



NORTHWEST TERRITORIES  
**LEGISLATIVE  
ASSEMBLY**

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

**Day 79**

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

**UNEDITED HANSARD**

**Thursday, February 12, 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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(Nahendeh)

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Box 10

Yellowknife, Northwest Territories

Tel: (867) 767-9010 Fax: (867) 920-4735 Toll-Free: 1-800-661-0784

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Published under the authority of the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

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**YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES****Thursday, February 12, 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 1:30 p.m.

**Prayer or Reflection**

---Prayer or reflection

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

Good afternoon. Colleagues, I am prepared to deliver my ruling on the Point of Order raised by the Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh on February 10, 2026. I have reviewed the unedited Hansard for the exchange in question, and I do not agree that this constitutes a Point of Order.

I would first like to recognize that the Member felt personally impugned or that their relationship with an Indigenous leader had been called into question. However, there has been no unparliamentary language, no clear allegations against another Member, and no charges of false or hidden motives.

I recognize that there is a debatable basis for a Point of Order regarding the imputation of motives or suggestion that the Member's questions are misaligned with Indigenous leaders. However, given the absence of key explicit and direct wording, alongside the Premier's explanation of his intent in his response to the Point of Order, I do not see a formal Point of Order.

I appreciate that the Premier was prepared to apologize before I even made a ruling. I also appreciate that the Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh is speaking for his residents. I do wish to stress to Members to avoid such personal implications and encourage both sides to focus on substantive questions of treaty obligations and medical travel policies. I would also like to take this time to remind Members not to suggest another Member is acting based on a personal motive or to ascribe promises or commitments they did not themselves state in this House.

Moving forward, I need to emphasize that debate in this area should be focused on policy, treaty obligations, and government actions regarding medical travel, not on personal motives or characteristics of Members.

In addition, Members know that the Speaker may allow debate on a Point of Order. However, I felt that hearing from the Member and the Premier, along with my review of the transcript, was sufficient in my ability to make a ruling on this Point of Order.

Thank you, colleagues. Ministers' statements. Minister from ECC.

**Ministers' Statements****MINISTER'S STATEMENT 178-20(1):  
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES BARREN-  
GROUND CARIBOU UPDATES**

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Mr. Speaker, barren-ground caribou are a vital part of the culture, traditions, and livelihoods of Indigenous peoples across the Northwest Territories. They are also an important indicator for the health of our northern ecosystems.

The conservation and recovery of barren-ground caribou herds is a shared responsibility and commitment. The Government of the Northwest Territories continues to work closely with Indigenous governments, Indigenous organizations, renewable resources boards, and other co-management partners to monitor herd condition, share information, and take targeted actions when needed.

The new population estimates for several herds have highlighted conservation concerns we are currently facing in the territory. The Bathurst, Bluenose East, and Porcupine herds all recorded significant population declines in 2025 despite collaborative efforts to address climate change, habitat disturbance, and other contributing pressures.

Mr. Speaker, despite these challenges, the GNWT is working with our Indigenous partners and communities to support recovery using both science-based management and Indigenous knowledge. Decisions about caribou management are strongest when they are informed by the people who have relied upon and stewarded these herds for generations.

Over the past year, the Department of Environment and Climate Change and our co-management partners continue a range of research work and monitoring efforts. We support collaborative herd-specific management processes and continued discussions on harvest management and habitat protection.

In 2025, ECC hosted a series of respected harvester meetings with representatives from Indigenous governments and Indigenous organizations whose members have traditionally harvested along the Tibbitt to Contwoyto winter road. The department also provided ongoing support to Indigenous-led monitoring programs along the winter road led by the Tlicho government, the Yellowknife Dene First Nation, and the North Slave Metis Alliance. The GNWT is committed to working in partnership to support the long-term sustainability of barren-ground caribou. As the Minister of ECC, I am personally committed to ensure the long-term sustainability of caribou populations to make sure they are here for future generations.

