and stability. We need culturally grounded addictions treatment centres that help people heal using traditional cultural practices found in our communities. We need accessible, reliable health care in every community to reduce medical travel and improve outcomes. And we must address the high cost of living in the North by supporting wage growth and encourage local food production, such as gardening and preservation.

Mr. Speaker, our needs are many, but so is our determination. I thank this Assembly for working to support our communities, and I look forward to continue this valuable work. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 856-20(1):  
ABANDONED VEHICLES AMENDMENTS TO  
THE MOTOR VEHICLES ACT

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, a constituent recently raised concern with me about some abandoned vehicles adjacent to their property which have been an eyesore for many years. Initially, I thought this was a pretty cut-and-dry municipal issue, but after raising it with a colleague on city council, they came back to me and noted that a legislative gap at the territorial level was preventing the city from taking action.

The Motor Vehicles Act currently stipulates that the owner of a vehicle is liable for towing, storage, and disposal fees related to an abandoned vehicle. This works well when the owner is identifiable and can be tracked down but occasionally this is not possible for various reasons. My understanding from liaising with the city is that in order to deal with abandoned vehicles for whom the owner is not clear or the vehicle has lost intrinsic value is a minor modification of the Motor Vehicles Act which would allow officers to deem the vehicle worthless. This would allow tow companies to take the vehicle for scrap disposal as opposed to having to pay to store it indefinitely, which they currently do. Making this small change would assist the city in resolving this issue for my constituent but also in a wider sense as I know this is not an isolated issue. It occurs throughout my city, Mr. Speaker, and I have heard this is a problem at the Inuvik airport and that it is affecting cleanup of Enterprise also, to name a few other areas in the territory it is creating problems.

Mr. Speaker, this is a relatively minor legislative change which would help our municipalities address a longstanding issue. So I am hoping our infrastructure Minister can get this done quickly. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Frame Lake. Members' statements. Member from Tu Nedhe-Wilideh.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 857-20(1):  
MANDATE AND PRIORITIES OF THE  
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

**MR. EDJERICON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At the start of the 20th Assembly, the Premier issued a mandate letter outlining his expectation for each Minister aligning their priorities in the common agenda for this government. Those letters were received after this Assembly voted for current executive council following the leadership commitment process where we shared our vision and considered candidates for ministerial positions. After two years, it is fair now to start asking the Premier what accountability exists when a Minister fails to uphold the trust of Regular Members and fails to deliver the mandate entrusted to them by this Premier.

The first responsibility is outlined in the Premier's mandate letter is clear: Ministers, in the spirit of consensus government, are expected to maintain constructive, open, respectful, and collaborative relationship with Regular Members. Over the past two years, my colleagues and I have sought to work collaboratively with the Minister of Health and Social Services to improve key services and advance reconciliation yet actions speaks for themselves and recent exchange with the Minister makes it clear that her agenda is narrow, limited, and disregards both collaboration with Regular Members and the mandate entrusted to her by the Premier.

When I am advancing -- advocating for this chamber leaders to call to action on our mandate letter, we both seek advanced reconciliation, implement UNDRIP, and strengthen partnerships with Indigenous governments. There is consensus on this mandate, and the principle of consensus government set an expectation that working together is possible. We have long awaited a modern collaborative approach for the government that, one, replaces the legal and colonial style approach with commitment to fulfilling treaty obligation and partnering genuinely with Indigenous governments. This government must take action now, or our term will not simply end with progress. I fear even decades could pass with treaties unresolved, reconciliation stalled, moments remembered as a missed opportunity.

Like all my colleagues on this side of the House, I want to help the Premier and this Cabinet take that action and fulfill their mandate. I would have questions for the Premier at the appropriate time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Tu Nedhe-Wilideh. Members' statements. Member from Yellowknife Centre.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 858-20(1):  
ECONOMIC FUTURE OF THE NORTHWEST  
TERRITORIES

**MR. HAWKINS:** Mr. Speaker, the Gahcho Kue announcement yesterday is a clear signal, if not a message, that our mining sector is in trouble. Once the backbone of the NWT economy, Mr. Speaker, it is under enormous strain everyone can agree upon. This deeply troubling news for people like me, I see this strain may not be the right word, Mr. Speaker. There may be a different word to look at this particular case, more so is our economy is turning into a nonexistence. Once a strong resource economy is fading away. Further erosion of our NWT economy is I fear what is next.

This government doesn't seem to recognize the urgency of this particular problem, Mr. Speaker, and that becomes fearful for citizens I talk to abound. Hope is not a plan, Mr. Speaker. I don't know if this government hopes someone will save us, but I could assure you hope won't feed your kids and I can guarantee a hope doesn't keep the lights on. When it takes over ten years or more to get a project to move forward, Mr. Speaker, the reality is we need that investment, the employment, the economic certainty to save the North, Mr. Speaker. And back to hope.

Which business school out there teaches hope as an economic plan? I assure you not a single one.

Every delay sends a message to the industry, Mr. Speaker, that the NWT is a difficult place to work, too slow, uninterested, and far too uncertain to invest money here. Investors look elsewhere. They take their bags of money and opportunity to other jurisdictions that welcome them. Mr. Speaker, jurisdictions such as Nunavut and the Yukon. Their economies are accelerating forward while ours is stalling.

Mr. Speaker, to be honest, it's about what are we going to do about what's coming next? If it wasn't for the potential DND investment of \$10 billion potentially ramping up, I don't know what we'd be doing about this potential serious gap ahead of us, Mr. Speaker. And to be clear, any success of that investment is solely credited to D -- let me try again. Solely entirely credited to DND, not the GNWT, Mr. Speaker. So I tell the GNWT to stand out of their way and don't mess it up.

Mr. Speaker, we're fearful. Many people are fearful in my community when they hear this. So back to hope. Is this government going to wait for Providence to save us? Is there happenstance that we wait in line for? We can only wait for divine intervention and luck so

long, Mr. Speaker. No one is suggesting this urgency means we have to ignore environmental responsibilities, but we need to be fighting, fighting for jobs, because jobs lead to -- help us on the fight of poverty, to help families, and build healthy and strong communities. Mr. Speaker, I will have questions during question period later today with respect to my statement because we need urgent action. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 859-20(1):  
CELEBRATION OF LIFE OF DOLPHUS  
"DUFFY" CAZON

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** Colleagues, it is with great regret that I advise the House of the passing of Dolphus Henry (Duffy) Cazon. Today, it is not to mourn his passing but to celebrate a life full of joy, generosity, and simple pleasures that touched us all.

Born on July 30, 1953, in Fort Simpson to Baptiste and Marie Alphonsine Cazon, Duffy was one of 17 children who grew up embracing the land alongside his siblings -- running, laughing, and learning the rhythms of our northern home. From his young days, Duffy's love for music lit up the room. He'd practice that accordion with such passion and later in life nothing made him happier than rock n' roll tunes or a good kung fu movie. Give him a T-shirt from his favourite band or a DVD of Bruce Lee and his eyes would sparkle. Kathy Tsetso reminded us of his quirky love for chocolate-covered cherries, a mystery until we learned these were his mother's favorite. This story captures Duffy's loyalty, sentimental, and full of heart.

Duffy was generosity itself. If you needed something and he had it, it was yours - no questions asked. Much of his adult life brought physical challenges confining him to a motorized wheelchair but did that slow him down? Never. We'd spot him zipping through Fort Simpson, that big smile on his face, often on the hunt for his favourite snuff. Despite it all he stayed happy, positive, a familiar and beloved presence who lifted spirits wherever he went.

In his later years at the Fort Simpson long-term care facility, Duffy found a second family in the staff and residents who adored his humour and warmth. To them, we say thank you from the bottom of our hearts for your kindness and care. After a long battle with health issues, Duffy passed peacefully on December 17, 2025, at the age of 72 years young.

Duffy leaves a legacy of smiles, music, and open-hearted giving. He reminds us to find joy in the small things, to share freely, and to keep smiles through trials. Rest easy, Duffy, your spirit rolls on in our stories, our songs, and our community.

The family extends heartfelt thanks to the dedicated staff for their kindness and unwavering support during his time there. We know he is with his siblings and parents that predeceased him. He will be sadly missed.

Members' statements. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. For the people who are here, thank you very much for being present. We enjoy having -- oh, sorry. Member from Deh Cho.

### Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery

**MRS. YAKELEYA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to recognize two pages from Kakisa. They're from a constituency, and they're Chloe Chicot and Leah Simba. Welcome to the Legislative Assembly.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you. Recognition of visitors in the gallery.

Again, for those ones up in the gallery, thank you very much for attending. We appreciate you giving us the honour of representing the people of the Northwest Territories for the 20th Assembly. I hope you enjoy the proceedings, and it is always nice to see people in the gallery.

Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Replies to the budget address, day 4 of 7. Reports of committees on the review of bills. Reports of standing and special committees. Returns to oral questions. Acknowledgements. Oral questions. Member from Inuvik Boot Lake.

### Oral Questions

QUESTION 978-20(1):  
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ON MAKENZIE VALLEY HIGHWAY

**MR. RODGERS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Following up to my Member's statement, I have questions for the Minister of Strategic Infrastructure, Energy, and Supply Chains.

Mr. Speaker, can the Minister provide an update on the community engagement sessions and what the department's hearing from the residents as they engage with the community. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Inuvik Boot Lake. Minister responsible for

Strategic Infrastructure, Energy, and Supply Chains.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I had to practice to get it right myself. So, Mr. Speaker, I am happy to have the chance to speak to this. There's been a lot of engagements over 30 years on this particular stretch of highway, but we are at a different stage now. Over the last few years now, we've heard communities say they wanted to have community readiness. They don't want to just have the road get built. They want to be ready, they want to participate, they want to be ready when it is built. So we are accelerating the work for community readiness. The team is there all week. They had two days in Norman Wells. I would encourage anyone in the Sahtu -- it's all over social media, I don't have it in front of me here, to check out the engagements happening in the evenings. Because we are looking to really meet with the communities to figure out what needs to happen so they can participate more fully and to be ready. Again, community readiness is a different stage. It usually happens towards the end of a project. We're moving it forward. We're confident enough to know that we need to get this done, and that's what they're there laying the foundation for, for community readiness, participate, and to be ready when that road gets built. Thank you.

**MR. RODGERS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for that. So around that, I guess that same theme of being involved, what opportunities, Mr. Speaker, will there be for Indigenous governments and local communities to stay involved as this project moves forward?

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there's already work underway in partnership with Indigenous governments. We had, in the fall, signed a work plan with the Pehdzeh Ki First Nation out of Wrigley and met just last week there. We're going back again to design the final routing. The final design of the routing will be done together so that we're making best use of traditional knowledge as well as with more western traditional science-based design. They're putting those two things together so we have the best possible route. But meanwhile, Mr. Speaker, again, looking to work on a traditional knowledge studies throughout the area to make so that the final design has best use but also that -- again, the community readiness is about making sure that there are corporations in those communities, corporations and individuals who might need further training, who know what's coming, who are ready when the project come forward, that they're there to participate, that they can make best use of different opportunities, and to work

with the Indigenous governments who are land holders and traditional land users that, again, when this project moves forward that they are there to participate in those contracts, that their members are there to participate in those contracts, and, really, so that this -- the work starting from today and going forward is seamless, that everyone knows the timeline and everyone's ready to bid on contracts, to participate in contracts, and have whatever training is necessary to do so. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister responsible for Strategic Infrastructure, Energy, and Supply Chains. Final supplementary. Member from Inuvik Boot Lake.

**MR. RODGERS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you for that. Mr. Speaker, my final question is when the residents of Inuvik head south with their commerce to head into the Yukon and head into possibly Alberta, Mr. Speaker, when can the Minister anticipate that they can put their left signal light on and take a left turn and head all the way down to Yellowknife instead, Mr. Speaker?

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I share this dream. Mr. Speaker, and I believe a lot of people in this territory share this dream. Mr. Speaker, I want to first emphasize we will be complying very much as proponents with the guidance of the board, the Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Board. They are the arbiters right now of making sure we go through an environmental process that provides mitigation steps as necessary for the road project right now to Norman Wells. We will continue to work with them on phase 2, which is that section that gets us all the rest of the way up to Inuvik. But we started those conversations. We want to work to ensure that we are making best use of available information. There was data gathered back in 2013. There's more work happening right now on a winter road routing as I understand from some of the Indigenous governments in the region. We can marshal all of that, and we can accelerate this project so that we are not waiting another 30 years or even another 10 years. If we can start construction on the southern portion in possibly as early as 2028-2029, then we can certainly be, I think, accelerating the northern portion similarly as well. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister responsible for Strategic Infrastructure, Energy, and Supply Chains. Oral questions. Member from Yellowknife North.

QUESTION 979-20(1):  
CULTURAL SAFETY AND STABILIZING  
WORKFORCE IN HEALTHCARE SYSTEM

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have questions for the Minister of Health and Social Services.

So the equitable access report that HSS released in November 2025, which the Minister's staff referred to as our roadmap for primary care moving forward, identified as one of its seven overarching goals, strong and lasting workforce, yet out of the list of 17 actions in the report none relate to stabilizing the health care workforce or recruitment and retention.

So my first question for the Minister: Is it possible to achieve culturally safe care with the current level and ever increasing portion of our health care workforce made up of temporary workers? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**HON. LESEA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, a culturally safe healthcare system does not only rely on culturally safe training. Workforce instability affects continuity in care of patients, and hiring people alone doesn't guarantee cultural safe care. Cultural safety must be built in to the whole system so everybody provider can deliver it, even temporary staff. Our new primary and community care framework puts cultural safety and anti-racism at the centre of the framework and a culturally safe system that will attract staff who share those values which will boost morale, which will reduce burnout, which will improve long-term retention, Mr. Speaker.

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So if that equitable access report published last year is seen to be the primary care roadmap, why doesn't it include any specific actions related to health care workforce stabilization, recruitment, or retention? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. LESEA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the roadmap was released -- and this is the -- as it is, it's a roadmap for the framework. And so we wanted to release the direction that we're going in prior to -- as the work is going on with the framework. So this report was meant to show work done to build the new primary care framework, and it doesn't list every action. The new framework, which will include the strategies to improve staff well-being, recruitment, retention, long-term workforce, key components include valuing Indigenous roles and Indigenous leadership on care teams, increasing Indigenous representation in the health care workforce, and this is essential for stabilizing the workforce

supporting local Indigenous use and delivering culturally safe care. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Has the Indigenous patient advocate office, or the Office of Client Experience, been gathering any data on what percentage of complaints regarding patients being treated disrespectfully or insensitively by practitioners involve temporary staff who have been brought in to plug holes within the healthcare system? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we do receive these complaints but don't track the complaints specifically about which staff are -- through the office, like if it's temporary or permanent. They do record general complaints related to discrimination, but they don't identify, as I mentioned, whether they're temporary or permanent staff. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 980-20(1):  
ACCELERATING RESOURCE  
DEVELOPMENT IN THE NORTHWEST  
TERRITORIES

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know the Premier, who I am going to direct my questions to, is going to say we're marshaling all resources and doing everything we can, but when we see Gahcho Kue do their announcement, we've seen that people accelerate the mining industry is shrinking and certainly the economy is on its rails, Mr. Speaker. I am asking the Premier what can he do to help fast track the relationships and the approval process we have with Indigenous governments and not give the old saying, we're doing what we can, we're doing this stuff now, because we need to see true results that are not clear and transparent to Northerners; we're truly doing everything we can. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Yellowknife Centre. Mr. Premier.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So I believe the question is what are we doing to fast track these projects by working with Indigenous governments. And so to that I will say that we have put a lot of time and energy into improving the relationships with Indigenous governments. And as I travel around the territory, that's what I hear from many

Indigenous governments, that we have improved those relationships, we've done that work, we've built that trust. And by doing so, we're able to combine forces and work together on different projects. Of course, we have the Arctic Economic and Security Corridor. We signed an MOU with the Yellowknives Dene and the Tlicho. We have good relationships with all of the Indigenous groups up and down the Mackenzie Valley when we're talking about the Mackenzie Valley Highway. We are -- we've increased the funding to help Indigenous governments participate in the regulatory process and to engage with exploration companies. And so there's been a lot of work. There's been a lot of trust built. And it's paying dividends. I would also have to mention, of course, that the NWT Council of Leaders travels together down to Ottawa, Indigenous leaders and the GNWT Cabinet, with a common message. So the work that we've done with Indigenous governments has been very important. It's one of the highlights of my time here in this term. It's one of the things I will look back on with a sense of pride. And so I can tell the Member that we are working hard on that aspect of ensuring that we have everything in place that we need to to advance the economy and bring new projects online. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. HAWKINS:** Mr. Speaker, it's difficult to feed your kids with trust, and it's hard to heat your home on hope, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, real tangible items would be to accelerate the MRAs. Mr. Speaker, real tangible ideas would be to accelerate maybe a junior investment program. Mr. Speaker, those are the types of acceleration processes I am asking for. Is there ways to accelerate that type of action to get better results or I should say any results. Thank you.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I won't speak about things in front of committee, but the budget contains things to do just that. We're also working on -- we have an MOU with CanNor to help speed up things. We're working -- I am working with my counterpart in the federal government to look at a more detailed MOU to really tackle a lot of these issues that have held things up. We are looking at how we can engage the federal government more so that they can provide direction to the boards in certain areas and provide better support to the boards where we see things held up. One example I always mention is that if the boards want some legal advice, they need to apply to CIRNAC and there needs -- there's an approval process that takes a while, and it could be a couple months later before they're able to get an answer to the legal question they had two months prior. All of these little things add

up, and they add delays. And we're addressing those. We're also looking at ensuring that if there are processes that can be done concurrently, so the permitting process that the GNWT does, if it can be done -- the sections that can be done concurrently with the board process, we want to make sure that happens. We're working with Pine Point Mining right now to do that, and that's going to trim six months off their timeline for opening, which equates to tens of millions of dollars of benefit to the Northwest Territories.

So over the last two years, we have put our mind to this, and we've put in a lot of work, and we are now in a place where I feel confident saying that we have a lot of the tools in place and we are getting ready to implement a lot of the next set of tools. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Premier. Final supplementary. Member from Yellowknife Centre.

**MR. HAWKINS:** Mr. Speaker, one of the biggest problems is timelines, response to timelines, and money and resources for Indigenous organizations to be able to respond to any of these timelines and response to timelines and hence to avoid the perception of not interested or causing delays.

Mr. Speaker, I've given the Premier several ideas. Here's some. I'd like to hear the Premier's thought about trying to effectively grab on these as actionable items.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And as I mentioned, a couple of the ideas that the Member gave are reflected in the budget. The idea that the Member just gave, I mentioned that in my first answer when we increased the funding to the interim resource management assistance program, and we're also encouraging the federal government to increase their contribution to that as well. So there are tangible actions that will result in increased efficiencies and projects coming online sooner. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Oral questions. Member from Range Lake.

QUESTION 981-20(1):  
LAND TENURE AND LAND TRANSFERS

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, dovetailing on my colleague's comments about the economy, crucial to the economy, especially a natural resource economy, is land tenure. I'd like to ask the Minister responsible for Environment and Climate Change how is his department moving expeditiously to ensure that there is

comprehensive land tenure reform so there's certainty in the Northwest Territories for investment. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, certainly land tenure in the Northwest Territories has been top of mind for myself and my department as we work together with our Indigenous partners, Indigenous governments, and Indigenous organizations, and the many boards that oversee land tenure in the Northwest Territories. This conversation is very much a collaborative effort, and we are looking for ways to advance and streamline the process to ensure that where possible, we can align items to ensure that we are moving as quick as we possibly can. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I appreciate collaboration, but we need urgency as well. So, Mr. Speaker, is the Minister willing to bring forward changes to timelines? Will he cut timelines? Will he reduce the amount of time it takes to review these files? Working in collaboration for sure, but setting a new service standard so we can get quicker turnaround on land tenure decisions. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, similar to an earlier response, there are items in the budget -- the proposed budget that are currently being addressed that will help us to advance some of this work. We are also, as I said, you know, very much engaged with our Indigenous partners across the Northwest Territories, and we have made investments over time to ensure that we are helping them to enhance their capacity so that we can ensure that the process moves as timely as possible. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am not getting some clear answers so I will have to come back to this. But, Mr. Speaker, one of the partners the Minister left out is municipalities. Will the Minister transfer land requests from municipalities, particularly the city of Yellowknife but also Inuvik, Hay River -- will he transfer those lands that they've requested for by, let's say, end of Q2 this year? We need this land now. We need to bring the investment forward. It's time for these decisions to be made; will he make those decisions? Thank you.

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there are a number of files and different parcels of lands, whether it be in the city of Yellowknife or other communities within the Northwest Territories, that are currently at various stages within the process. Part of this process is ensuring that we are working closely with those municipalities as we have recently last year signed a new memorandum of understanding with the City of Yellowknife, and we are also working very closely with all of the parties involved to ensure that the process and we do proper consultation and move these forward in a timely manner. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 982-20(1):  
AMENDMENTS TO THE MOTOR VEHICLES  
ACT CONCERNING ABANDONED  
VEHICLES

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, can the -- I spoke to the issue of the Motor Vehicles Act earlier. Can the Minister for Infrastructure commit to making the necessary changes to the MVA to give officers the ability to deem vehicles worthless for disposal. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Frame Lake. Minister of Infrastructure.

**HON. VINCE McKAY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the concerns brought forward by the Member and the department has been looking into this; however, it may seem straightforward just to make the changes, but there's necessarily -- there's some direction that we have to take in order to apply this legislation. We have to, you know, start working on necessary policy direction, the regulations, different program adjustments, and these all take time and resources. Although this process is scheduled to start, hopefully taking place this summer, we hear the concerns and it is on the radar. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, can the Minister just help us better understand. It sounds like it's a fairly complex issue. My understanding is this is just a fairly small change although this isn't the first time that we've talked about a small change and how long it can take in this House. But can the Minister just help us better understand what issues they're trying to resolve here. This seems like a fairly simple one that's done in other jurisdictions. Thank you.

**HON. VINCE McKAY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's the issue of writing the legislation for this issue. It's not a matter of just putting in a couple lines and continuing on. We have to go through the process of the legislation. And, again, you know, we've set our priorities in the 20th Assembly for, you know, certain things, and the legislative proposals have been put in place on what we're concentrating on for our legislative priorities, and it also takes different departments, not just the Department of Infrastructure. We also have to involve the Department of Justice in writing some of this material. So thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister of Infrastructure. Final supplementary. Member from Frame Lake.

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That's fair enough, I suppose. But, I mean, this is a relatively minor change. It's something that's been dogging municipalities for a very long time. We've got abandoned vehicles all over the city that haven't been dealt with as a result. Can the Minister commit to getting this done within the term of the 20th Assembly? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. VINCE McKAY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, this is a concern not only in his riding. This is a concern throughout the territories, including my own riding. Although I can't commit to, you know, starting all this year and having completed it by the end of the 20th Assembly, like I said earlier it is on the radar, and writing instructions are being given this summer to get the work started. So like I said, hopefully, you know, we should be able to get some of this going here right away. So thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister of Infrastructure. Oral questions. Member from Monfwi.

QUESTION 983-20(1):  
LONG-TERM BENEFITS OF RESOURCE  
DEVELOPMENT IN THE TLICHO REGION

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions are for Premier.

Indeed, we know that having a good working relationship is important for advancement. With that in mind, I want to ask the Premier how is this government planning to ensure that upcoming mining and infrastructure projects in the Tlicho region deliver long-term socio-economic benefits for communities beyond short-term employment? Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Monfwi. Mr. Premier.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And, of course, the Tlicho have tens of thousands of square kilometers of contiguous land and there are opportunities for mines on that land, from what I understand. And so from that standpoint alone, there would be ongoing benefits and benefits directly to Tlicho residents.

In terms of infrastructure, we want to ensure that when there's new infrastructure, if there's maintenance, that that's done locally. For example, roads, we always like to ensure that the communities closest to the roads are the ones doing the maintenance on those. So there's long-term benefits there as well.

And the Tlicho are no strangers to capitalizing on economic opportunities. With the diamond mines, the Tlicho government has run many successful programs, and sent many students to post-secondary and supported a number of economic opportunities that way as well. So I would say that it's not on the government, GNWT, alone to ensure that. The Tlicho government is a strong, sophisticated government, and we will work in partnership, as we always do, with them to ensure that there are lasting benefits. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for the response. Mr. Speaker, given the imminent closure of the Diavik diamond mine and Gahcho Kue mine just recently announced -- so what step is this government taking to develop a comprehensive transition plan for affected Tlicho communities and other northern communities in the NWT? Thank you.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And so for quite some time we've known that the diamond sector is going through a transition and the market is not quite as robust or stable as it used to be, and so we have already, for a number of months now, had a partnership with the Tlicho government and the Yellowknives Dene to ensure that we are pooling resources, we're getting information out there, and we're supporting residents the best way that we can. So that work has already begun. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Final supplementary. Member from Monfwi.

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, House is this government working with both Indigenous government and federal partners to advance the proposed Arctic Economic and Security

Corridor and secure funding for critical road and trades infrastructure? Thank you.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And how we're doing that is in partnership. Once again, we were just down in Vancouver at the AME Roundup where I signed an MOU with the Yellowknives Dene and the Tlicho to advance the Arctic Economic and Security Corridor. Of course we have a Minister of Strategic Infrastructure, Energy, and Supply Chains -- see, it's not that hard of a title -- to focus on this work with an associate Minister who -- and I have found that arrangement actually to be one of the most effective things that we do as government, to have an associate and a Minister focusing on these specific projects. It has really helped to move them along. We've travelled down to Ottawa many times, both as Council of Leaders -- or rather, with other Indigenous governments, to advocate for the economic security corridor. I've done this to the Prime Minister, to a number of Ministers, as has the Minister of infrastructure. We have a timeline that we're working through with the proponents, the Yellowknives Dene and the Tlicho, to advance this. We're in had regular contact with the leadership of those Indigenous governments. And so we're doing everything we can to move things forward here. We have a federal government that is receptive. The world has a focus on the Arctic and on critical minerals, and we are doing our best to take advantage of that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Premier. Oral questions. Member from Yellowknife North.

QUESTION 984-20(1):  
DIAMOND MINE SOCIOECONOMIC  
AGREEMENTS

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to ask questions of the Premier.

The Government of the Northwest Territories signed socio-economic agreements with each of the diamond mine operators as they were starting up operations. The one with Ekati was signed with BHP as far back as 1996. One was signed with Diavik in 1999 and then amended in 2015. And two have been signed with De Beers, in 2004 and 2013. So these commit the operators, amongst other things, to use certain levels of northern and Indigenous employees and contractors. They also commit the GNWT to certain actions like training and apprenticeship programs.

My first question: How is the GNWT enforcing these socio-economic agreements including, at this time as several mines are reducing their operations, how can we enforce their promises

to prioritize reserving northern workers and northern contractors as they scale down? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And so of course socio-economic agreements don't have enforcement clauses. There's not levers to enforce. There's not fines that can be levied on the mines for not meeting those targets. And so this is about building relationships and ensuring that we're staying on top of this. So I know the Minister of ITI has quarterly meetings with the mines where they go over these numbers, the employment numbers. When we learn about mines looking at changing their workforce, reducing the workforce, of course we ensure that they're going to follow the appropriate legislation. But we also do our best to ensure they keep as many northern staff as possible. And a lot of effort goes into that. That's always a live discussion at the Cabinet table whenever anything happens with any major industry or employer in the territory. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So of course it's disappointing to hear that these much touted agreements with companies are actually not enforceable. How is the GNWT ensuring, then, that the diamond mine operators fulfill their commitments according to the agreements to work with the GNWT as operations are being scaled back or moving towards closure and, particularly, to retrain workers and ease their transition to new jobs? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And so when certain companies wind down, for example up at Diavik, for years they've had a my path program where they worked with the employees there to help them transition to whatever might be next. And so as I mentioned earlier, we have formed a partnership with Yellowknives Dene and the Tlicho to look at any training opportunities that might be available, trying to figure out where, you know, those individuals are working, how we can best support them. I want to also point out that there's already a lot of different programs available in the territory. There's different training programs that can be accessed. And not everybody needs those programs all the time. But when they do need them, they exist. And so in these situations, we don't need to always come up with a whole new suite of programs. We already have existing programs. That said, we do lobby the federal government to enhance the funding through -- that we get through some of these programs to address

these issues when there's large closure or a large number of job losses. We want to ensure that both the federal and the territorial government are working together to maximize our resources and getting as much money into the territory and into the hands of the people who need it as possible. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Premier. Final supplementary. Member from Yellowknife North.

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So given that mines such as Ekati have been sold over the years to new operators, if the socio-economic agreements have been assigned or transferred to the responsibility of the new owners, was there any assessment of whether the new owner or operators had the financial capacity or know-how to actually fulfill the obligations in these socio-economic agreements? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So the department of ITI does review the socio-economic agreements when there is the sale of a mine, and those socio-economic agreements do transfer to the new owner. So, yes, we do review those. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Premier. Oral questions. Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh .

QUESTION 985-20(1):  
IMPLEMENTATION OF UNITED NATIONS  
DECLARATION ON THE RIGHTS OF  
INDIGENOUS PERSONS CONCERNING  
HEALTHCARE

**MR. EDJERICON:** Yeah, thank you, Mr. Premier. Mr. Speaker, culturally safety training and medical travel modernization fall far short of the structured changes required to fulfill and realize the framework of UNDRIP, including Indigenous control over health services, ensuring Indigenous people have access to high quality of non-discriminative care. My question is the Premier.

Is the Premier satisfied with these shortcomings, and what will he do to ensure the Minister takes meaningful action to fully implement UNDRIP during the remaining of this term? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh. Mr. Premier.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I heard the Member mention the Minister's priorities of medical travel and cultural safety. I am not sure if he mentioned the other priority of care in small communities, and so I think a

focus on care in small communities, which are primarily Indigenous in the territory, is -- you know, is a direct -- you can directly point to that to say we are working to fulfill the treaties. But I will comment since I am on the subject there that we do fulfill the treaties, I would say more than any other jurisdiction in Canada. We put more effort into ensuring that we do fulfill the treaties. I am very confident in the Minister of health, and when I travel around the territory and I meet with different leaders, including Indigenous leaders from the Member's own riding, they go out of their way to tell me what a good job the Minister is doing and how much faith they have in her. So, Mr. Speaker, I am excited with the changes that are happening. I can see the -- you know, we -- I have access to more of what's going on, I would say, than obviously the general population, and there's a lot of stuff happening in the departments right from putting in a public administrator, to straighten things out, to ensuring that we are understanding what we're actually spending money on, to ensuring that the medical travel is being dealt with today. You know, we're not waiting until next term to start looking into this. So there's a lot of great things happening, and things do take time, but we're seeing those changes now. And I think that in the next few years, we're going to see a significant transformation of the healthcare system in the Northwest Territories for the better. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. EDJERICON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Does the Premier believe the Minister of Health and Social Services is upholding the spirit of consensus government and the open collaborative approach required in her mandate letter when she refused to work with Regular Members on protecting treaty rights and improving quality of care of Indigenous people received through medical travel policies? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, I don't accept the premise of the Member's question. We do uphold the spirit of consensus government. Ministers appear in front of committees. Committees give feedback to Ministers. Ministers go and give direction to departments informed by that feedback. Just because a Member is not getting everything they want or they make promises that the Minister can't deliver on for them, it doesn't mean that we're not fulfilling the promise of consensus government, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Premier. Final supplementary. Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

**MR. EDJERICON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Meaningful progress is not being made by the Minister in advancing UNDRIP or upholding treaties, strengthening partnerships with First Nations as required in her mandate letter. What steps will the Premier take to ensure these commitments are fulfilled during the remaining of his term? Thank you.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We're going to stay the course because, again, I don't agree with the premise of the Member's question. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Premier. Oral questions. Member from Yellowknife Centre.

QUESTION 986-20(1):  
FIRE SAFETY IN ENCAMPMENTS

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to return to the homeless encampments. To be clear, I didn't say unhoused - the homeless encampment.

Mr. Speaker, the one downtown and near Sir John and the one set up right underneath the transmission lines that come from Snare into the City of Yellowknife, Mr. Speaker -- those big lines, yes. Mr. Speaker, they continue to have fires there. They continue to have jerry cans there, and it continues to be a -- well, we'll say a mess. I think that's about the safest parliamentary word I will use today, Mr. Speaker. But the Minister knows what I am talking about.

So, Mr. Speaker, what is the Minister doing under her portfolio of homelessness to clean up that camp and let them move over to that huge investment they created by the golf club? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Yellowknife Centre. Minister responsible for Housing NWT.

**HON. LUCY KUPTANA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, our homelessness department within Housing Northwest Territories works closely with encampment individuals, works closely with partners, with the City of Yellowknife, with the Salvation Army, with the YWCA. We do have a Yellowknife partnership committee that meets regularly, along with the NWT fire marshal, along with environment and climate change officials. So we do this constant communications and outreach including visits with the encampments. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister dovetailed perfectly into my next question. I was driving by the museum the other day and saw the old stove type barrelling

smoke, Mr. Speaker, unregulated I am sure, Mr. Speaker, and the Minister said fire marshal. Mr. Speaker, when has the fire marshal officially given their stamp of approval that these two encampments are safe? Thank you.

**HON. LUCY KUPTANA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Since the NWT fire marshal doesn't report to me, I don't have that information at this time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister of Housing NWT. Final supplementary. Member from Yellowknife Centre.

**MR. HAWKINS:** Mr. Speaker, she is the one saying we're working together so there must be some information she can supply this House or this Member in particular. Mr. Speaker, I ask again, would the Minister prove that the fire marshal is comfortable and confident that those two locations are safe and Yellowknifers are -- and these individuals are not put at risk. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. LUCY KUPTANA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, working closely with Yellowknife partnership's committee and the homelessness division. I think that there's constant communication and outreach, and we can provide details to the Member with the question. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister responsible for Housing NWT. Oral questions. Member from Range Lake.

QUESTION 987-20(1):  
COST OF LIVING SUBSIDIES FOR POWER  
RATES

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is in Yellowknife, so you're not wrong.

Mr. Speaker, a number of my constituents have had very concerning power bills over the coldest months of the year with some of their -- some of their bills doubling, and it's very concerning. I've mentioned it before. We subsidize power rates. It's clear that the structural fixes are going to take far more time than we have to provide relief to Northerners who are struggling every day. Can the Minister of -- responsible for NTPC tell me how -- or what subsidies are available to shield Yellowknifers in my riding from the rising cost of power? Thank you.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there is a new cost of living subsidy that is being applied directly to all customer utility bills in the Northwest

Territories meant to reflect the changes that came about following the general rate application last year. Thank you.

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the cost of -- I believe it was the cost of living subsidy. So will that directly impact the bills that my constituents are paying? Because that's what it -- because that's where the rubber meets the road. Are they going to see increasing costs, or are they going to see a stabilized cost going forward where they're not going to see these shocks month on month; that's what they want to know. And I am hoping the Minister can tell me. Thank you.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, so at the conclusion of the general rate application process, there was increases that were instituted by the public utilities board to reflect a variety of increases in costs which they go through a public process of reviewing. At the conclusion of that process, they did determine that there would be increases to everyone's rates, and that is what people are seeing now, is the conclusion of that process. The GNWT doesn't completely cover all increases to all utilities costs but they have instituted the cost of living subsidy to mitigate those increases so they're not as great as they would otherwise have been. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister responsible for NTPC. Final supplementary. Member from Range Lake.

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It seems like the majority of subsidies are going to diesel zones rather than hydro zones. So is the Minister willing to implement a new rate subsidy for customers in the capital? It's half the population. There's a lot of people paying higher bills. Will the Minister bring forward enhanced subsidies to lower the cost for my constituents? Thank you.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's in fact the folks down in the Taltson zone who are seeing the largest rate impacts. They had been paying an amount that wasn't reflective of the impacts of having increased infrastructure in their region and as a result of that, Mr. Speaker, it's actually that area that's seeing the greatest increase, not folks who are in the northern zone on this particular occasion. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 988-20(1):  
AIR AMBULANCE CONTRACTS

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have another set of questions for Minister of Health and Social Services.

So the ten-year contract for air ambulance services in NWT was signed last May with Access Air Ambulance, a joint venture between Air Tindi, several Indigenous development corporations, and Advanced Medical Solutions, which was bought a few days later by a non-northern company. The total value of the latest contract was \$425 million, almost three times the value of the previous ten-year contract for air ambulances.

So my question, through the contract Access Air Ambulance has committed to achieving substantial levels of NWT content as per the Business Incentive Policy. Can the Minister tell us what does substantial levels of NWT content mean exactly? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Yellowknife North. Minister responsible for -- or sorry, Minister of Health and Social Services.

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And so according to the BIP online, substantial levels means the contractor must show meaningful, not token, use of northern capacity; for example, through NWT registered subcontractors, local staff, and services delivered from the Northwest Territories. The goal is to maximize economic benefit for the Northwest Territories residents, support local jobs and skills, and recognize the higher cost of doing business in the North. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Can the Minister tell us what happens if HSS or the health authority or GNWT decides that the contractor has not achieved substantial levels of NWT content; what happens in that case for a ten-year contract such as this? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as this is an essential service to the residents of the Northwest Territories, it is where our most vulnerable are having to be moved from small communities to the regional centres, regional centres that need to have access in the capital, and to the southern -- to Alberta. Within this -- you know, I'd have to get back to the Member on how procurement is done. I am very familiar with a lot of the portfolios; however, procurement is not one of the things that I delve down into on a day-to-day basis. So I would have to get back to the back. Thank you.

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

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can certainly appreciate that so I appreciate the Minister getting back to us.

And so, finally, particularly given that the number of air ambulance rides that are required has actually been slightly decreasing over the last three years, can the Minister commit to providing detailed justification for why taxpayers are suddenly paying three times the amount for this contract? For example, what new services are going to be provided, why those new services are necessary. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I can recall from the conversation yesterday that we were starting on this, I don't have all the details. What I do have is that from what was mentioned, we had in the old contract fixed costs that cushioned the price inflation and the volume in the numbers. The new contract had to address the new volumes, inflation, and the contract was based on volumes from ten years ago -- only the contract was based on volumes from ten years ago. So this new contract includes new planes that travel faster, can travel longer distance, less down time for planes and staffing based on staffing configurations. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### QUESTION 989-20(1): TALTSON HYDRO EXPANSION

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions will be directed to the Minister responsible for strategic infrastructure, and it's in particular to the Taltson briefing we had the other day.