Mr. Speaker, to be clear, I want the caribou to be there for my grandchildren and their grandchildren after them. Through collaboration, shared responsibility, and continued investment in monitoring and conservation, we can help ensure these herds remain part of the North forever. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister of Environment and Climate Change. Ministers' statements. Members' statements. Member from Inuvik Boot Lake.

### Members' Statements

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 869-20(1):  
???

**MR. RODGERS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Roy Sugloo Arena at the Midnight Sun Complex in Inuvik will be loud and proud tonight. The 37th Annual Inuvialuit Regional Corporation Native Hockey Tournament, also known as the IRC Cup, starts today with 12 teams competing in over three divisions.

I would like to thank the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation and its affiliated sponsors for sponsoring the event. It brings players and fans from throughout the Inuvialuit settlement region, the Beaufort Delta, the Mackenzie Delta, and beyond. I would like to thank the organizer for this event for their tireless efforts, as well as the amazing staff at the MSC, the Midnight Sun Complex, ensuring the facilities are in top shape for the athletes and fans alike.

This event, Mr. Speaker, brings together families, friends, athletes, and visitors to our community. It truly is an incredible event. I would like to wish all the teams the very best of success, and I know it will be another amazing tournament this year. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

### MEMBER'S STATEMENT 870-20(1): TOWN HALL ON CRIME AND PUBLIC SAFETY

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last night, the Member for Yellowknife Centre and I hosted a town hall on crime and public safety. Around 70 residents joined us, including parents, priests, public servants, business people, Indigenous leaders, activists, outreach workers, and people with lived experience on the streets of our capital. What we heard may not be surprising considering the recent state of our territory on crime but the deeply personal experience and insights shared were striking. In their own words, here are some of what we heard last night:

- A citizen whose home was broken into said, I still stay up at night looking out of the window fearing for the safety of my family.
- A Canadian Ranger said he was robbed and assaulted in uniform, the assailant telling him, I've always wanted to beat up a Ranger.
- Dene people are raised to do the right thing. This is not Dene law; this is addiction.
- The rules aren't strong enough.
- The hospital ER is being used as a homeless shelter.
- Fights are breaking out and families don't feel safe, but they can't leave or they won't be treated for their medical issues.
- School-aged children drinking and smoking drugs in my backyard.
- I spent four years living on the streets. I used to snort cocaine and shoot crack. We had respect back then, now these people have no shame, doing it all out in the open.
- It's like we live in a third world country. Elders living in duct-tape homes.

- There is no respect. I live a hundred feet from an encampment. It's going on the second year. I see girls going in as prostitutes. I see drugs going in. Why is the GNWT supporting this with generators and garbage pickup?
- Our neighbourhood isn't safe anymore. I am afraid. I feel helpless. I don't feel safe walking downtown.

Mr. Speaker, several themes emerged over the course of the discussion:

- Crime prevention programs designed for youth,
- Accountability as a guiding principle for criminal justice reform,
- Increased proactive community policing,
- A need for stronger economic and social opportunity,
- Regulation of private security companies and mandated cultural safety training; and,
- More resources in small communities so not everyone has to come to Yellowknife for services.

I want to thank everyone who joined us last night and trusted us with their stories so we could share them here in this chamber. I also want to thank RCMP members, sheriffs, and peace officers who are working tirelessly to protect Northerners.

I am calling on the House to hear the voices of our people, honour their stories, and take decisive action to bring safety back to our streets, Mr. Speaker. And I will have questions for the Minister later today.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 871-20(1):  
TOWN HALL ON CRIME AND PUBLIC  
SAFETY

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am going to start off with some interesting words: Confusion, anger, fear, frustration, hopelessness reinforced by the feelings of abandonment and vulnerability. Again, Mr. Speaker, the weight when someone tells me they feel vulnerable and abandoned by the process in the world we live in.