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the briefing, and I certainly am a fan of the overall concept of the project. One of the things mentioned by the witnesses about the fears or concerns that we must protect to make sure we don't mortgage or children and grandchildren, etcetera, and I think he was quite correct in that observation. So my question in particular to the Minister is that when will a business case actually be built in detail to ensure that we have that kind of answer to find out if we can afford this particular initiative before we proceed and hope the customers do come one day. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Yellowknife Centre. Minister responsible for infrastructure and energy.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** That's me. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there is a very detailed business case. It was developed back, I want to say roughly 2020, 2021. But, Mr. Speaker, the next question -- the second question that was asked as to whether or not we can afford it, the simple fact, Mr. Speaker, is that the GNWT alone cannot afford a project that is into the \$3 billion although I might spin it on its head and part of the comment that was being referenced wasn't mine; it was by one of the other Members who attended from another -- as a representative for one of the other governments that's participating, and the concern being about what we're doing for our future generations, Mr. Speaker, it's a question of can we afford not to invest in our energy infrastructure, and I'd suggest, Mr. Speaker, that we cannot. We need to find a path forward. That path forward's going to have to be partnership with other governments. Thank you.

**MR. HAWKINS:** Mr. Speaker, just like my colleague from Range Lake had pointed out, exorbitant power fees, my concern and the concern of people is this, simply clearly, we can build it for any price, sure, but can we afford it and what kind of rate riders are going to be on this? So, Mr. Speaker, has that analysis been started, and when can we expect that analysis to be public to find out what the increased costs to the bottom line of Northerners' power bills will be? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, Mr. Speaker, there is a very detailed business case that looks at different types of structures for this project. There's two parts to it. There's the transmission line that connects our north and south hydro grids, and the second part would be utilizing water that's already in the reservoir and that's not currently being used to generate more power. There's the opportunity to bring Indigenous governments into this project, make them owners of the project, figuring out what kind of equity sources they have and what might backstop, what kinds of funds stacks they might have, as well as then on the other side. Mr. Speaker, the simple reality is if we were to build this entirely as a utility, as -- then it was an infrastructure investment go on to ratepayers, that's a rule of the public utilities board, not mine. That is not an option, Mr. Speaker, for all the reasons that we're already talking about. Folks can't afford that. The residents can't afford that. And we're going to need to find a different funding stack. That has been long what's chased this project -- not long but I would suggest has delayed this project, but we do now need to find that funding stack, and I am committed to doing so.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister responsible for strategic infrastructure and energy. Final supplementary. Member from Yellowknife Centre.

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate that. To me, it's about the three Ps. I like the project. I like the partners. I am afraid of the payments, Mr. Speaker. When will there be a clear and transparent business case put before the public so we know what the realities will be and what the offsets if we do get any support from government -- federal government so we can see what the actual payment might be before we have a go/no-go on this particular initiative. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I said there was -- there's a very long and detailed business case. It was shared with MLAs earlier this Assembly. And, again, happy to share it confidentially. It was held confidentially in part, Mr. Speaker, because there's other partners involved in the project, and there's considerations that they may have around what -- how they may want to structure their own affairs in this particular instance. As well, Mr. Speaker, the more detailed we get into the costs of something can potentially affect the procurement process that we go out to. If it's well known that something costs \$10, you run very much a risk that you get bids of exactly \$10, if not more. So, Mr. Speaker, but that's not to say that we aren't going out to the public to make sure people are aware of what the project is, what the costs are, and how it might get paid for, and that, then, can hopefully answer exactly the questions of what will be the -- what will be the payments to be made and to what extent are -- is the GNWT exposing to risk. That is exactly the question that has to be made before this thing goes into procurement. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister responsible for strategic infrastructure and energy. Oral questions. Member from Range Lake.

QUESTION 990-20(1):  
ARCTIC ECONOMIC SECURITY CORRIDOR

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd also like to ask questions for the Minister of Strategic Infrastructure, Energy, and Supply Chains.

The Arctic Economic and Security Corridor is a crucial strategic priority of this government and Canada. Obviously, it's in the planning stages. We're not shovel ready at all. The question I have is about the billions of dollars that have been promised in new defence spending in the

Northwest Territories. Is any of that contingent on the ASEC corridor? Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Range Lake. Minister responsible for Strategic Infrastructure, Energy, and Supply Chains.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I presume the billions being referenced are the recent advanced procurement announcement that were out online not too long ago. Mr. Speaker, to my knowledge, those two items are both directed at the airports predominantly, both in Inuvik and in Yellowknife, and are not tied to nor necessarily, you know, dependent upon what may be happening with the Arctic Economic Security Corridor. Thank you.

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That comes as a relief as one will not necessarily impede the other. So when it comes to ASEC, which I will call the corridor for short, how close are we to a routing decision? Thank you.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, that work is very much underway right now, and it's being done in partnership. To date, the partnership formally is an MOU arrangement, working group work arrangement, between the Government of the Northwest Territories, the Tlicho, and the Yellowknives Dene First Nation. There was certainly some significant comments and commitments made in our -- on our side as a government knowing that there are other Indigenous governments with interests in this area who will want to ensure they're -- that they are engaged and involved in final routing decisions. And that was reflected when the signing took place at Roundup recently by all three parties. So I was not expecting the question here today. I do think we have some target dates, and I don't want to get them wrong. I believe it is -- it is this year, Mr. Speaker. As to the month, I will need a few minutes to go and look through my notes quickly. But it is well known that we need to move this forward quickly, that a routing decision needs to be made, and then we move -- need to move on to figuring out how this project gets paid for and procured. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister of Strategic Infrastructure, Energy, and Supply Chains. Member from Range Lake. Final supplementary.

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, that is good news that we'll have a firm date, and I welcome the receipt of that either here or elsewhere.

As it relates to the Grays Bay project on the other end of the corridor, can the Minister give

a status update on the Nunavut side of the project as it is crucial, again, to the completion of this, to the best of her ability of course. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Range Lake. That was pretty close to being a new question, but I will allow it. Minister responsible for Strategic Infrastructure, Energy, and Supply Chains.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, they may sound like different things; the two certainly are linked. The one project does depends on the other. The other -- they each depend on one another, and it is well accepted that the routing on both sides will need to align at the border in order to make this truly a corridor that impacts all of this country. So as a national corridor, it makes sense that it's going to connect.

Mr. Speaker, I have often been asked to speak on the corridor over the last couple of years and when I am, I can say that typically representatives from the West Kitikmeot are also there. So all sides, all parties are frequently meeting together, we're speaking together, we're promoting this project together.

My understanding is that they're in an environmental assessment process for a corridor, not necessarily a final routing, and we're looking to get our final routing done. So I would say that both parties are at a roughly -- roughly the same point in a way. They're just at different points doing it in a slightly different way. But the two do depend on one to the other. And, Mr. Speaker, just to shore the point up, this is a national -- project of national interest. It's in the national major projects office already, and we're committed to seeing it through. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister responsible for Strategic Infrastructure, Energy, and Supply Chains. Oral questions. Member from Yellowknife Centre.

QUESTION 991-20(1):  
FIRE MARSHALL'S OFFICE AND  
ENCAMPMENTS

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Recently, I raised with the Minister of MACA about how the NWT fire marshal's job is -- one of its responsibilities is to ensure about home -- or building inspections in the communities. I am looking forward to hearing what his plan is about filling the gap that they are not inspecting building plans and buildings in communities outside of their fire responsibility. Thank you.

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

**HON. VINCE MCKAY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yeah, we have done a review of the fire marshal's office, and we have seen concerns of a gap. We are addressing those. We've upped staff with a position in Yellowknife to help take some of that strain off the area. You know, so our goal is here to provide a service for the residents of the Northwest Territories and Yellowknife. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Can the Minister speak to how long this practice has been ongoing. Thank you.

**HON. VINCE MCKAY:** Try to clarify what practice he's speaking of but, Mr. Speaker, we've had a fire marshal in -- the fire marshal in Yellowknife for many years. However, due to ongoing, you know, legislative priorities, workloads for different types of things at headquarters, you know, the goal was to add some support for doing inspections in the area, along with regional assistant fire marshals throughout the regions. We've added another assistant fire marshal in the area here to assist in the Yellowknife region. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's been a well-known secret within the department that the fire marshal does not do building inspections outside of the city of Yellowknife. The City of Yellowknife has its own process. So my question specifically is how long is this practice of refusal to do this because it's a well-known culture secret within the Department of Infrastructure as well as the GNWT, and I want to make sure this problem stops. Thank you.

**HON. VINCE MCKAY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The responsibility of the fire marshal's office is to do building inspections as they develop or also occupancy loads or anything like that. So, you know, the City of Yellowknife also has bylaws that they may have in place for their building inspectors or whatever, but the fire marshal's office has the authority and has the legislative authority to do inspections on buildings in the Northwest Territories. And like I said earlier, our fire marshal in Yellowknife is -- you know, has been -- the workload has been quite a bit and ongoing pressures, so we've added the

assistant fire marshal position here in Yellowknife to assist with that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs. Oral questions. Member from Yellowknife North.

QUESTION 992-20(1):  
ASPEN APARTMENTS

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a question for the Minister of housing and homelessness.

We saw the announcement the end of last November that the renovations had been completed on the building that was formally known as Aspen Apartments to the end of establishing transitional housing units for about -- well, 36 -- 36 units. Can the Minister give us an update now; have people moved in, or how many people have moved in if so? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Yellowknife North. Minister responsible for Housing NWT.

**HON. LUCY KUPTANA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you to the Member for the question. Aspen Apartments was an ongoing renovation for the last couple of years, and we did have the opening. And with that opening, though, we found that there were some electrical that still needed to be done, so we delayed moving clients in. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So does the Minister now have an updated timeline on when they expect either the full suite of clients to move in or sort of a phased-in gradual move in of residents? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. LUCY KUPTANA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the latest update I have from Housing NWT is the apartment building has been shifted over to Yellowknife Housing Authority to move tenants in. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister responsible for Housing NWT. Final supplementary. Member from Yellowknife North.

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So can the Minister explain what will be different about this model of transitional housing to be set up at Aspen Apartments. Is there going to be enhanced supports on site versus some of the other public housing units in Yellowknife? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. LUCY KUPTANA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the Member again for the question. This is really important work that we're doing with Housing NWT because we're finding that sometimes we need to add the element of supportive care, wraparound supports. We're finding it throughout the North that many people are going into housing, and sometimes they don't have those personal living skills, and it's really important that we help them to be successful in housing because, again, we only have limited housing across the North and many times those relationships are fragile. So supportive living and wraparound supports with Aspen Apartments is a new venture we're doing with Yellowknife Housing Authority. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister responsible for Housing NWT. Colleagues, time for oral questions is up. Oral questions. Written questions. Returns to written questions. Replies to the Commissioner's address. Petitions. Tabling of documents. Minister of Justice.

### Tabling of Documents

TABLED DOCUMENT 459-20(1):  
GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES RESPONSE TO COMMITTEE REPORT 26-20(1): REPORT ON THE STATUTORY REVIEW OF THE LEGAL AID ACT

TABLED DOCUMENT 460-20(1):  
GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES RESPONSE TO COMMITTEE REPORT 30-20(1): REPORT ON THE REVIEW OF THE 2024-2025 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES INFORMATION AND PRIVACY COMMISSIONER

TABLED DOCUMENT 461-20(1):  
GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES RESPONSE TO COMMITTEE REPORT 32-20(1): REPORT ON THE REVIEW OF THE 2024-2025 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following three documents: Government of the Northwest Territories Response to Committee Report 26-20(1), Report on the Statutory Review of the Legal Aid Act; Government of the Northwest Territories Response to Committee Report 30-20(1), Report on the Review of the 2024-2025 Annual Report of the Northwest Territories Information

and Privacy Commissioner; and, Government of the Northwest Territories Response to Committee Report 32-20(1), Report on the Review of the 2024-2025 Annual Report of the Northwest Territories Human Rights Commission. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister of Justice. Tabling of documents. Notices of motion. Motions. Notices of motion for the first reading of bills. First reading of bills. Minister of Health and Social Services.

### First Reading of Bills

BILL 40:  
AN ACT TO AMEND THE VITAL STATISTICS ACT,  
DEEMED READ

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Mr. Speaker, I wish to present to the House Bill 40, An Act to Amend the Vital Statistics Act, to be read for the first time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister. Pursuant to Rule 8.2(3), Bill 40 is deemed to have first reading and is ready for second reading.

First reading of bills. Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs.

BILL 41:  
AN ACT TO AMEND THE REAL ESTATE AGENTS LICENSING ACT,  
DEEMED READ

**HON. VINCE McKAY:** Mr. Speaker, I wish to present to the House Bill 41, An Act to Amend the Real Estate Agents Licensing Act, to be read for the first time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs. Pursuant to Rule 8.2(3), Bill 41 is deemed to have first reading and is ready for seconding reading.

First reading of bills. Second reading of bills. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters, Tabled Document 448-20(1), Tabled Document 453-20(1), Tabled Document 454-20(1), with the Member from Tu Nedhe-Wilideh in the chair.

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

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** I now call the Committee of the Whole to order. I am going to go to the Member -- sorry, what is the wish of the committee? I will go to the Member from Inuvik Boot Lake.

**MR. RODGERS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, the committee wishes to consider Tabled Document 448-20(1), 2026-2027 Main Estimates, Department of Health and Social Services and the Department of ECC. Committee also wishes to consider Tabled Document 453-20(1), Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 3, 2025-2026. And, Tabled Document 454-20(1), Supplementary Estimates, (Operations Expenditures and Borrowing Authorization), No. 3, 2025-2026. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. We'll take a short break.

--SHORT RECESS

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Committee, we have agreed to consider Tabled Document 448-20(1), 2026-2027 Main Estimates. We will now consider the Department of Health and Social Services. Does the Minister of Health and Social Services wish to bring in witnesses into the House?

**HON. LESEA SEMMLER:** Yes.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Sergeant-at-Arms, please escort the witnesses into the chambers.

Thank you. Would the Minister please introduce her witnesses.

**HON. LESEA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. To my left, I have deputy minister Alan Doody. And to my right, I have assistant deputy minister Jeannie Mathison.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you. Committee, we will resume consideration of Department of Health and Social Services where we ended yesterday. Committee, we were considering the information items on page 217 to 221. Are there any questions? Okay, thank you.

Members, return now to department summary found on page 189, with information items found on pages 190 to 196. Are there any questions? Seeing no further questions, committee, I will now call the department summary.

Health and social services, operations expenditures, total 2026-2027 Main Estimates, \$728,039,000. Does the committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you, committee. Thank you to the Minister and thanks to the witnesses for appearing before us. Sergeant-at-Arms, please escort the witnesses from the chambers.

Committee, we will now move on to Tabled Document 453-20(1), Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 3, 2025-2026.

Committee, we have agreed to consider Tabled Document 453-20(1), Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 3, 2025-2026. Does the Minister of Finance wish to bring in witnesses to the chamber?

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Yes, please, Mr. Chair.

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Sergeant-at-Arms, please escort the witnesses into the chambers.

Thank you. Would the Minister please introduce her witnesses.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, on my left I have Bill MacKay, the deputy minister of finance. On my right, Mandi Bolstad, the deputy secretary to the financial management board.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Does the committee agree to proceed to the detail contained in the tabled documents?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Committee, we will begin at page 5 with the Department of Environment and Climate Change.

Department of Environment and Climate Change, capital investment expenditures, wildlife and forest management, not previously authorized, \$74,000. Are there any questions? Okay, seeing no further questions.

Department of Environment and Climate Change, capital investment expenditures, wildlife and forest management, not previously authorized, \$74,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Department of Environment and Climate Change, capital investment expenditures, total

department not previously authorized, \$74,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Committee, we will now consider the Department of Finance on page 6.

Department of Finance, capital investment expenditures, Office of the Chief Information Officer, not previously authorized, negative \$1,811,000. Are there any questions? Seeing no further questions.

Department of Finance, capital investment expenditures, Office of the Chief Information Officer, not previously authorized, negative \$1,811,000. Does the committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Department of Finance, capital investment expenditures, total number, not previously authorized, negative \$1,811,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Committee, we will now consider the Department of Health and Social Services on page 7.

Department of Health and Social Services, capital investment expenditures, administrative and support services, not previously authorized, negative \$221,000. Are there any questions?

Sorry, not previously authorized, negative \$221,000. Are there any questions? Seeing no further questions.

Department of Health and Social Services, capital investment expenditures, administrative and support services, not previously authorized, negative \$221,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Department of Health and Social Services, capital investment expenditures, health and social services programs, not previously authorized, \$5,041,000. Are there any questions?

I will go to the Member from Great Slave

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I would love to understand more about what sped up the Tulita health centre project and

how we can maybe mimic that success to other projects. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I don't necessarily have detail as to what sped it up. I'd be more than happy to report that back to the House. I take it from the tone of the question it certainly wouldn't hold up moving this through, but don't disagree with that. So can certainly -- I will say one thing is largely around with respect to mobilization and may well be in part as a result of just some of the mobilization costs and managing to streamline those. But, again, happy to perhaps report that in some more detail and I share the -- I share the view. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I will go back to the Member from Great Slave.

**MS. REID:** No, thank you, Mr. Chair, that's all.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay. Is there any further questions? Seeing no further questions.

Department of Health and Social Services, capital investment expenditures, health and social services programs, not previously authorized, \$5,041,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Department of Health and Social Services, capital investment expenditures, total department not previously authorized, \$4,820,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you, Members. There is a schedule on page 8 that details the impacts of capital estimates. This schedule is not a voteable item and is included as information only. Are there any questions? Seeing no further questions. As this is not a voteable item, we will move on.

Committee, do you agree that you have concluded consideration of Tabled Document 453-20(1), Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 3, 2025-2026?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** I will go to the Member from the Deh Cho.

COMMITTEE MOTION 137-20(1):  
 CONCURRENCE MOTION – TABLED  
 DOCUMENT 453-20(1): SUPPLEMENTARY  
 ESTIMATES (INFRASTRUCTURE  
 EXPENDITURES), NO. 3, 2025-2026,  
 CARRIED

**MRS. YAKELEYA:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I move that consideration of Tabled Document 453-20(1), Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 3, 2025-2026, be now concluded and that Tabled Document 453-20(1) be reported and recommended as ready for further consideration in formal session through the form of an appropriation bill. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Question.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? Motion carried.

Tabled Document 453-20(1) will be reported as ready for consideration in formal session through the form of an appropriation bill.

--Carried

I want to thank the Minister and thank the witnesses for appearing before us today. I am going to ask the Sergeant-at-Arms to excuse the Members. Thank you.

Committee, we have agreed to consider Tabled Document 454-20(1), Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures and Borrowing Authorization), No. 3, 2025-2026. Does the Minister of Finance wish to bring in witness into the House?

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Yes, please, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Sergeant-at-Arms, please re-escort the witnesses back into the chamber. Okay, let's continue on. We already know the witnesses.

Does the committee agree to proceed to the details contained in the tabled documents? Committee -- does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. Committee, we will begin on page 3 with

the Department of Education, Culture and Employment.

Department of Education, Culture and Employment, operations expenditures, corporate management, not previously authorized, \$371,000. Are there any questions? Seeing no further questions.

Department of Education, Culture and Employment, corporate management, not previously authorized, \$371,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Department of Education, Culture and Employment, operations expenditures, education, not previously authorized, \$1,867,000. Does committee agree? Okay, I am going to go to the Member from Yellowknife North.

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So we're looking at \$529,000 here for costs associated with the lead testing program in school drinking water systems, including remediation and providing alternative sources. Can the Minister tell us how many schools are covered by this expenditure as we have continued to see each month --

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** -- sorry, my apologies to the Member from YK North. There's a process here I got to move through, so just give me one second. Thank you.

Department of Education, Culture and Employment, operations expenditures, education, not previously authorized, \$1,867,000. Are there any questions? I am going to go to the Member to Yellowknife North.

**MS. MORGAN:** Rewind. Okay. Well, with regard to money for lead testing in school drinking water systems and remediation and provision of alternative water sources, can the first tell us how many schools this this money has been spent on so far and, you know, how many more schools are still left to be tested as we continue to see more and more results trickle in that higher lead levels continue to pop up in schools around the territory. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank You Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, this funding is going to support a territory-wide program. So I don't know that I have the exact number of schools here but it is for all JK to 12 schools in the Northwest Territories to ensure that there's

supports both for testing, for immediate remediation measures for fixtures found in -- fixtures and fountains, and also provision of alternate drinking sources while those measures are being undertaken. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I will go back to the Member from Yellowknife North.

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Can the Minister at least tell us when was the cutoff for this total expenditures in that, you know, we've continued to see each week, up until very recently, new schools come to the forefront in terms of flags being raised that that there are lead problems there. So are these expenditures, like, up to last December? Up to January? Up to yesterday? You know, how -- yeah, up until when does this \$529,000 cover? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I will go back to the Minister.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, these are the costs projected to the end of this fiscal year given that this is a supplementary estimate that takes us -- this is the last supplementary estimate to the end of the 2026 -- like March 31st, 2026, fiscal year, and then obviously going into the new fiscal year, there's a new budget that comes in and we will determine whether or not additional funding would be needed after that point in time. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I will go to the Member from Yellowknife North.

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Does the Minister have any sense of how much of this expenditure has gone to the testing part and how much has gone to the remediation part, so the actual fixing the problems so that schools can go back to using their regular drinking water sources? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes, it's at this point the cost to provide drinking water and to support YK 1 schools was the more significant of the costs to date -- or sorry, not to date really. I guess as of, say, November 30th. The projected costs have it as being roughly equal amounts as between the testing initiative that's been undertaken, immediate remediation efforts, and then also to provide drinking water. So as I said, up to this point in time it was a little heavier weighted on ensuring availability of supports for in the short-term for -- like, the water fountain remediation and water, but between now and

the end of the fiscal, it roughly evens out. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I will go back to the Member from Yellowknife North.

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So given that we're getting more and more information about problems that we're seeing in schools, has any funding for this been included in the mains for 2026-2027, anticipating that we will continue to be needing to address both testing and remediation in school drinking water systems over the coming year? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, this wouldn't have been anticipated at the time that the main estimates were being developed. It actually is sort of an example of an issue that is -- a really good example of what would meet the criteria for being a supplementary estimate in that it was emergent over time and may well vary over the course of the next year. So it would have been difficult and still is likely difficult to know what the final costs would be. It would depend upon the state -- or of the testing that goes on, which schools need remediation, what kind of remediation and over what period of time. So the reason this came in as a supp was to ensure that work could get going immediately once it was clear that this was not seemingly isolated only to one or two schools but seemed that the initial tests were bringing back some -- or bringing back results that impacted a large number of schools, and so a supp was put in to ensure that the work wasn't going to be delayed until we knew what all of the school's tests were and that all -- and that that testing could be accelerated. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I will go to the Member from the Yellowknife North.

**MS. MORGAN:** That's all of my questions for now. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MR. TESTART:** No, thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Seeing no further questions.

Department of Education, Culture and Employment, education, not previously

authorized, \$1,867,000. Does the committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Department of Education, Culture and Employment, operations expenditures, income security, not previously authorized, \$3,335,000. Does committee agree?

Oh, I am going to go back to the Member from Range Lake.

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So this is a large increase. Can the Minister tell us what this funding is inclusive of. Thank you.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So this includes the drinking water testing and short-term remediations that were discussed just previously. There's also funds within this component here for funding under the national action plan to end gender-based violence. There's an amount here -- oh, sorry, Mr. Chair. Are we on -- my mistake. Let me just turn that to the deputy minister, please. I was looking at the wrong line item, please.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I will go to the deputy minister.

**MR. BILL McKAY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So this falls under the division in the department of education, income security, and they are responsible for student financial assistance, so they're seeking an increase to -- or a supplementary -- a supplement to their budget for the year to cover the costs of delivering that program over the course of this fiscal year. And that's due mainly to an increase in uptake more than was anticipated. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I will go back to the Member from Range Lake.

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. And are -- these student late fees from the last academic semester, are they covered by this increase? Thank you.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. No, Mr. Chair, this is related to, again, two main components. One is a shortfall in available funds because of a larger number of students who were applying as well as some changes in terms of the types of available -- or the types of a loan and the extent of a loan that

was available for students. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I will go to the Member from Range Lake.

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you. And are we seeing -- do we anticipate that we'll have to increase SFA budgets accordingly going forward to accommodate the increased uptake, or is this something that's somewhat of an anomaly based on trends of the program uptake? Thank you.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So, Mr. Chair, there there is in the 2026-2027 Budget, a proposed increase. Obviously that remains to be seen, how that goes here, but it's still before committee. But there is a proposed increase to student financial assistance. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I will go back to the Member from Range Lake.

**MR. TESTART:** And are these increases at all driven by increased fees at academic institutions, or is this merely driven by the number of students who are enrolling in the program? So I guess is it more expensive to go to university and that's why the rates are going up, or is it just because we have more students applying? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I will go to the Minister.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I don't know that I can 100 percent give that analysis here. Happy to take that back to the department. The request really at this point is driven by the demand but then also some changes in benefit levels. It may well be that the need for changes in benefit levels has some connection to higher costs on the -- on the side of the universities and/or other institutions themselves, but at this point I don't have that kind of analysis here. Thank you.

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

**MR. TESTART:** Nothing further. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Are there any further questions? Seeing no further questions.

Department of Education, Culture and Employment, income security, not previously

authorized, \$3,335,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. Department of Education, Culture and Employment, operations expenditures, labour development and standards, not previously authorized, \$483,000. Are there any questions? Seeing no further questions.

Department of Education, Culture and Employment, labour development and standards, not previously authorized, \$483,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Department of Education, Culture and Employment, operations expenditures, total department not previously authorized, \$6,056,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Turn to page 4 for the Department of Environment and Climate Change.

The Department of Environment and Climate Change, operations expenditures, corporate management, not previously authorized, \$260,000. Are there any questions?

I am going to go to the Member from Great Slave.

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. And, yeah, not to put this all on the Department of Environment and Climate Change; this is a recurrent cost throughout many departments. I believe it's in the range of \$3.5 million in TSC chargebacks across government in this supplementary estimate. Can the Minister tell me if this is representing good value for money, or what can be done to maintain and manage these costs? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Firstly, yes, investments in having technology that is modern and secure is good value for money. Only in the last few years, really, we brought a lot of our systems up to speed with respect to cyber security from a place where they were, you know, really behind a lot of other jurisdictions in Canada to being at the front end of what's available for cyber security requirements. And given the impact on people's information, on data on the services they depend upon, I would suggest that is very important.

With respect to that said, some of the -- some of the drivers of the cost fees or the costs, Mr. Chair, there's much higher licensing costs that we are facing from a number of the different services that we rely upon, so everything from Microsoft to Adobe, and there's very limited ability, particularly for a small jurisdiction, to try to negotiate that down. That said, Mr. Chair, there's some, I think, very active conversations with larger jurisdictions in Canada, particularly the federal government, around ways to better provide some economies of scale for jurisdictions such as ours. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I will go back to the Member from Great Slave.

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Nothing further.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Are there any further questions? Seeing no further questions.

Department of Environment and Climate Change, corporate management, not previously authorized, \$260,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Department of Environment and Climate Change, operations expenditures, environmental management and monitoring and climate change, not previously authorized, \$36,000. Are there any questions? Seeing no further questions.

Department of Environment and Climate Change, environmental management monitoring and climate change, not previously authorized, \$36,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Department of Environment and Climate Change, operations expenditures, wildlife and forest management, not previously authorized, \$18,191,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Are there any questions? Seeing no further questions.

Department of Environment and Climate Change -- oh sorry, my apologies. I will go to the Member from Yellowknife North.

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I first wanted to ask if the Minister has any details on the Canadian biomass mapping initiative contribution program clean fuels funds agreement. I understand that this is fully offset

by the federal government, but I wondered if the Minister had a quick description of what this is about. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So this is cost-shared. It does have some input from ECE, but that is through their existing work that they do. They're able to provide in kind to offset the funding requirement or funding proportion that is directed to them or expected from them. The program funds are for technical work such as high-resolution enhanced forest inventory, particularly in the area surrounding Fort Providence, as well as improving on modeling in the Taiga Plains ecozone. All of which is meant to help modernize some of our data that is now into the 10 to 30 years old range with respect to what is going on in these regions and the biodiversity and bioeconomy of those areas. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I will go back to the Member from Yellowknife North.

**MS. MORGAN:** Okay, thanks to the Minister for that. It's something that I will address hopefully later this week in some statement and questions about biomass economic opportunities.

I also just wanted to ask about -- so the shortfalls in fire suppression. We see \$18 million coming in this supp. My understanding is that this is the second supplementary request that has come in this fiscal year for fire suppression. Can the Minister remind us, including this \$18 million, what would be the total request for supplementary funds for fire suppression in the 2025-2026 year. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I will go to Minister.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. At this point, we're anticipating just shy of \$80.5 million. There's an original budget of \$20.9 million, and there was a supplementary appropriation this past fall and some recoveries, but all of which together totals out, as I say, to about just shy of \$80.5. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I will go back to the Member from Yellowknife North.

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. And so given the previous patterns of the federal government paying us back essentially for fire suppression efforts, does the Minister have an

estimate of how much of this we expect we might get repaid from the federal government in time? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So that work is actively underway right now to make the determination between both ECC, who are responsible for the fire suppression directly, but also MACA who would have a role in terms of emergency systems and emergency planning. It does take a bit of time. The federal system is fairly particular about what they expect and the reporting that they expect. And so I don't have that number right now but certainly would, of course, be reporting it in to the House when it is available, Mr. Chair. And certainly to temper expectations, it is not all of this money that would come in; it would be typically when a fire is -- and the fire suppression efforts are in relation to a community or somewhat -- or, like, assets. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I will go to the Member from Yellowknife North.

**MS. MORGAN:** Okay, no further questions now. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. Is there any further questions from Members? Seeing none.

Department of Environment and Climate Change, wildlife and forest management, not previously authorized, \$18,191,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. Department of Environment and Climate Change, total department not previously authorized, \$18,487,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Turn to page 5 for the Department of Executive and Indigenous Affairs.

Department of the Executive and Indigenous Affairs, operations expenditures, gender equity, not previously authorized, \$167,000. Are there any questions? Seeing no further questions.

Department of Executive and Indigenous Affairs, gender equity, not previously authorized, \$167,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Department of Executive and Indigenous Affairs, operations expenditures, governance and service integration, not previously authorized, \$254,000. Are there any questions? Seeing no further questions.

Department of Executive and Indigenous Affairs, governance and service integration, not previously authorized, \$254,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Department of Executive and Indigenous Affairs, operations expenditures, Office of the Secretary to Cabinet, not previously authorized, \$387,000. Are there any questions? Seeing no further questions.

Department of Executive and Indigenous Affairs, Office of the Secretary to the Cabinet, not previously authorized, \$387,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Department of Executive and Indigenous Affairs, total department not previously authorized, \$808,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Turn to page 6, the Department of Finance.

Department of Finance, operations expenditures, directorate, not previously authorized, \$8,318,000. Are there any questions? Seeing no further questions.

Department of Finance, directorate, not previously authorized -- sorry, my apologies. I am going to go to the Member from Yellowknife North

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So my understanding is that this \$8.3 million is largely to stabilize and establish a better sort of baseline for what emergency shelters need to sustain their operations, and it's intended to be, you know, catchup for 2025-2026 and then put into the mains going forward. This description says, though, that it's also to establish a new homelessness division. How much out of this \$8.3 million is just for the establishment of the new homelessness division, or was that done with, like, already existing internal resources? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I am going to go to the finance Minister.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's just over \$1 million that provides for compensation and benefits as well as the establishment of those positions. I mean, there's often associated startup costs for a new position but the remainder 7.2 -- just over \$7.2 million is contributions to emergency shelters in Yellowknife, Hay River, Inuvik, and Fort Simpson. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I will go to the Member from Yellowknife North.

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. And so was there -- I mean, my understanding is that a lot of work around homelessness has already been underway but, you know, it's been spread across executive and Indigenous affairs or housing or different departments. Was there any decrease in positions or resources anywhere else to sort of make way or make room for this new homelessness division, or is it just adding on to what we've already had? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I will go to the Minister.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So up to this point, the homelessness and the homelessness strategy that was developed in the last government and moved into this government resided initially in EIA and was a combination of staff, but not necessarily creating staff that was singularly responsible. As it's transitioned and coming to a point where implementation is reaching, you know, further down the process of implementation and moved into housing, the establishment of the homelessness division now is getting dedicated staff. So if I recall, there was one staff previously in Housing NWT now doing all of that implementation and coordination and bringing all of the pieces together that were previously spread across departments, and now this division will allow them to better oversee these increases in over \$7 million of increases and to ensure that -- and, really, that there's a better coordination and implementation going forward. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I will go to the Member from Yellowknife North.

**MS. MORGAN:** That's all for now. That information is helpful. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Is there any other Members that have questions? Seeing none.

Go to the Department of Finance, directorate, not previously authorized, \$8,318,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Department of Finance, total department not previously authorized, \$8,318,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Please turn to page 7 for the Department of Health and Social Services.

Department of Health and Social Services, operations expenditures, administrative and support services, not previously authorized, \$2,201,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Is there any questions? Seeing no further questions.

Department of Health and Social Services, administrative support services, not previously authorized, \$2,201,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. The Department of Health and Social Services, operations expenditures, health and social services programs, not previously authorized, \$10,692,000. Are there any questions?

I am going to go to the Member from Great Slave.

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, in this section, there is \$1.75 million to address increased costs for diagnostic laboratory services performed outside the territory. In the tabled main estimates for 2026-2027, we have a new 24/7 laboratory and diagnostic services unit being stood up. Is there contemplation that this sort of supplementary request will reduce or be eliminated by that new ask? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. The increase in the 24/7 servicing improves services, improves the timeliness of service, and likely will, but I can't say that with certainty, only because one of the other cost drivers has been an increase in demand. So without knowing whether or not the testing volumes continues to outweigh perhaps with more availability of services, hard to say. And

also inflationary pressure. So this is a service that when sent outside of the territory is driven by a contract. And if the contract costs change, then that also can increase the costs. So, yeah, again, hopefully yes, but, really, the 24/7 service is one that can -- you know, is likely to have a wider impact than just -- it wasn't being driven entirely or exclusively by a cost -- a reduction in other costs. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I will go back to the Member from Great Slave.

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate that. There is another item under this activity where \$348,000 is allotted to provide funding for the purchase of COVID-19 vaccines. And I am wondering if this cost overrun was due to the fact that some orders were invalid in transport and more had to be repurchased. I know that in the flu and COVID vaccine clinics, there was a sort of pause in being available -- the availability of the COVID vaccine last fall. And I am wondering if this is a shortfall addressing that particular issue. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I will go to the Minister.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, excellent question. That amount was not the cost driver on this particular request. I mean, that -- the amounts there -- I don't have that exact amount here, but that wasn't one that was of a sufficient nature to result in this request. This request is entirely because federal funding ended for COVID vaccines in 2024-2025 which meant that for the coming year for that -- for this 2025-2026 year, GNWT had to purchase their own vaccines. And so they went through the process of updating eligibility recommendations, running a diagnostic of what would be anticipated to be needed. Some -- again, there was some challenges with a portion of that, but overall the main purchase agreement was because the federal government has exited this space. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I will go back to the Member from Great Slave.

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So I can understand that answer, but I can only presume that the feds exiting the space, as the Minister just stated, would have been known in advance or was it, indeed, known in advance. It seems like something that you would hope you would know quite a ways in advance, but perhaps I am mistaken. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Perhaps the Minister can clarify.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, it did meet the cutoff in terms of, you know, having it in main estimates, but it also -- if I am not -- if I understand correctly. Mr. Chair, I certainly will come back to the Members if there's an incorrect -- if this is not accurate. But the challenge here is knowing what the anticipated amount of doses would be to meet what the recommendations were. And in this case, that wasn't known with finality until later in the fiscal year. So it -- again, because there's a -- can be a change -- in this case there was a change in the eligibility recommendations and then coupled with determining whether -- knowing what that change was and then trying to extrapolate what the demand would be made it difficult to know for certain what the then purchase amount would need to be or -- that's right, or what the pricing would be at the end. So putting all those three things together resulted, then, in the final numbers not being available in time other than to come through by way of a supplementary appropriation. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I will go back to the Member from Great Slave.

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So was the GNWT's estimate of uptake of the vaccines lowballing, I guess, for lack of a better term? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. No, Mr. Chair, we don't -- we don't want to lowball. And if anything, Mr. Chair, I would note, and folks should be aware, that, you know, there's a disproportionate impact on Indigenous residents of -- well, Indigenous Canadians and therefore a significant impact on Northerners with 50 percent Indigenous population as they have statistically faced higher and more -- higher risk of more serious COVID impacts. And so in this case, the doses were ordered in such a manner as to meet the public health recommendations of who should be prioritized of receiving them. And in this case actually it was the chief public health officer expanded eligibility to include more high-risk populations, and that's what increased the forecast by over double in terms of what was determined to be required. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I will go back to the Member from Great Slave.

**MS. REID:** Thank You, Mr. Chair. Good to know, and nothing further.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Is there any further questions? I will go to the Member from the Yellowknife North.

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just first following up quickly on -- my colleague asked some good questions about the 24/7 lab that is being proposed in this budget. And I am wondering -- so the last item on the list for \$317,000 to provide funding for laboratory and diagnostic imaging for outpatient collections -- well, first I am wondering why this is coming to us in supps but also whether this is again something that might be mitigated by a 24/7 model at the Stanton lab. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes, this was an occasion that will connect in to the proposed 24/7 lab staffing. This would bridge where things were at through to what is hoped to be the change that will take place as of April 1st if the main estimates are approved. It provided for early hiring of eight outpatient laboratory diagnostic imaging positions at Stanton. That addressed some of the immediate wait times and returned the same-day appointments back to the position -- or to the frequency with which they were previously, so -- and it is certainly expected that with a 24/7 staffing model that that will subsume this temporary measure. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I will go back to the Member from Yellowknife North.

**MS. MORGAN:** Okay, thank you, Mr. Chair. Again, that's helpful to know.

I also wanted to ask about the funding for the in territory child and family supports program. That's \$832,000. So why is this coming to us in supps, and what exactly is involved there? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I will go to the Minister.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So this in territory child and family supports, this is an area that supports youth who are in need of supports through, for example the Tlicho Community Services Agency as well as Hay River Health and Social Services Agency, foster placements by both of those agencies, family support agreements, group homes across different regions and communities. As for why it comes in the form of a supp, Mr. Chair, there -- it is demand driven and so if there's a higher than anticipated need,

then that -- then the budget amount that is allotted for the course of a fiscal year obviously doesn't cover it. And in some cases, the health and social services system don't necessarily know what the final numbers will be until they're later in the fiscal year. So I would also note one of the other things that has happened over the last few years, there have been increases in per diem rates in the last few years which is impacting the cost of foster placement care. As well, Mr. Chair, some changes in the types of supports that are being driven by changes to the Child and Family Services Act, and so as a result of all that, even with forced growth increases in the last couple of years, this -- the program saw, it was in a shortfall. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I will go back to the Members from Yellowknife North.

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. The Minister referenced changes to the Child and Family Services Act. My understanding was that we are expecting to start reviewing changes to the Child and Family Services Act later this Assembly and that changes were not made in the last Assembly, so I am not sure what recent changes the Minister is speaking of. Can the Minister clarify? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes, absolutely. So there was amendments back in 2016, but that then has resulted in, you know -- at least it's one of the reasons that's resulting in increased costs, which is to say that there are more children who are staying in their homes and then under voluntary support services agreements which do have costs associated as well as a last round of changes extended services for youth to the age of 23, which again increases the costs if there's a group or a cohort within that age bracket that are drawing on those services. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I will go to the Member from Yellowknife North.