Mr. Speaker, many people know Yellowknife will never be the Old Yellowknife of old days

but, Mr. Speaker, with my colleague from Range Lake, we wanted to hear the stories of up to 70 people. People showed up who are not regular people who come to these types of community events. They rose to the occasion. They didn't hide behind some veil of I am not telling you who I am. They're not trying to speak in funny voices so we don't know who they are. People saying I want you to know who I am, my story. I want you to hear the struggle of abandonment and fear.

Mr. Speaker, when seniors tell me at a community event like this what is my right to protect my home, what is reasonable force? If a senior, Mr. Speaker, is asking what reasonable force is when someone breaks in their home, that has got to be one of the loudest bells ringing I've ever heard in my job in my whole career. They're that afraid; they need help, Mr. Speaker.

The frustration of hearing a mom talking about being in Stanton Hospital and feeling threatened and wanted to leave. Her child did not feel safe.

Mr. Speaker, these are real stories that people had. They shouldn't feel unsafe.

When business owners are saying they've stopped calling the police because they don't show up fast enough for minor petty crime that happens day in and day out, it's not a criticism of the police because they quickly jump to we know they're dealing with heavy crime. And that's where they feel abandoned and vulnerable, that they're asking questions what do we do now?

Another senior told me do I now have to buy a security system I can't afford, do I have to buy a subscription? Where does it end, Mr. Speaker?

Although my time on the clock is ending, Mr. Speaker, this issue isn't ending. This is the beginning of how we're going to start asking how do we make our families and our friends feel safe in our community again because if that doesn't matter, I don't know what matters. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 872-20(1):  
ELDERS HOUSING AND HEALTH  
SUPPORTS

**MRS. YAKELEYA:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. I want to speak to an urgent and growing need in our small communities, the need for reliable after

hours care for our elders, especially in places where no ambulance services are available.

Mr. Speaker, we know that many of our elders want to remain in their home communities as they age. This is not only a matter of comfort, it's a matter of dignity, culture, and connection. But too often elders who live alone or without close family support face unnecessary risk when a health concern arises outside of regular hours.

In many of our communities, nurses are not permitted to leave health centres and without ambulance services or on-call support, elders may be left with nowhere to turn in moments of distress. This is a gap we can and must address. One practical and community-driven solution is to enable local home care workers to provide limited after hours support when needed. These workers already have the trust of the community, they know the elders, understand local realities, and are trained to provide safe and compassionate care. Allowing home care workers to respond during after hours emergencies within a clear and supported framework would provide a vital safety net for our most vulnerable residents.

Mr. Speaker, this is not about replacing emergency services. It is about ensuring that no elder is left alone without help simply because they live in a small community. It is about creating a safe environment for aging in place, reducing unnecessary medivacs, and supporting the very people who built our communities. Our elders deserve to feel safe in their own homes, day or night.

I urge this government to work with our communities to develop an after hours home care support model that reflects our northern realities and honours our elders with the care they deserve. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 873-20(1):  
SUPPORT FOR 2SLGBTQIA+ COMMUNITY

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I want to remark on how deeply thankful I am for the diverse 2SLGBTQ+ community of the Northwest Territories. In recent years, and notably again this week, misguided hatred towards the trans community festers on social media. As Bad Bunny reminded us all at his Super Bowl performance last weekend, the only thing more powerful than hate is love. So today I rise once again to state unequivocally my love for the 2SLGBTQ+

community and specifically my trans and nonbinary friends and neighbours.