**MS. MORGAN:** That's all my questions for now. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Are there any further questions from Members? Okay, seeing none. I am going to continue on seeing no further questions.

Department of Health and Social Services, health and social services programs, not previously authorized, \$10,692,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Department of Health and Social Services, operations expenditures, long-term continuing care services, not previously authorized, \$3,700,000. Are there any questions? Seeing no further questions.

Department of Health and Social Services, long-term care and continuing care services, not previously authorized, \$3,700,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Department of Health and Social Services, operations expenditures, out of territory services, not previously authorized, \$26,624,000. Are there any questions? Seeing no further questions.

Department of Health and Social Services, out of territory services, not previously authorized, \$26,624,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. The Department of Health and Social Services, operations expenditures, supplementary health benefits, not previously authorized, \$4,293,000. Are there any questions? Seeing no further questions.

Department of Health and Social Services, supplementary health benefits, not previously authorized, \$4,293,000. Does the committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Department of Health and Social Services, operations expenditures, total department not previously authorized, \$47,510,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Please turn to page 9, the Department of Infrastructure.

Department of Infrastructure, operations expenditures, asset management, not previously authorized, \$1,095,000. Are there any questions?

I am going to the Member from Great Slave.

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, this is \$1.095 million for repair costs associated with the Deh Cho Bridge. Could the Minister

please provide a substantiation around what those repair costs entail. Thank you.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. This is being driven by some unexpected issues that came to light once the bridge system was opened up for the already-known repairs that were taking place, and as a result of that, when they identified an opportunity to do some additional work on shuttering plates, rubber control springs, that these two warranted replacement, and as an opportunity, given that the bridge was already opened up -- well, paused for traffic or reduced traffic and had these cable systems opened up, it was an opportunity to ensure that this work also got done at the same time. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I will go back to the Member from Great Slave.

**MS. REID:** Yeah, thanks, Mr. Chair. I was just trying to confirm it wasn't more cable work. So thank you for that. Nothing further.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. Is there any further questions? Seeing no further questions.

Department of Infrastructure, asset management, not previously authorized, \$1,095,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Department of Infrastructure, operations expenditures, corporate management, not previously authorized, \$537,000. Are there any questions? Seeing no further questions.

Department of Infrastructure, corporate management, not previously authorized, \$537,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Department of Infrastructure, operations expenditures, energy and strategic initiatives, not previously authorized, \$2,610,000. Are there any questions? Seeing no further questions.

Department of Infrastructure, energy and strategic initiatives, not previously authorized, \$2,610,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Department of Infrastructure, operations

expenditures, programs and services, not previously authorized, \$10,315,000. Are there any questions?

I will go to the Member from Yellowknife North.

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So this year, once again, we're seeing a major deficit projected for marine transportation services. But in 2025, my understanding was that there were no cancellations on -- in terms of the barge season and that they were able to run a full season. So can the Minister explain why for 2025, in particular, they're still running a \$10.3 million deficit. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, in some ways, although it's a bit cold comfort at this point, the deficit was actually predicted to be much higher but it was because of the fact that they were able to recoup some costs by way of increasing the revenues that it was not as bad as it might otherwise have been. Nevertheless, there's still some fairly significant costs associated. So for instance in terms of the fuel costs that continue to be high as well as an almost \$2 million grants in lieu, property tax charge that was owing and that needed to be dealt with, and the fact that the fleet remains a fairly aged one does mean that the maintenance costs continue to be often high and, indeed, often higher than anticipated subject to supply chain availability which has not improved historically much over the last several years. So, again, the sales and revenues are, I would suggest, stabilizing, but that hasn't fully caught up on some of the costs. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I will go to the Member from Yellowknife North.

**MS. MORGAN:** Can the Minister explain what the plan is, then, for marine transportation services or what at least the options are for moving forward and leaving these deficits behind? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I mean, there is right now, in progress, work to convert MTS to a Crown corporation and it -- otherwise -- I mean, I do want to emphasize for folks in smaller communities and, you know, up the Mackenzie Valley up into the High Arctic that it is recognized that the barge resupply is an essential service which makes it difficult to simply run it as one might a private company,

and that's where the decision was ultimately made to try to convert it to a Crown corporation, the hope being, Mr. Chair, that we can make -- take advantage of some of what are efficiencies in a system that isn't within the public service system however, but without that -- so it may -- it may see that there's some improvement as it would be run more from a corporate environment. That said, you know, I can't say for certain, Mr. Chair, that this is likely to become a profit-generating entity but the hope, of course, is that we can get to a place that it's not requiring as much to make up losses in the revolving fund. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I will go back to the Member from Yellowknife North.

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am sure this will be the subject of some in-depth conversations to come, but I will leave it there for now. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. Are there any further questions from Members? Okay, seeing no further questions.

Department of Infrastructure, programs and services, not previously authorized, \$10,315,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Department of Infrastructure, operations expenditures, regional operations, not previously authorized, \$23,289,000. Are there any questions?

I will go back to the Member from Great Slave.

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So in the supplementary, in regional operations, there is \$1.893 million to provide funding for contractual obligations associated with the base rent and operations and maintenance for GNWT-leased facilities. I assume that just means office space on the whole. But maybe the Minister can speak to how they are addressing this ongoing cost pressure challenge. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So this is -- I mean, I don't have a breakdown of every individual lease, but I can say that this is part of multiple regions and a portfolio of 109 active leases, and it provides -- these are buildings that provide not only office space but also program and service space for government operations, again across all of the regions.

In terms of what is being done, I mean, there is still outstanding work happening with respect to reducing the overall lease footprint, and that's being done in conjunction with the Department of Finance because it would certainly involve ensuring that we are supporting the public service if we are reducing office -- their office space through whether it's remote work arrangements more formally or other work-from-home arrangements that may be -- that can be formalized. So that work is still happening, and efforts are still being made in that regard.

Mr. Chair, I don't have it in front of me, but I know that it has been examined in the past, ensuring that there's a mix, and looking at what an appropriate standard mix is between how much a government owns of its office footprint or its footprint in general for usage versus leases. That is an easier thing to manage within Yellowknife where there's a wider real estate availability and wider range of real estate availability a little more difficult outside.

Last note, Mr. Chair, is that, at least a bit of silver lining in -- particularly in communities around the smaller communities and regional centres, the facilities that are being leased often are from Indigenous corporations or community governments so some of this funds -- some of these funds do actually end up indirectly supporting those communities as well. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I will go to the Member from Great Slave.

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I am going to push back gently on the work-from-home piece impacting this in any really great meaningful sense. I don't think the GNWT has scads of people working from home currently; I could be wrong. But I would also be very much interested in whatever documentation that the Minister is comfortable sharing with the Department of Finance's work on that own versus lease mix, and perhaps she could commit to sharing that with committee. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay. Thank you. I will go to the Minister.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I won't speak to whether it's scads or not. There's -- I mean, we have the remote work policy but there's also a lot of folks who do work from home in not necessarily formalized arrangements or agreements, and the challenge -- and it has slowed the work in terms of trying to realign lease footprints because that would then -- if we really realign what the lease footprint is for departments, that reduces the

amount of workspace available. But if people are working from home in an -- sort of in an unofficial or un-organized sense, for lack of a better description, then they they're not reducing the footprint of the lease because they're keeping the office space even when they may be working from home. So the intention is to be able to be -- you know, notwithstanding what might be in the headlines for other governments, the intention for us is to remain a workplace that is flexible and adaptable. But whether we can then take advantage of that to change the lease footprint, as I say, to this point unless there's a more standardized approach to folks working from home or working remotely, makes difficult to translate into a reduction of the lease footprint. So that effort has not gone away; it's just trying to figure out how best to align those two -- those two goals in a way that makes sense and doesn't actually undermine them by then forcing people to do things or to not have workspaces that actually undermines the very same morale issues that we're trying to address.

As for that mix, Mr. Chair, I believe the Department of Infrastructure does maintain an eye on having a good mix. And I don't want to commit them without going back to the Minister, but I expect it would be able -- we can probably share that. So, again, just subject to making sure I am not making a promise that I can't keep, I think we can share that. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I will go to the Member from Great Slave.

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Nothing further from me on this one.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I will go to the Member from Yellowknife North.

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I wanted to start by asking why there's a projected deficit for the Yellowknife airport revolving fund for this 2025-2026 fiscal year of almost \$1.8 million. What has happened to lead to that deficit? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So this is a result of operating cost increases, and that, in particular, is due to more severe weather events which then results in higher costs associated with providing runway clearing and -- runway clearing in particular and related other cost pressures, Mr. Chair. Costs of utilities, that certainly affects the government as much as it affects everyone else, and that has been an unexpected cost pressure over

2025 beyond what had been in the plan. And I suppose last and not least, Mr. Chair, would simply be that there's the airport improvement fees don't necessarily go directly in as an offset. There is an amount where if the airport improvement fee amount is not being used in a given year for a capital expense that it doesn't get accounted for quite -- under an accounting standard, doesn't get it offset the same way as it might. So increased costs with severe weather, increased costs for utilities, and not being offset. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I will go back to the Member from Yellowknife North.

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So I don't recall, but maybe the Minister can remind us, in this past year what extreme weather events or unusual weather events the Yellowknife airport has experienced versus other years. I know every year there's various kinds of challenging weather but is there something different that happened this past year, or what do we -- do we expect the cost of dealing with weather to just continue for every year hereafter? Like, what different happened in terms of weather in this past year? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I will go to the Minister.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's actually the freezing rain that -- the humidity and freezing rain that we had back in -- I don't remember the month exactly, but it was early this fall where when we have conditions on the runways or conditions at the airport that are -- that result as -- again, particularly with freezing rain or wet snow earlier or heavier snow earlier in the season, that is what changes it. So typically in a year you can have just as -- and I don't have a year-over-year comparison but just by way of some notes, there would be, you know, three or four unusual type events such as this, but I am told that in the last recent time it's hit over 20 in a season and that the budget for this, the maintenance can be actually utilized right -- well, in the fall and before -- yeah, before the fiscal year is out. So could certainly look at getting that breakdown for Members if there's an interest in that. But, again, as I say, it's particularly freezing rain events that are noted to me here as being one that drives these cost pressures. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I will go to Member from Yellowknife North.

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. And so moving forward, is the Yellowknife airport

expected to prevent such deficits in the future, for example, by increasing fees? Do they have some responsibility to not run a deficit, or is it just sort of acceptable that they might come to us each year with a deficit? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. It certainly would not be acceptable that there's running deficits in general. The hope, of course, is that there's not a running deficit and that much as it was initially set up to do, that the report airport revolving fund can ultimately become self-sustaining. The last several years have had a number of different challenges and not the least of which first was although the airport was on a trajectory of receiving a high number -- high volume in terms of passengers and flights, COVID-19 shut everything down there, relatively speaking. And then the 2023 wildfire evacuation, although numbers were coming back, that evacuation resulted in fairly significant overtime costs which reduced the malleability of that budget so that -- just as we were coming back on. And here we are again, the flight numbers are up. Not quite what they were pre-COVID, but coming back. But then, again, the extreme weather does continue to drive those costs up and now added to that would be increased utilities. So yes, the short answer is it would be nice to remove the deficit and it would be ideal that the revolving fund can be self-sustaining. At this moment in time, we're not there yet. I believe there is a fair bit of work happening with the YZF Airport Authority and with as well the EAC, which I believe is the environment -- Economic Advisory Council working to get a capital project or capital improvement plan put forward which could then create a more sustaining ecosystem. Obviously, on top of all this, we've seen in advance procurement notice from the department of defence. Obviously, that's -- that's not ours to drive and it's only early days on that, but that may well force an acceleration of these plans. Thank you.

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

**MS. MORGAN:** Okay. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I wanted to turn next to increased construction and maintenance costs. Well, first for both the Mackenzie Valley winter road and the Tlicho winter road. Mackenzie Valley winter road is facing increased costs of about \$2.5 million. The Tlicho winter road of about \$4.26 million. Can the Minister explain why these costs were unexpected, why they're coming to us in

supplementary appropriations. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I am mindful of time so I will try and be quick, but there's different -- different cost pressures affecting each of these winter roads. So the Mackenzie Valley winter road right now is over 900 kilometers of road. There's -- there -- notwithstanding the fact that barges went through -- more so in the last year, there's still obviously some communities that were experiencing reductions in the barging services. And so there's been a much greater uptake this winter on fuel -- on demand on the winter road, as well a shipment of -- up to Colville Lake with long overdue, if I may say, school portables meant that there had to be an expansion of that winter road. That is something that -- there is a base budget that is in the annual budgets that doesn't necessarily accommodate these kinds of increases year over year.

With respect to the Tlicho winter road, that is some 300, 400 kilometers up to Gameti and Wekweeti. And in this case, it was negotiations that were taking place under the Tlicho Infrastructure Cooperation Agreement, and those did not conclude in time to be reflected other than through a supplementary appropriation. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I will go back to the Member from Yellowknife North.

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Can the Minister tell us, then -- so if the Tlicho winter road increases are a result of a sort of negotiated increase in the cost, can the Minister tell us sort of what was the base amount or the amount that was assumed in this budget and then what will be the new amount when you add this \$4.264 million, just to give us a sense of scale of how much the contract is increasing by. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I will go to the Minister.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So Mr. Chair, there was challenges on this contract, if I recall, last year as well, and so the negotiations that went on over a fairly extended period of time last year -- sorry, well, I guess a year more than last year ago, there was effort undertaken to actually see what the actuals were in the course of a year because it was, you know, brought to our attention that the contract authority was not able to perform the

services required at the cost that they had. So the -- yeah, and so with that, we entered into the negotiations together with in hand what the 2024-2025 costs were, and then we're able to conclude the negotiations to provide an amount that better reflected what the actuals were. And I think there's a question on -- a second question that I missed in all that, Mr. Chair. I am sorry.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I will go back to the Member from Yellowknife North to repeat the last part of your question.

**MS. MORGAN:** I don't think I heard the actual numbers of the the previous contract -- the amount of the contract that was assumed when we went into this 2025-2026 Budget and then what it's now increased to. That was the main question. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So in 2025-2026, there was a shortfall of \$4.2 million. 2026-2027, a shortfall of 4.7. And then going forward, the shortfall would have been just over 5. So what we are looking to do now is adjust the budget to reflect the fact that we now have a contract to -- that makes up that total, that total amount. The total contract costs expected for the coming year -- or sorry, for the -- that is in front of the committee right now is just over \$6.9 million for 2025-2026. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Are there any further questions from Members? Yeah, I am going to go to the Member from Frame Lake.

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Not a lot of questions left after that strong round from my colleague, but just the -- to build on some of the questions that she asked.

The line item for \$9.1 million funding for -- to address high -- higher highway operations costs due to inflation, materials, and emergency response activities. Can the Minister help us understand the emergency response activities; what does that entail? Why -- like, how is that an unexpected and how does it relate to highway maintenance.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I will go to the Minister.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Sorry, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, if I can get the Member to repeat the question, please.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I will go back to the Member from Frame Lake.

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, of course. What I was asking is how do emergency response activities relate to highway maintenance? It's in the -- in the substantiation for the increase, it says to provide funding to address higher highway operations costs due to inflation, materials, and emergency response activities. So I am just curious what those activities are and how they relate to maintenance. Thanks.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I will go to the Minister.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Sorry, Mr. Chair. So not specific to any of the one items but just in general? (audio) or the ADM, please.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I will go to the ADM.

**MS. MANDI BOLSTAD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So the emergency response requirements generally are related to community evacuations and highway closures and resulting needs for staff over time, those types of things. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I will go to the Member from Frame Lake.

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. And, yeah, sorry if it was unclear. I thought I was referring to a specific line item. But yeah, that makes sense to me, like if there had to be highway closures, the various guide vehicles and all that that happens along with that. So that makes sense to me.

Can they help -- can the Minister help us understand how much of an increase this is over our regular highway operations costs. I mean, \$9.1 million seems like a lot for the end of a year for inflation. I mean, how is that something that we weren't able to budget for knowing that inflation has been sitting around 2 percent this year? Thanks.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I will go to the Minister.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. And sorry, the Member was clear. I just didn't have it large enough on my screen to see it. So it's not only inflation necessarily. There is rising material cost and contract -- there's also rising contract cost, increased number of response events, so that's not only necessarily related to inflation. And then too, Mr. Chair, would be if there's, you know, climate change events that result in an

increase in the number of emergencies. All of those things can contribute to this. So, Mr. Chair, there's a base budget -- the other thing, Mr. Chair, is that we are dealing with Beaufort Delta region, Deh Cho region, North Slave region, and South Slave region, so it's not a shortfall in only one; there's shortfalls in all.

In the Beaufort Delta region, the shortfall was \$4.4 million. Deh Cho was just over a million. North Slave, 650,000, and -- or sorry, North Slave. And then South Slave, just shy of \$3 million, Mr. Chair, and all that together adds up to the \$9.1. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I will go back to the Member from Frame Lake.

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. My next question is just about the additions to energy and strategic initiatives. I am pretty sure I know the answer to this one. But it looks like we got funding for the four different funds that are listed there. I won't list them for sake of time. But I know during the last -- the last review of the mains there was some concern about that funding lapsing. It looks like the feds did step up and fund those programs. Can the Minister just confirm that that's the case and that's why (audio).

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I will go to the Minister.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes, this is the low carbon economy leadership fund, and there has been a renewal of that agreement now. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I will go to the Member from Frame Lake.

**MR. MORSE:** Thanks, Mr. Chair. I think that's it for me on this item. Thanks.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. Was there any further questions from Members? Seeing no further questions.

The Department of Infrastructure, regional operations, not previously authorized, \$23,289,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

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

Department of Infrastructure, operations expenditures, total department not previously authorized, \$37,846,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Please turn to page 11 for the Department of Justice.

Department of Justice, operations expenditures, services to government, not previously authorized, \$625,000. Are there any questions?

Department of Justice, operations expenditures, services to government, not previously authorized, \$625,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. The Department of Justice, operations expenditures, total department not previously authorized, \$625,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

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

Please turn to page 12 for Department of Municipal and Community Affairs.

Department of Municipal and Community Affairs, operations expenditures, community governance, not previously authorized, \$270,000. Are there any questions? I am going to go to Member from the Deh Cho.

**MRS. YAKELEYA:** (audio) provide the detail for this community level emergency services, firefighting, education, and development, some information on it. Thank you.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. This is funding that is meant to support and enhance emergency services and firefighter education across all communities. So there's two different things happening here, Mr. Chair. Regional centres will see the training done brought to the national fire protection association standard. That's for regional fire departments. As well, Mr. Chair, then there will be, for smaller communities, the assistant fire marshals and contract trainers will be providing first aid and emergency response training to those small communities so that they can support their own initiatives. And last but not least, Mr. Chair, the annual fire chiefs conference has a slice of funding here as well to ensure that all fire chiefs across the Northwest Territories are able to connect and -- in the course of a year. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I will go back to the Member from Deh Cho.

**MRS. YAKELEYA:** Nothing further, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, seeing no further questions.

Department of Municipal and Community Affairs, community governance, not previously authorized, \$270,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Department of Municipal and Community Affairs, operations expenditures, total department not previously authorized, \$270,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Members, there are schedules on page 13 and 14 that detail borrowing authorization and on page 15 to 17. That detail, the supplementary reserve impact, are there any questions on these schedules? Seeing no further questions, please turn to page 13.

Government of the Northwest Territories, 2025-2026, Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 3, revised, 2025-2026, total government borrowing authorization proposed adjustments, \$1,496,611,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Committee, do you agree that you have concluded consideration of Tabled Document 454-20(1), Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures and Borrowing Authorization), No. 3, 2025-2026?

Okay, I am going to go to the Member from the Deh Cho.

COMMITTEE MOTION 138-20(1):  
CONCURRENCE MOTION – TABLED  
DOCUMENT 454-20(1): SUPPLEMENTARY  
ESTIMATES (OPERATIONS  
EXPENDITURES AND BORROWING  
AUTHORIZATION), NO. 3, 2025-2026,  
CARRIED

**MRS. YAKELEYA:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I move that consideration of Tabled Document 454-20(1), Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 3, 2025-2026, be now concluded and that Tabled Document 454-20(1) be reported and recommended as ready for further consideration in formal session through the form of an appropriation bill. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Question.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? Motion carried. Tabled Document 454-20(1), Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures and Borrowing Authorization), No. 3, 2025-2026, will be reported as ready for consideration in the formal session through the form of an appropriation bill.

I want to say thank you to the Minister and thank you to the witnesses for appearing before us. Sergeant-at-Arms, please escort the witnesses from the chambers. Thank you.

We will take a ten-minute break to give the translators a little rest, and then we'll resume. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** If everybody could take your seats, we'll continue. Okay, all right. Committee, we have agreed to consider Tabled Document 448-20(1), 2026-2027 Main Estimates. We will now consider the Department of Environment and Climate Change. Does the Minister of Environment and Climate Change wish to bring witnesses into the House?

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Yes, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Does committee agree? Thank you. Sergeant-at-Arms, please escort the witnesses into the chambers.

Thank you. Would the Minister please introduce his witnesses.

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. To my left, I have deputy minister Robert Jenkins. And to my right, I have director of finance Jessica St. Arnaud.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. The committee has agreed to forego general comments on Department of Environment and Climate Change. Does the committee agree to proceed to the details contained in the tabled documents? Committee?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Committee, we have deferred the department summary and review the estimates by activity summary, beginning with corporate management starting on page 81, with information items on pages 83 and 84. Are there any questions?

I will go to the Member from Frame Lake.

**MR. MORSE:** Thanks, Mr. Chair. I am going to take this as the section where I can ask some business plan questions, I think. So I will just get started on those.

I just note that a number of different regulations - the Forest Act regs, Wildlife Act regs, Waste Reduction regs, Reindeer Act regs - are all off the table on the legislative agenda. Is this due -- can the Minister help us understand why that's the case.

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

**HON. J. MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, earlier this fall Cabinet went through a prioritization exercise to highlight some of the legislative initiatives that lined up more directly with the priorities of the 20th Assembly. As a result, we prioritized our outstanding initiatives in that way, and so many of these pieces, although not priority at this time, work continues in some of the areas. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I will go to the Member from Frame Lake.

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Can the Minister just help us understand what legislative initiatives continue to be a priority for the department and what they're working to advance.

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

**HON. J. MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I will pass that to deputy minister. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I will go to the deputy minister.

**MR. ROBERT JENKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So the legislative initiatives that the department continues to advance is work on the Northwest Territories land regulations, the Protected Areas Act, the Thaidene Nene regulations, the Public Lands Act regulations, and the water regulations. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I will go back to the Member from Frame Lake.

**MR. MORSE:** Okay, thank you very much; I appreciate that update. The Public Land Act regulations, that's one that I haven't heard much about from this government thus far. Can the Minister give us an update as to where those are at, what stage they're at with developing those. I haven't seen any

communications go out to the public about what's going on. So I have a constituent who was raising questions about that at a constituency meeting recently and would appreciate an update.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I will go to the Minister.

**HON. J. MACDONALD:** Yes, thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, the Public Lands Act was passed in the 18th Assembly to amalgamate and replace the Commissioner's Land Act and the Northwest Territories Land Act. These are two statutes that were inherited from the federal government. Currently, the regulations have been in development for four years with a technical working group under the IGC legislative development protocol. The working group is working to reach final consensus on the outstanding concerns related to jurisdictional interaction between the GNWT, public land administration, and land use permitting carried out with the land and water boards. The department is aiming to have a final draft of the technical working group in late spring of 2026. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I will go back to the Member from Frame Lake.

**MR. MORSE:** Okay, thank you, Mr. Chair. And so following a review by the technical working group, I assume that will be brought to committee, and then it will go for more of a public review?

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

**HON. J. MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes, there will be an opportunity for public engagement after that. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I will go to the Member from Frame Lake.

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So the process of the Public Lands Act, now that we're on that subject, that is going through currently at the IGC table, I think one of the difficulties that constituents of mine had -- have and, you know, something that I've been starting to talk to the Minister more about is just when things go into the IGCS, they kind of disappear for a while and sometimes a very long while, and it's difficult for the public to keep track of what's happening with legislation. And, certainly, I am not going to have time to unpack all of this today but, you know, the fact that the Public Lands Act was passed in the 18th Assembly, I mean, that's two assemblies back. So by the time we get the regs in place, the legislation could be said to be potentially out of date. And that was

the same problem that we were having with the Mineral Resources Act. And so there seems to be a real disconnect between the ability to move legislation through that process and the need for some kind of reasonable timeliness. So I am wondering if the Minister can speak to how he's been starting to address that issue, either as our government House leader or as the Minister for ECC, considering that most of ECC's legislation is going to end up in the IGCS probably more than most other departments.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I will go to the Minister.

**HON. J. MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I think one of the areas here certainly -- and I wouldn't say this as an excuse, but capacity across all of our partners, as well as the GNWT, tends to make the IGC legislative development protocol maybe move not as quickly as we would like it but certainly from the perspective of the department, we are -- you know, we can do a little bit more of a proactive approach to consider getting this to move a little quicker with all of our partners. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I will go to the Member from Frame Lake.

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. And I think there just isn't enough time during Committee of the Whole to get into it, but it is an issue that I want to continue raising, and I've got our research staff working on getting me ready for some questions in the House. Let me just look at my questions here.

Oh yeah, this was one I wanted to ask about, business plans.

So there seems to be, I note, a bit of a disconnect between what's in the business plan and some of the initiatives that the department is engaging in to improve and streamline regulatory. I just note that, you know, the deputy minister just listed off changing -- making targeted changes to the waters Act -- or sorry, to the waters regs, which we've talked about on the floor of the House a fair bit, and a number of other activities that they communicated, either through response to the environmental audit or response to the Standing Committee on Acc Dev and Environment report on the regulatory framework. So it all encompasses a fair amount of work, but I note that that doesn't make it -- its way into the business plan. So I was just curious if that's just an oversight. Is there a reason why those things aren't included in the business plan? Because I just note that some of those initiatives are included in ITI's business plan, yet it's one of ECC's initiatives. So I know ITI is the industry department and

they're kind of focusing on, you know, promoting industry, but it is ultimately the work of ECC that is responsible for all these regulatory initiatives. So I am just curious why they're not detailed in the business plan. Thank you.

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

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, there is a spot in the business plan that does speak to some of the legislative initiatives, but one of the challenging things here is there are many, if you say, moving parts, I guess if you will, Mr. Chair, and a lot of partners involved in this work. And, certainly from the perspective of the department, we're trying to engage with those partners on the land and water boards, our Indigenous governments and organizations, to really try and focus. So perhaps if the Member had a specific example, we might be able to give a little bit more precise response. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I will go to the Member for Frame Lake.

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I mean, I did give a number of examples in my preamble there. And so I am really only raising the issue because, you know, I've been told multiple times that the business plans are where we look to see, you know, what work is government doing on any given issue or what are -- you know, what are the general directions being given to the department as to what to prioritize. So when I don't see something in the business plans -- I will just put the targeted amendments to the water regs, for example. So we can just talk about that one. But there was a number of commitments that the department made in response to SCEDE's report. And the reason I am wondering is that I don't want initiatives like this to be something that's done off the side of people's desks or are kind of considered besides the work and would just note that in reading the business plan on regulatory streamlining where it says in the line item on the business plan, regulatory streamlining, the items that were communicated in the business plan were all generally status quo type stuff, like, you know, issuing water licenses, participating fully in proceedings. I mean, those are things that the department has to do. I mean, that's just basic work. And I can understand why they would put that in the business plan. But what I wasn't seeing in the business plan was what the department was doing to change things or to respond to the Assembly's priorities. And so it may be that I am misinterpreting what the business plan is for or putting too much weight on the business plan, but the reason it stood out to me is just that

these are — it's where I look to see what direction the department's being given in terms of implementing the Assembly's priorities. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay. I am going to go to the Minister.

**HON. J. MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I think on page 39 of the business plan, you know, it lays out our priority, if you will, for the Water Act regulation. And, you know, the three-phased approach that we've committed to when it comes to Water Act regulations, you know, the targeted amendments are the first phase of that. And we have certainly made significant progress in moving that forward and hope to have the final result here in the not-too-distant future. Understanding the Member's frustration with the speed at which these things move along, I think it's safe to say that, you know, we all would like to see things move a little bit quicker. You know, as we get to this point I think the work continues in our phased approach as we look at the legislation going forward, the changes that are required, and how we're able to go back and, you know, ensure that this is the quickest, timely changes that we could make as opposed to opening up the legislation and having to start from scratch. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. Are there any further questions? I will go to the Member from Yellowknife North.

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So, overall, since we're looking at corporate management overall, I wonder if the Minister can give any insights into whether the merger between lands and ENR several years ago actually resulted in any efficiencies in terms of reduction of positions overall between the two departments since the merger. I know it's been a number of years now. I don't know if the Minister has any data on that or could commit to get back to us with more information. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. J. MACDONALD:** Yeah, thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, there were some reductions in positions. I will pass to the deputy minister for some detail. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I will go back to the Member from Yellowknife North.

**MS. REID:** Deputy minister, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Oh, I am sorry. Yeah, deputy minister.

**MR. ROBERT JENKINS:** Thanks. Thank you, Mr. Chair. So there were some efficiencies through the optimization exercise between the Department of Lands and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources that were realized, and there are some that are still occurring. For example, one of the positions that is slated for reduction this upcoming year is that there was an additional senior advisor position to the deputy minister, so that position is being eliminated. So there is -- still working through that process, and -- but there has been some optimization through that exercise. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I will go back to the Member from Yellowknife North.

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I wonder if the Minister could commit to get back to me with some specific numbers in terms of overall positions that have been reduced in the creation of efficiency. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I will go to the Minister.

**HON. J. MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes, happy to provide that information to the Member. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I will go back to the Member from Yellowknife North.

**MS. MORGAN:** Okay, thank you. I also wanted to ask -- I know in the business plan the 2025 environmental audit is mentioned. It was tabled just last October, and many of those recommendations remain only partially implemented or outstanding. So in the business plan, it identifies that one of the priorities is to move forward with implementing the recommendations in that audit. Do we see any money slated in this budget to make sure that that implementation can take place? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I am going to go to the Minister.

**HON. J. MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, the specific money that's allocated to the environmental audit recommendations is -- some of it is contained in the \*SIMF funding, and other amounts are spread across the different areas within the department. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I will go back to the Member from Yellowknife North.

**MS. MORGAN:** Okay, thank you, Mr. Chair. I wanted to ask a specific question about the work on accepted waste sites. It was included in the information item in the cost-shared agreements, but I figure this might be as good a time as any to ask about it.

So it looks like the funding for accepted waste sites that was coming from the federal government has sunset now, or it's sunsetting in March 31st, 2026, and it was to conduct pre-remediation work on six sites, many of which -- or some are in my riding. The Crestaurum, Ptarmigan, Tin, Rod, Burwash, and Tom mines. And so given that that funding is sunsetting, what has been accomplished so far with that federal funding? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I will go to the Minister.

**HON. J. MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, since 2023, we've completed extensive environmental, geological, geotechnical, architectural, and risk assessments on field programs as phase one for all six of the sites. Draft remedial options analysis are now complete for each of the sites, and those outline the feasibility remediation options and identify site hazards and evaluate the options against safety, land use, technical feasibility, and socio-economic factors and costs. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I will go back to the Member from Yellowknife North.

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So that is pre-remediation work, but there's still a lot of actual remediation work to be done and this funding is running out. So what is the next step, then? How do we move forward with remediation on these sites? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. J. MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, the remedial option analysis will form the technical foundation for negotiations with Canada on the actual remediation responsibilities and what that potential future funding could look for, as well as inform the regulatory process. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I will go back to the Member from Yellowknife North.

**MS. MORGAN:** Okay, thank you, Mr. Chair. And so is that -- has that negotiation with

Canada begun, then? Or what's the timeline for that? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. J. MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, we're completing engagement on those plans and plan to start negotiations with Canada early in the next fiscal year. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I will go back to the Member from Yellowknife North.

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thanks to the Minister. That is helpful to know.

I just finally wanted to touch on transboundary waters. In the last fiscal year, there was a bit of a jump or a spike in spending, both for the Alberta-Northwest Territories transboundary waters and the Yukon-NWT transboundary waters, and it looks like this year we're back to the sort of standard baseline of what we're spending. Can the Minister explain what was accomplished on transboundary water issues last fiscal year to -- in terms of what extra money was spent and why. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. J. MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I will pass to the deputy minister.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I will go to the deputy minister.

**MR. ROBERT JENKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So under those agreements, the work that we do year to year is really sort of gaining knowledge and monitoring the health of the aquatic ecosystem in those shared watersheds, and we work with a number of Indigenous governments on that work. You know, there's a number of water monitoring programs. There's fish studies. There's annual reporting. There's some consultant contracting. So in terms of a specific breakdown of some of the activities and details that we did, we would have to follow up with the Member. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I will go back to the Member from the Yellowknife North.

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So, I mean, as far as I can see, concerns about transboundary water issues are only heating up. They're not -- concerns aren't going down. So are we planning to -- why would we plan to spend less than last year on transboundary

water issues? What assurance do we have that we can sort of go back to the lower baseline amount? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. J. MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I will pass to the deputy minister.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I will go to the deputy minister.

**MR. ROBERT JENKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So, you know, the focus and a lot of the concerns that have been raised in terms of transboundary water, in particular with Alberta, has been with oil sands mine water and releases of oil sands mine water. And so, you know, that's our focus in terms of next year. We're continuing to do the monitoring programs, and we have reporting requirements and sort of additional costs from time to time there. We're also doing some work, next year, in terms of really looking at that issue. We've done a bunch of work already on that, and those were additional costs that we had, and we're now sort of in conversations both with Alberta and with the Government of Canada because there's responsibilities under the Fisheries Act for releases of mine water that we can utilize the work that we had previously done and the costs that we had previously had in conversations that we can -- we'll have with those governments next year. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I will go back to the Member from Yellowknife North.

**MS. MORGAN:** I will leave it there for now. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I will go to the Member from Deh Cho.

**MRS. YAKELEYA:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am looking at the Deh Cho conservation protected area. Are we in that area? How close are we to completion of this agreement? I mean, it looks like it's expiring. What happens; what will be the result of this agreement? Thank you.

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

**HON. J. MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Could we get clarification on what agreement the Member is referring to? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** I will go back to the Member from Deh Cho.

**MRS. YAKELEYA:** thank you, Mr. Chair. Deh Cho conservation protected area.

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

**HON. J. MACDONALD:** Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, ECC remains ready to support the Deh Cho communities in advancing work on their conservation planning. In June 2024, ECC presented the Deh Cho Protected Area Planning Committee on the NWT tool for protecting land, including establishment of the Territorial Protected Area under the Protected Area Act, and we are waiting for Indigenous governments and communities in the Deh Cho to decide on how they wish to proceed. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I will go to the Deh Cho Member.

**MRS. YAKELEYA:** The agreement states with environment and climate change Canada to finalize planning for the candidate protected areas of the Deh Cho region. How many candidate areas do we have in the Deh Cho?

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

**HON. J. MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. There are four candidate protected areas in the Deh Cho. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I will go back to the Member from the Deh Cho.

**MRS. YAKELEYA:** And those four candidate areas are, can you...

I've asked the question, what are the four protected areas. Thank you. Or candidate areas.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I will go to the Minister.

**HON. J. MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Buffalo Lake and Trails Protected Area. Ka'a'gee Tu Protected Area, Somba K'e Protected Area. And Five Fish Lakes. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I will go back to the Member from the Deh Cho.

**MRS. YAKELEYA:** You said Buffalo Trails? Is that just buffalo trails in general, or is there a place called Buffalo Trails, location? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I will go to the Minister.

**HON. J. MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, the name of the protected area is Buffalo Lakes and Trails. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I will go back to the Member from the Deh Cho.

**MRS. YAKELEYA:** Okay, so that is a -- it's a place? It's a -- or is it just a number of places that -- I need clarification. Thank you.

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

**HON. J. MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, it's an area to the east of Hay River, and we are happy to provide a map outlining the proposed protected areas to the Member. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I will go back to the Deh Cho Member.

**MRS. YAKELEYA:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. No further questions. Thank you to the Minister.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. Are there any further questions? No further questions, please turn to page 82.

Environment and Climate Change, corporate management, \$14,735,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Moving on to environmental management, monitoring, and climate change, beginning on page 85 with information items on page 87 and 88. Are there any questions?

I will go to the Member from Great Slave.

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, the budget for climate change cumulative impacts and knowledge is projected to decrease by \$575,000, and I'd like to know if the Minister can please elaborate what activities or research areas will be scaled back as a result of this reduction. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I will go back to the Minister.

**HON. J. MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I will pass that to the director.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I will go to the director.

**JESSICA ST. ARNAUD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. That reduction is for two social scientist positions that have been vacant for a number of years and a sunset for climate change adaptation funding, which was subsequently

renegotiated and added back into that budget. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I will go back to the Member from Great Slave.

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. And, yeah, noting that those two positions were vacant, can the Minister tell me how long those positions were vacant? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I will go to the Minister.

**HON. J. MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, those positions were vacant for over three years, and we are using the funding to allow Indigenous governments to do the work that would have been accomplished through those two positions. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I will go back to the Member from Great Slave.

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. And that's good to hear. But how does ECC plan to balance this decrease for a growing need for climate adaptation and cumulative impact monitoring? I am happy to hear that some of the funding is being redirected to Indigenous governments, but do they feel that they are adequately addressing these needs going forward? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I am going to go to the Minister.

**HON. J. MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, we're currently developing a new action plan, and the approach while we develop that action plan will be to fund from within the department's resources. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I will go back to the Member from Great Slave.

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. On a different, I guess -- I think it's under here. Yes, it is, it's -- water management and stewardship is under here, correct? Thank you. So on the other hand, water management and stewardship will be increasing by \$450,000. Can the Minister explain what's driving this increase and what initiatives or priorities it will support? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. J. MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I will pass to the director.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I will go to the director.

**JESSICA ST. ARNAUD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. That increase is due to a new federal agreement that we signed this year for flood hazard mapping, and that was replacement of another agreement that we had previously, so just an amendment. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I will go back to the Member from Great Slave.

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So water management spent \$2.9 million more than budgeted, or perhaps it's water management and stewardship and climate change that -- and climate change cumulative impacts -- there's a lot of words there, Mr. Chair, I am sorry. What are the factors that contributed to this overspend? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. J. MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I will pass to the director.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I will go to the director.

**JESSICA ST. ARNAUD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So my understanding is that there are no actuals in the main estimates that you're looking at. You're probably looking at the revised estimates column, and those are actually increases in funding agreements with the federal government. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I will go back to the Member from Great Slave.

**MS. REID:** Thank you. And, you know, I appreciate that we've talked about this in committee with various Ministers, notably the finance Minister, that many things are off-cycle with agreements. Is there absolutely any way that there's more projections that are -- more accurate projections that can be accomplished in this avenue, especially in this department? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I will go to the Minister.

**HON. J. MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, until we have an actual signed agreement, we're not able to include it in the estimates. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** I will go to the Member from Great Slave.

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I believe that is all I have for this section right now. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Is there any further questions? I will go to the Member from Yellowknife North.

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So I wanted to ask about mobile barren-ground caribou conservation measures. I know that features in the business plan as one of the priorities, and there's a goal of coming up with mechanisms for offsetting and compensation when barren-ground caribou habitat is damaged or destroyed. Can the Minister give us an update on when we will see what -- like, the plans or the, you know, actions in terms of mobile barren-ground caribou conservation, especially as we've seen results of surveys in the last couple of months that have been increasingly worrisome in terms of the state of barren-ground caribou. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. J. MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I will pass to the deputy minister.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I will go to the deputy minister.

**MR. ROBERT JENKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So yes, a number of recent surveys have shown some declines in barren-ground caribou populations. So there's a number of management committees amongst a number of different groups - the GWNT, federal government, Indigenous governments. And they've been meeting over the past several weeks to discuss actions and mechanisms that could be instituted to help with the challenges that we're experiencing with populations.

In terms of some of the pieces that we're doing in terms of the winter road, the winter road is expected to open this Saturday. We have officers that have already moved up, and we are reestablishing the Gordon Lake check station. And we're going to be working with a number of Indigenous governments and guardians programs to have a presence in the area to make sure that we have respect for harvesting this winter season. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I will go to the Member for the Yellowknife North.

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So my understanding was that the previous monitoring and management plans for barren-ground caribou were being evaluated, you know, for how effective they were or what should be done in terms of new management and monitoring plans going forward. Has there been a report yet in terms of what is the conclusion of the

evaluation of those previous monitoring and management plans, or what can we expect? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, the Wek'eezhii Renewable Resources Board approved an extension of current management actions of the Bathurst until July of 2027. And based on that request came from ECC and the Tlicho government, the extension allows for community engagement prior to the development of the new joint management proposal. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I will go to the Member from the Yellowknife North.

**MS. MORGAN:** Okay. I guess we will stay tuned in terms of the results of those consultations. I do think it is quite urgent that we really look hard at whether what we've been doing so far has been working or not. And, clearly, the barren-ground caribou herds are still suffering so we need to do something different. So I am looking forward to seeing some outcomes in terms of what are we going to do different going forward.

I also wanted to touch upon community-based monitoring. I don't know if there's a specific line for it, but certainly in the business plan it talks about goals in terms of jobs for community-based monitoring programs. And obviously this is important not just for employment and the economy, but just overall stewardship of the land and the environment. And so over the last few years, have we been seeing increases in the amount of community-based monitors or decreases? What has participation rates been like in the community-based monitoring program? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. J. MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes, Mr. Chair, I think the uptake in the community-based monitoring over the last number of years has been improving and certainly from a department perspective, we have had a lot of engagement talking to our Indigenous partners and communities in looking at ways to interact with the guardian programs and how we can have the guardians work with our officers on the land to ensure that we're coming forward with a unified message. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I will go back to the Member from Yellowknife North.

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am curious to know with the uptick in guardian programs, are we seeing decreases in the amount of community-based monitors being hired for GNWT-specific programs? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. J. MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I will speak briefly, and then I will pass it to the deputy minister. But Our Land for the Future funding will provide an opportunity to hire more community-based monitoring. That's part of the overall work plan. So that's, I think, a positive going forward. But I will pass to the deputy minister.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I will go to the deputy minister.

**MR. ROBERT JENKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yeah, you know, it's very community-specific. You know, we have some community-based monitors that have been going out and doing the sampling for a long time, and we're seeing some areas where that's changing. So it's a bit fluid. We are expecting, as the Minister mentioned, with the OLF and, you know, third party funding for Indigenous guardians programs, that we will see more monitoring out on the land and, you know, want to work together on how we can incorporate all the information that's collected through those different programs. So we expect that the presence will grow, and with the dollars through the OLF that more information will be collected. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I will go back to the Member from Yellowknife North.

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So looking at the business plan, it lists that we're trying to measure the number of residents being hired for these kinds of community-based monitoring programs, but we don't have any specific targets there. We're just saying, just increase community capacity or provide jobs. And so then when it lists progress to date, we just kind of state what we're doing, but we don't know if it's getting better, it's getting worse, are we meeting targets, because we don't really have specific targets. Does ECC plan to establish specific targets? I understand it might be challenging if things are fluid, especially with other programs like the guardian program starting up. But when can we expect to actually set sort of meaningful or realistic targets to

know whether we're on track for community-based monitoring programs or not? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. J. MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I will pass to the deputy minister.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** I will go to the deputy minister.

**MR. ROBERT JENKINS:** Yeah, thanks, Mr. Chair. You know, in the business plan, you know, it speaks to the action that we want to do to meet the mandate commitment of increasing community capacity and training and hiring residents. So, you know, our measure is the number, and that's what we've put in the plan. And, you know, the progress to date in terms of the community-based monitoring program has been a total of 32 monitors. So that is sort of the gauge on which we hope to increase and grow moving forward. And, again, this could be met either through our own programs, or it could be new programs and working together. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I will go back to the Member from Yellowknife North.

**MS. MORGAN:** Great, thanks, Mr. Chair. I appreciate that, and I will keep an eye going forward on how that program is doing because I did formerly do some work with some community-based monitors and it was, I think, inspiring for everyone involved in terms of people gaining the skills to gain new employment but also feel more confident in doing that kind of work, being on the land, taking care of the land, and working with both traditional knowledge experts and scientists. And so I think it's a really promising area going forward for jobs in our communities and hope that we can continue to expand. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. Colleagues, we're going to take a 30-minute break, and we'll resume in 30 minutes. Thank you.

--SHORT RECESS

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Welcome back, everybody. We're ready to go again. I am going to continue on to page 86. Is there any further questions from Members? Seeing none, please turn to page 86.

Environment and Climate Change, environmental management, monitoring, and

climate change, \$21,877,000. Does the committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Moving on to the policy and strategic planning, beginning on page 89 with information items on page 191 and to 93 -- sorry, 91 to 93. I am going to go to the Member from Great Slave.

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I believe that ECC is projecting an approximately \$462,000 decrease for policy legislation, evaluation, and communications. Can the Minister speak to the substantiation behind that reduction? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I will go to the Minister.

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I will pass to the director.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I will go to the director.

**MS. JESSICA ST. ARNAUD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. That was a reduction of one position and a sunset of two positions under the MVRMA. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I will go back to the Member from Great Slave.

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Appreciate that detail. I do have a question about the regulatory initiatives that was not touched on earlier by my colleagues. Specifically, I am interested in the Waste Reduction and Resource Recovery Act regulations. Previously, ECC committed to implementing three to five new waste reduction or diversion programs by 2028, and I am curious if this regulatory project is not on the business plan priorities, whether or not this commitment will be accomplished. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, currently, that initiative is not on our priority list. It would be something that would be completed in the next government. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I will go back to the Member from Great Slave.

**MS. REID:** So just to be very clear, the department expects that those regulations will be passed by 2028? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I am going to go to the Minister.

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. 2028 -- yeah, I will pass that to the deputy minister. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I will go to the deputy minister.

**MR. ROBERT JENKINS:** Yeah, thank you, Mr. Chair. In terms of the Waste Reduction Resource Recovery Act regulations, so that was passed in the 19th Assembly, so a prioritization exercise was recently done. This piece of legislation is not on that listing, and so it is something that we'd be looking to accomplish in the next government. We're doing some internal work right now to be ready for the next government to be able to move that forward. 2028 would be early in the next government, so that may be difficult to accomplish in that timeframe, but it is something that we feel could be accomplished in the next Assembly. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I will go back to the Member from Great Slave.

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Under conservation planning and sustainable livelihoods, there was quite a large difference between the 2025-2026 Mains and the revised estimates, and now in this proposed 2026-2027 Main Estimates, there is a slight reduction to that line item. Can the Minister please explain that variation. It's quite a big swing. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. J. MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I will pass to the director.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I will go to the director.

**JESSICA ST. ARNAUD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So for the 2025-2026 revised estimates, we had a bunch of funding from the federal government that we were able to carry over from the 2024-2025 fiscal year, and then that funding has come to an end, which reflects the decrease of the 2026-2027 Main Estimates. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I will go to the Member from Great Slave.

**MS. REID:** Thank you. Could I get some more detail about what was carried over. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I will go to the director.

**JESSICA ST. ARNAUD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So the carryovers were for the nature fund agreement, the Deh Cho Protected Areas Agreement, the Inuvialuit Protected Areas Agreement. And then we did sign a new agreement for the NWT nature fund during the year, and that was just a one-year agreement, so that's reflected in there as well. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I will go to the Member from Great Slave.

**MS. REID:** Thank you. I appreciate that. And just one last item on the mains. There is a decrease of slightly over, I think, \$600,000 for land use and sustainability from last year's mains to this year's mains. Can the Minister please explain what will be affected by this reduction. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I will go to the director.

**JESSICA ST. ARNAUD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So one of the items in there was a reduction of a position that has been vacant for a long time and has a number of the same positions, so the work will continue in the department with existing resources. And the other reduction was money for unauthorized occupancy work, and, again, we're using internal resources for that until the next funding opportunity for next fiscal year. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I will go back to the Member from Great Slave.

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I don't want to reiterate all of my colleague from Frame Lake's comments around the legislative slate for the department. Obviously, this is very important to the committee, and I would just echo those sentiments. But other than that, nothing else for me, Mr. Chair. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Is there any further questions? I will go to the Member from Yellowknife North.

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I wanted to follow up a bit more. We just heard there's a sunset of funding for two positions that supported something to do with the MVRMA, and it's a bit confusing. The MVRMA, obviously, is a federal act that has been there for very many years. Can the Minister or his staff explain a bit more what were those positions supposed to be doing in relation to the Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. J. MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, those positions were created by the department during devolution to work on the regulatory issues related to the MVRMA. Since their establishment, the positions have supported works related to land and resource legislation, including Public Lands Act, Forest Act, water regulations, and others. These functions will continue to be funded within the department's existing resources with no employees affected.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I will go to the Member from Yellowknife North.

**MS. MORGAN:** Okay, thank you for that. Can the Minister explain how the two positions are sunsetting? And so we're losing two positions, but no employees are actually going to be affected? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. J. MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. The positions were vacant. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I will go to the Member from Yellowknife North.

**MS. MORGAN:** Okay. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Does the Minister happen to know what is the total list of vacant positions right now within ECC, especially those that have been vacant for, say, more than two years? I am not sure if the Minister has that data offhand. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I will go to the Minister.

**HON. J. MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I don't have that level of detail with me but happy to provide it to the Member. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I will go to the Member from Yellowknife North.

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. That's all for now.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Is there any further questions? Okay. Seeing none. Please turn to page 90.

Environment and Climate Change, Policy and Strategic Planning, \$12,294,000. Does the committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Moving on to the regulatory assessment and authorization, beginning on page 94, with information items on page 96 and 97. Are there any questions?

I will go to the Member from Frame Lake.

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I wanted to ask about the positions that the finance Minister announced in her budget address. That's my first question, is just if the Minister can give us a bit more detail on those. Yeah, thanks.

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

**HON. J. MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, those are two positions that were created. They'll be based in Fort Smith, and their role is to primarily support the housing initiative so that we have more resources to advance the land acquisitions to support housing across the NWT. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I will go to the Member from Frame Lake.

**MR. MORSE:** Okay, thank you, Mr. Chair. I noted in the previous iteration of the business plan it spoke to a bulk lands transfer process that had been requested and remains in progress and it is no longer being mentioned there. There was a couple different changes. There was -- according to the old plan, 152 fee simple title applications are in progress, 34 in the review stage, 98 applications are being prepared for execution. So were all 98 of those applications finished and transferred over, or can the Minister help us understand kind of what is comprised in the new business plan update with the 158 fee simple title applications that are currently in progress? Thanks.

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

**HON. J. MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, sort of a progress update. So progress since the start of the Assembly, there's been 162 parcels transferred, 89 are being prepared, 18 have been transferred to fee simple for housing since April 1st of 2025, and there are currently 420 applications that are in progress in our last reporting cycle. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I will go to the Member from Frame Lake.

**MR. MORSE:** Okay, thank you. Can the Minister just help us understand why the number has increased so drastically since the last time the business plan was updated?

Because I thought this thing was just printed a week ago.

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

**HON. J. MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, these are a result of the increased amount of federal funding that's been available to Indigenous governments as well as the territorial government, which is increasing the demand for land on a pretty consistent basis. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I will go back to the Member from Frame Lake.

**MR. MORSE:** Okay, thank you. And I might have missed it in the Minister's answer, but I was wondering about the bulk transfer process that was in the previous iteration of the business plan and ended up not in it now. Has a bulk land transfer process been completed, or what happened with that process between the last plan and this one?

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I will go to the Minister.

**HON. J. MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I will pass to the deputy minister.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay. I will go to the deputy minister.

**MR. ROBERT JENKINS:** Yeah, thank you, Mr. Chair. So, you know, in terms of bulk land transfers, we're open to working with communities on bulk land transfers. You know, we've been working closely with the City of Yellowknife, for example. They've been applying for parcels of land that are larger than one block, and so we've been sort of working through those applications, and we're continuing to process those. And so it is reflected. It might not be referenced as bulk land transfers, but we are open to working with communities. And there's a number that have expressed interest in potentially initiating a bulk land transfer. This includes Hay River, Inuvik, Fort Good Hope, and Yellowknife. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I am going to go back to the Member from Frame Lake.

**MR. MORSE:** Okay, thank you, Mr. Chair. Just staying on Yellowknife, I know that, you know, there's already been a fair bit of chat back and forth on the floor of the House this sitting about land needed for military investment, land needed for housing. So I know there's one big parcel that the city's applied for in the kind of

northern side of Frame Lake. I am curious to know how that process is proceeding and whether the new staff that the department has taken on is going to help processes like that move more quickly. And -- well, maybe I will start with that one, and I will ask the military one next. Thanks.

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

**HON. J. MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. To the best of my knowledge, the parcel that the Member is referring to is currently in consultation. And to the second part of the question, the resources that we've added are there to support land administration across the territory. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I will go back to the Member from Frame Lake.

**MR. MORSE:** Okay, thank you. And, yeah, if the Minister could help us better understand if they've been working with the city on identifying lands that are needed for the military investments that have been identified and how that's going. Thank you.

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

**HON. J. MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. The City of Yellowknife has indicated that the Department of National Defence has an interest in land and, you know, this may result in a number of applications. And we have been having ongoing conversations with the city as part of our memorandum of collaboration that we signed last year. But I will pass to the deputy minister to provide some more detail. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** I will go to the deputy minister.

**MR. ROBERT JENKINS:** Yes, thanks, Mr. Chair. So as the Minister mentioned, we have a memorandum of collaboration with the City of Yellowknife. They've identified their interests in a number of areas. They've applied for a number of parcels of land. I think they have eight applications in that we're working through. And we've also had a conversation -- I had a conversation with the city manager late last week about DND interests and some of the city needs and some of the conversations that are happening there and possible applications that may come from the city for things like easements and other things to support city infrastructure. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I will go to the Member from Frame Lake.

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. And so is it fair to say, then, that with the addition of staff that -- or how do I put this. Clearly some more capacity was needed in the department to move things along as quickly as has been demanded. But what I am wondering is are there any timelines that staff have to work under? Is there a minimum or maximum timeline a land application will proceed through the department in and meet all the different requirements or how is -- does the department have any targets related to timelines in terms of trying to move things along in a more timely manner? I mean, I think that we've been speaking quite vaguely about the issue up until now. It's always been do it faster, but we've never really spoken about specifics. Like, can the Minister help us understand if there is a timeline that is expected or maybe even in the legislation that I am not aware of. And if not, how are they going to measure success of adding these staff in terms of things going faster than what? What is the baseline that they've established to help communicate what they're achieving. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I will go to the Minister.

**HON. J. MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I think, you know, as the demand for processing the land transfers increases, we're certainly recognizing that and adding the additional resources. The one part of setting a specific timeline in this regard is that we don't control the whole process. There are a number of steps along the way that are controlled by others, so we can emphasize the areas that we have control on but it may not necessarily allow us to meet a specific timeline that could be set in the future because there are pieces in between that we don't have control of. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I will go back to the Member from Frame Lake.

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Does the department have a chart or an infographic or something that MLAs would be able to refer to, and the public even, to help us understand what the various steps are in the process, where we're trying to speed things up, where things get stuck, what we do when things get stuck, what processes are engaged in order to move things along when they get stuck on a part of the process that we don't have control over? Because it's -- yeah, I think that it would go a long way in helping us have a more informed conversation about this issue if we understood it better and the various steps within the process. Thanks.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I will go to the Minister.

**HON. J. MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I will commit to certainly providing that information to the Members, and I will have the deputy minister walk through the process. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I will go to the deputy minister.

**MR. ROBERT JENKINS:** Yeah, thanks, Mr. Chair. So a number of process steps. So the first being that the community government applies for a parcel of land. Once that's received, our group works directly with the community government to ensure that we have all the information we need, so completing this check. Then there's a consultation and engagement process that's undertaking with relevant and applicable Indigenous governments. At the same time, we would do engagement with GNWT and federal departments and community governments. After that is successfully completed, we would work on land sale agreements. Those must be prepared and signed. There may be a need for the community government to pass a land acquisition bylaw to get these parcels. And then once that's all done, the parcels need to be defined by a legal survey so that they can be registered with land titles pursuant to the Land Titles Act. And then following the filing of that at the land titles office, the Commissioner, on behalf of the Crown, requests a grant of the parcel to the community government. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. Is there any further questions? I will go back to the Member from Frame Lake.

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you for your indulgence, Mr. Chair. And so, yeah, obviously I want to ask some questions about that process that the deputy minister just laid out to me. So I really appreciate him laying it out clearly like that. I don't think I've actually had that before.

So I am trying to understand, at any one of these stages -- they all seem like stages except for the land acquisition bylaw itself that the GNWT is in control of that process. So can you help me understand, the answer that the Minister gave previously was that there are stages in the process where the department doesn't have control -- and so can you help me understand, outside of the land acquisition bylaw itself, which of course is on the municipality, how the department isn't in control of the process otherwise? Thanks.

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

**HON. J. MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I will go back to the deputy minister.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Deputy minister.

**MR. ROBERT JENKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So, you know, in terms of the steps, so the community government applies for a parcel of land. There may be a number of pieces in that application that aren't completed or not sufficient to be able to send out for consultation. So there's a point where it would go back to that community government to fill in the blanks. So that's an area that's outside of our control. Of course when we enter into our consultation process, we would send it out. We would ask for feedback within a certain period of time. However, if concerns are raised or potential impacts are identified, we would have to enter into a process with the Indigenous government to understand those and to see if there's a need to accommodate through that process. So that could take additional time, which is hard to define.

In terms of the -- once that process is done, there's land sale agreements prepared and signed. Of course, we have templates and wording, but there's a need for people acquiring the land to have their own legal reviews conducted, and there's often a back and forth there between council on some aspects. So, again, areas that are outside of our control. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I will go back to the Member from Frame Lake.

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. And I can't help but, as I hear that process and how it plays out, think about my experience at the land and water boards, and -- because it's the process I am most familiar with -- I think about how timelines built into that legislation worked in a very similar situation where sometimes the board would be dealing with something and sometimes proponents would be dealing with something, and the clock would be running when the board had it, and it wouldn't be running when the proponent had it. So I wonder if we could establish something similar to that kind of process for our own -- for our land acquisition process in the sense that it seems reasonable that any time the GNWT has its hands on it that we could establish what we consider to be a reasonable timeline for the GNWT to deal with, say, a completeness check or, you know, drafting of land sale agreements and so at least that people, when they apply for land, can be reassured that they're going to get an answer within a certain timeline. And any timeline outside of that that they're in control of,

of course, that's on them. And I think that would be a fair way to run the process and a fair way to be transparent about what you can expect from GNWT when you come to them for land. So has the Minister or staff considered putting that kind of structure in place to maybe put better parameters around this process, which I think can probably feel a bit nebulous for people that enter into it. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I will go to the Minister.

**HON. J. MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I can honestly say that I don't believe that we've considered that specific approach at this time. I think our focus has really been on, you know, trying to get -- deal with the tremendous amount of applications that we have in front of us. But happy to take that away and have the department have a look at it and see if that is something that, you know, could potentially benefit the process and see what the sort of administrative burden that it -- may come along with that type of monitoring. But happy to take it away. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I will go back to the Member from the Frame Lake.

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. And I think something that it might help with when I think about something along those lines -- it doesn't have to follow what the boards are doing in any way, but I just bring that up as one process that does have timelines associated with it. But one thing I am thinking is, like, you know, if I was working in that office and 420 applications came in and, you know -- I can just imagine, you know, people are asking you, you know, like, well, how come we're not moving on this, and how come it's not moving along? And staff are just dealing with a huge amount of applications, and we don't have expected timelines that things are supposed to move along with. And so staff are just kind of buried in a huge amount of applications and don't really have a structure to refer to to say we need more resources or we have -- you know, we have enough resources to be able to get these applications done in a timely manner. What ends up happening is instead, you know, MLAs just hear, you know, the process is too slow, the process isn't moving. And so it doesn't -- I don't think it gives anybody within the process parameters to look at and measure their success against. So I think it could be useful and helpful in this conversation.

The -- and, yeah, I think that, you know, for the pieces that end up not in the department's control, I was also wondering, I mean, does the department have some kind of public registry or

a place on their website where people can go and look and track applications and see what the progress is on them? Do we have anything transparent like that at all, or are applications all handled behind the scenes. Thanks.

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

**HON. J. MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, the process is not public in that way. The communication would be with the actual client directly from the department. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I will go back to the Member from Frame Lake.

**MR. MORSE:** Fair enough. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yeah, I appreciate the department helping me better understand this aspect of their work. And, certainly, I mean, I think I join many of my colleagues in just -- you know, I would like to find constructive solutions to our problem. I appreciate the Minister adding staff to the department to try and address the timeliness issue but, yeah, I am making these suggestions with the hope of constructively getting us to a place where we are establishing kind of a baseline of expectation and trying to work from that in terms of measuring what a reasonable timeline is, whether we're meeting those timelines. I think that's a much better conversation to be having than just back and forth on it's not fast enough. I think it's always good in situations like this to be talking about specifics. So I will leave my comments there for this issue for tonight. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Next on my list I got is the Member from Deh Cho.

**MRS. YAKELEYA:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Similar to my colleague Mr. Morse, how does this process work for Deh Cho, Deh Cho and Deh Cho lands? How does -- I guess I need to understand that too. How does this work outside of municipal boundaries? Thank you.

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

**HON. J. MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, the process would work very similar in all of the territory with regard to this. There are some areas that may be withdrawn in areas that have unsettled claims that would require -- you know, would be identified through this process. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I will go back to the Member from the Deh Cho.

**MRS. YAKELEYA:** Okay, so you said the withdrawn, unsettled claims. And so there would be agreements in place with the territorial government for access to these lands, correct? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I will go to the Minister.

**HON. J. MACDONALD:** Yes, so maybe I can just sort of run through how a community government can obtain land. So they can apply for unoccupied land within the municipal boundaries, and there is a requirement to meet the regulations under the Cities, Towns and Villages and Hamlets Act or the Charter Communities Act. Land can be applied for as a lease or transferred to a fee simple title. Available Commissioner's and territorial land within the boundaries can be identified using our website on the GNWT ATLAS map viewer. Applications for land must be submitted to the land management and administration division of ECC. All applications are subject to a review process as well as a consultation and engagement process. And parcels must be identified by a legal survey before they can be transferred to fee simple. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I will go back to the Member from the Deh Cho.

**MRS. YAKELEYA:** Okay, so in -- I am trying to understand this. In the boundary of the municipal boundary, there are fee simple lands in there? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I will go to the Minister.

**HON. J. MACDONALD:** Yes, thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes, there are -- within that, there are Commissioner's lands which can be applied for and can be transferred to fee simple within the boundary. So there are -- within the boundary, there would be different blocks of land that are still Commissioner's land that no one has tenure of, that they belong with the Commissioner. And so the community could apply for that land with transferring it to fee simple at the end of the process. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I will go to the Member from the Deh Cho.

**MRS. YAKELEYA:** Okay, thank you, Mr. Chair. You said community can apply for or individual can apply for? Thank you.

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

**HON. J. MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am sorry, I made the assumption that you

were speaking for the community. But anyone could -- any individual could apply for. Or the community. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I will go back to the Member from the Deh Cho.

**MRS. YAKELEYA:** Thank you. Yeah, I guess it -- well, because the Deh Cho is in the process of doing the -- of land claim so I am just wondering how that works because -- how does that work that -- if anybody comes and decides they want to lease -- they want to lease some land or they want to set up shop in the community or outside of a community or in around the surrounding community, how does that work? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I will go to the Minister.

**HON. J. MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So there's three things at play here. There's the interim measures agreement. There could be potentially withdrawn lands in the area. And then any application would need to go through the consultation process with the affected Indigenous governments. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I will go back to the Member from the Deh Cho.

**MRS. YAKELEYA:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I have no further questions.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Is there any further questions? Seeing none, please turn to page 95.

Environment and Climate Change, regulatory assessment and authorizations, \$15,238,000. Does the committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. Moving on to wildlife and forest management beginning on page 98 with information items on page 100 and 102. Are there questions?

I will go to the Member from Great Slave.

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I note that in 2025-2026 we had wildfire hires in the amount of 405, and in 2026-2027, it's projected to be 224. And I am wondering if the Minister can speak to key drivers behind the reduction in wildfire hiring and how ECC is adjusting capacity planning as a result. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. J. MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I will pass that to the director.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I will go to the director.

**JESSICA ST. ARNAUD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So the position count for this activity is actually increased by two, and that's two new positions under that 2 billion trees cost share agreement that we have with the Government of Canada. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I will go back to the Member from Great Slave.

**MS. REID:** No, happy to be wrong, Mr. Chair, on this one. A completely different topic. I note from the appendices available to Members on the schedules, I should say, in Schedule 7 of the human resources reconciliation, I note that one of the reductions of positions is the education and outreach coordinator. And I recognize that this was assigned to policy and strategic planning but in my understanding and history with the department, it used to be a function of compliance and officer services, which is here under this activity. And so I am wondering if the Minister can speak to the current allotment of educational opportunities that officers are providing to communities, to harvesters, to folks that they're regulating. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I am going to go to the Minister.

**HON. J. MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, there are many educational opportunities within the department and a lot of that work is done regionally. And I think as a department we could probably do a better job of gathering that information and being able to share that data going forward into the future. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I will go back to the Member from Great Slave.

**MS. REID:** So I think that was kind of a soft commitment, so hooray. And then I guess to that end, is it the expectation, then, for the regional staff to be coordinating all educational opportunities throughout the different regions with the different officers, is there a consistency of effort that is being applied on education and outreach opportunities? Yeah, just if the Minister has a vision I'd love to hear it. Thank you.

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

**HON. J. MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I mean, I think it's really important that we track the data around the qualifications of our staff. And certainly, you know, from my time within the department, I was involved in the fire program and I know there's a lot of that information that is maintained within the fire program for certification or for looking at people available to do different roles within that organization. I can say I am not quite as familiar with the wildlife side of the department or waters or land, so I will pass to the deputy minister for a little bit more detail. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I will go to the deputy minister.

**MR. ROBERT JENKINS:** Yeah, thanks, Mr. Chair. Yeah, I think that one of the things we were talking about recently in the department was better tracking. You know, right now we have officers in every region and in a lot of the communities, and they very much undertake education and outreach, in particular in schools, and just sort of starting to sort of track some of the things that we do there to have a metric to report on.

We also have a climate outreach specialist, and so that's another position that's helping coordinate some of the things we do with the public on a number of fronts.

In terms of the compliance and officer services that was touched on, that area still manages the officer training and the support. So there's consistency there in that aspect through that unit. But it is an area where we've flagged as wanting to collect better metrics going forward in terms of the things we do because we are doing a lot in that space. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I will go back to the Member from Great Slave.

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. And, you know, I will note that I was excited to see the regional operations ADM out of Fort Smith be created a few years back. I am hopeful that, yeah, consistency of effort throughout the regions and throughout compliance actions is top of mind for the Minister and that all officers are sort of — I realize there's standard operating procedures and there's how they do their jobs, and enforcement is very regimented and appropriate but how they educate maybe perhaps not as much. And that's really what I am looking for today is sort of a -- for the Minister to take away that part of the compliance triangle and sort of maybe not -- standardize maybe not be the best word

but just to have that consistency of effort. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I will go to the Minister.

**HON. J. MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yeah, I mean, from — I will once again go back to my time within the department and the fire program primarily, and that was sort of an approach that was taken from forest management division of having consistency across all of the regions so that when you went region to region it was like working at home, everything was essentially the same, you know, right down to things as simple as, you know, designs of crew buildings so that they were all under the same design. So very similar here. I think it's important that we train our staff from the perspective of this is a territorial resource and our staff could work anywhere within the Northwest Territories. So to have them all trained at the same level I think is a very important key to success and certainly support that direction. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I will go back to the Member from Great Slave.

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. With the two minutes I have left I am curious, numbers of staff. Can ECC -- can the Minister explain the goals they have for hiring for the upcoming firing -- for the upcoming wildfire season, if they're meeting their targets, if they're feeling confident about what they expect for this season upcoming. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I will go to the Minister.

**HON. J. MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, typically the hiring cycle, if you will, for the upcoming season starts about this time of year as we start to advertise. Over the next number of weeks we'll send out recall letters for our different seasonal staff to get indications and commitments that they are -- do intend to plan to come back for another season. Certainly, I think over time there have certainly been some areas within the fire program that have been a little tougher to fill positions in, and primarily wildland firefighters being one area that, you know, we've struggled a little bit. But I think we're certainly optimistic that, you know, we're going to get a good turnout and have many of our seasoned staff returning for the upcoming season. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I will go back to the Member from Great Slave.

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. And sort of my last question on this topic. Can ECC provide an update on the ongoing work to update the community wildfire plans, where we are with that work. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I will go to the Minister.

**HON. J. MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. The community wildfire protection plans are an activity that's undertaken with all of the forested communities over the winter, so that would involve 28 communities each year. And the community wildfire protection plans, we have staff that goes to the community. We'll meet with all of the affected groups within that community, bring forward -- they'll bring forward their plan. ECC will provide support and advice on plan -- on the plan and work with them to identify required resources for the communities to successfully implement those community wildfire protection plans. And 28 community wildfire protection plans were updated in 2019 and all remain ready for action should the need arise. One was fully updated in 2025. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. Is there any further questions?

Member from the Deh Cho.

**MRS. YAKELEYA:** We're still on 100 and 101, correct? Okay, the question I have is fire damage compensation, 100 grants available to hunters or trappers to replace equipment lost as a result of forest fires. Can you tell me how many people have applied for it last year. Thank you.

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

**HON. J. MACDONALD:** Thank you. So I can go back and give you data for a couple of years. So 55 claims totaling \$990,670 were received for the 2023 wildfire season. For 2024 wildfire season, five claims were received for \$89,436. In the 2025-2026 fire -- oh, harvesters disaster assistance, sorry. There's no data on 2025-2026. We're still compiling that data.

I can give you numbers on the harvesters disaster assistance program. So for 2025-2026, no claims under this program were submitted. In 2024-2025, two claims were submitted. And in 2023-2024, we provided \$700,000 to support harvesters after the Peel River flood. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I will go to the Member from Deh Cho.

**MRS. YAKELEYA:** Okay. Those numbers will be somewhere. So it's just for harvesters. It's not so much for people that just have cabins out on the land?

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

**HON. J. MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yeah, so the program is designed to support people that have some level of income from that activity. So whether it's from -- you know, trapping I will use as an example. A certain percentage of their income would need to come from that to be eligible for the program. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I will go to the Member from Deh Cho.

**MRS. YAKELEYA:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I don't have any further questions. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Is there any further questions? Okay, please turn to page 99.

Environment and Climate Change, wildlife and forest management, \$81,601,000. Does the committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. There are additional information items on pages 103 to 111. Are there any questions? None. Moving on. Thank you.

Members, please return now to the department summary found on page 73 with information items on pages 74 to 80. Are there any questions? Seeing no further questions, committee, I will now call on the department summary.

Environment and Climate Change, operations expenditures, total department, 2026-2027 Main Estimates, \$145,745,000. Does the committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. Thank you, Minister, and thanks to the witnesses for appearing before us. Sergeant-at-arms, please escort the witnesses from the chambers. Thank you.

I am going to go to the Member from the Deh Cho

**MRS. YAKELEYA:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I move that committee rise and report progress.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. There's a motion in order. The motion is

non-debatable. All those in favour? All those opposed? Motion carried.

--Carried

I will now rise and report progress. Thank you.

### Report of Committee of the Whole

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you. Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

**MR. EDJERICON:** Mr. Speaker, your committee has been considering Tabled Document 448-20(1), Tabled Document 453-20(1), Tabled Document 454-20(1), and would like to report progress with two motions carried and that the consideration of Tabled Documents 453-20(1), 454-20(1) is concluded and the House concurs and those estimates and that the appropriation bill to be based on thereon be introduced without delay. And, Mr. Speaker, I move that the report of the Committee of the Whole be concurred with. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh. Can I have a seconder? Member from the Deh Cho. All those in favour, please raise their hand. All those opposed? Abstentions? Motion passed.

Reports on Committee of the Whole. Member from the Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

### Point of Order

**MR. EDJERICON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on a point of order. Earlier today, the Premier breached the rule of the Legislative Assembly contrary to section 3.2. In a debate, the Speaker will call on Member to order. If the Member each makes allegation against another Member, a house officer, a witness, or a Member of the public: (i) imputes false or hidden motives to another Member; (j) another Member while uttering deliberate falsehood. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh. Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh, did you wish to speak further on your point of order?

**MR. EDJERICON:** In response to my oral questions, the Premier said, thank you, Mr. Speaker. While I don't accept the premise of the Member's question that we do uphold the spirit of consensus government, Ministers appear in front of committee, committee gives feedback to Ministers, Ministers go and give direction to the departments informed that feedback just because a Member is not getting everything they want or they made promises

that the Minister can't deliver -- deliver on for them, it doesn't mean that we're not fulfilling the promise of a consensus government, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

Furthermore, the Premier also stated I am very confident in the Minister of health, and when I travel around the territory and I meet with different leaders, including Indigenous leaders from the Member's own riding, they go out of their way to tell me what a good job the Minister is doing and how much faith they have in her.

Stating that, I made a promise that the Minister can't deliver on and further suggesting that Indigenous leaders from a Member's own riding disagree with my line of questioning are clear allegations against me, suggesting that I am motivated by a personal gain and also that I am intentionally misrepresenting the interests of leaders in the Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh riding in pursuing questioning against a Member of the executive council concerning treaty rights and the concerns of my constituents with respect to medical travel.

As per Appendix D of the rules of the objectives of question period is (a) is equal for Regular Members to raise individual concerns of constituents; (b) as an opportunity for the House as a whole to probe the actions of the executive; and (c) as means of illuminating the difference of opinions on the policies of the executive on a major issue and judging that parliamentary skills of the individual Members of the House that I and many Dene Metis treaty people who I represent have different opinions on government Members' fidelity to Treaty 8 and 11 should be subject to allegation by the Premier.

Raised in the concerns are my Dene Metis constituents around both provision and medical care and treaty -- sorry, treaty right obligations are equally valid lines of questioning and should be cast in the doubt by allegations.

Furthermore, it is not the Premier's place to speak for Akaithcho leaders, nor is it acceptable to suggest that any one Indigenous leaders' confidence in particular Minister's performance is sufficient to discharge treaty obligations from the Crown. Without further evidence being provided is a direct allegation that can easily be perceived as an attempt to discredit my line of questioning.

In summary, the Premier doesn't have to like that I am holding government to account with my questions, but that does not give him the privilege to cause disorder by suggesting that I am motivated by a personal gain or deliberately misrepresenting the wishes of my leaders. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh. Mr. Premier.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So I never -- so there's a number of different things going on here. I will address them as I kind of remember them.

So I have heard from -- I have actually heard from leaders in the Member's riding who have told me one thing. I don't think it's a point of order for me to get up here and say that. So I think that one is, you know, an easy one.

I don't speak for the Akaitcho leaders. I've never said I do. So I don't know where that one came from.

I was trying to discredit his line of questioning because I don't think it's a very credible line of questioning. I didn't accept the premise of what he was saying, and so that was the entire point of my comments. And if that is the point of order and you rule that a point of order, I would be happy to apologize and withdraw those remarks, but I don't see that as a point of order.

In terms of personal gain, I said that -- if I recall, I said that the Member -- just because the Member's not getting what he wants, I don't think that's an accusation of personal gain or that he is -- the Minister can't fulfill promises that he's made, I don't see how that's a personal gain.

So I will say, Mr. Speaker, that the debate in this House has been a little testy. There's been a lot of misinformation, and not intentional. I am not saying anyone's lying; I am just saying the information being stated in the House needed correction, and so I did make an attempt to correct it. But I don't think that is a point of order.

So I am happy to hear your ruling on this and hear what has to be said on it. But if the -- if you would like to allow debate, I would rather just apologize and close this off because I don't want to sit here and waste everyone's time listening to, you know -- to comments that might not have a lot of value, just given the -- what's been going on in this House here. So I will leave it with you, Mr. Speaker. I have faith in your abilities. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Okay. Colleagues, I am going to take this under advisement, and I will come back at a later date. Thank you.

Reports on Committee of the Whole. Third reading of bills. Orders of the day, Mr. Clerk.

## Orders of the Day

**CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Harjot Sidhu):** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Orders of the day for Wednesday, February 11th, 2026, at 1:30 p.m.

1. Prayer or Reflection
2. Ministers' Statements
3. Members' Statements
4. Returns to Oral Questions
  - Oral Question 974-20(1), Medical Travel Policy and Ministerial Exemptions
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
  - Written Question 31-20(1), Prenatal, Pregnancy, and Postpartum Costs
10. Returns to Written Questions
  - Written Question 26-20(1), Application of Waters Act Provisions to the Sale or Transfer of Mining Assets
  - Written Question 27-20(1), Physician Recruitment and Retention
  - Written Question 28-20(1), Medical Travel
  - Written Question 29-20(1), Paramedic Contracts
  - Written Question 30-20(1), Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority Action Plans
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
  - Bill 40, An Act to Amend the Vital Statistics Act
  - Bill 41, An Act to Amend the Real Estate Agents' Licensing Act
21. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters
  - Tabled Document 448-20(1), 2026-2027 Main Estimates
22. Report of Committee of the Whole
23. Third Reading of Bills
24. Orders of the Day

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Clerk. This House stands adjourned until Wednesday, February 11th, 2026, at 1:30 p.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 7:46 p.m.