I also want to thank this House for passing the second reading of Bill 40, An Act to Amend the Vital Statistics Act. This bill also amends the Change of Name Act to provide discretion to the registrar general and vital statistics to disallow deadnaming in the gazette, an issue I have raised in this House to support that community. Thank you, colleagues. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Great Slave. Members' statements. Member from Frame Lake.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 874-20(1):  
LAND TRANSFER

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the city of Yellowknife continues to face a significant shortage of available land for development, a challenge that has become increasingly visible in recent years. Municipal leaders and residents alike have voiced concern that the city currently has little residential land available for sale and existing developed parcels are insufficient to meet the community's housing and growth needs. The city is actively working to develop the few available parcels it currently holds, but these are not nearly enough to meet expected demand. The difficulty they are facing is that bringing new land to market is a lengthy and complex process, one that is not fully within municipal control. The underlying issue is that the NWT communities own very little land within their municipal boundaries leaving the municipalities dependent on the Government of the Northwest Territories for land transfers before new parcels can be planned, serviced, and released.

Given these circumstances, there is a clear and pressing need for more efficient coordination between municipal and territorial systems, particularly within the land administration processes overseen by the Department of Environment and Climate Change.

Public reporting indicates that delays in administrative complexity in territorial land processes contribute to difficulties in making new land available. Improving the responsiveness and efficiency of these processes would help address multiple community priorities such as housing availability, economic stability and diversification, and long-term planning initiatives. These documented realities underscore the importance of strengthening intergovernmental coordination and modernizing land administration workflows.



Streamlining application requirements, reducing processing times, and enhancing collaboration between the city and the Department of Environment and Climate Change would help to ensure that our communities have access to the land they need to grow.

I appreciate the Minister's attention to this issue and the addition of new positions in the budget to respond to this need; however, I think there's work to be done on streamlining and improving the timelines of our processes as well. This work is part of our mandate implementation on building the foundation for a strong economy. It's a priority in the department's business plan so, really, we're just working on how best to implement the priority. I know our government wants to ensure that we are reducing barriers to local development as much as possible. I will have questions for the Minister later today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 875-20(1):  
IMPACTS OF DRUG USE AND CRIME

**MR. EDJERICON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the South Slave region has become a hot spot for crime and dangerous drugs coming up from Alberta, make their way into my four Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh communities. While recent increases in drug busts shows that policing investment in tools are working, there is still more that must be done.

As we continue to fight drug crimes, the government must also focus on repairing the harm done to families affected by it, especially the children who are often present in the home when drugs are trafficked.

All these drug dealers look for homes in our communities to set up shop. They trap the most vulnerable. Once the drug user is deeply in their debt, the dealers keep them isolated, terrified, and trapped in the cycle of fear and control. These are homes that the whole community knows as turning into drug dens yet they often have children in them, many of whom are already known to the health and social services. For the safety of those children, the Minister needs to ensure her department is working closely with the justice department because I continue to hear that there's no CFS checks that are happening in these homes. If staff are too afraid to enter, that should be a major red flag demanding immediate action.

I have heard stories of children being picked up at jails by their grandparents after drug busts of

the families being put into taxis and sent to already overcrowded homes of extended relatives. It is up to this government to help break that cycle of poverty and trauma. The Minister responsible goes beyond simply relocating children after RCMP involvement, and she must be proactive when it is clear that children are living and surrounded by drugs and crime. We need more investment not only in fighting crime but also supporting the victims. I will have questions for the Minister of health later on today. Mahsi.

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

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 876-20(1):  
MAGNETIC RESONANCE IMAGING  
MACHINES

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the construction of the new Stanton Territorial Hospital was one of the largest public infrastructure investments in the history of the Northwest Territories. Yet despite this, it lacks a key piece of medical technology - a magnetic resonance imaging machine, or MRI.

MRI technology is essential for early detection and accurate diagnosis. It allows physicians to identify cancers, strokes, neurological disorders, and internal injuries at early stages when treatment is more effective and positive outcomes are stronger.

Mr. Speaker, early diagnosis can mean the difference between a manageable condition and a life altering one. It can also reduce long-term health costs by preventing complications that arise from delayed care. Mr. Speaker, for residents across the Northwest Territories access to MRI services should not be considered a luxury. Timely access is a core part of modern health care and a standard service in hospitals across Canada.

For elders in smaller communities, these barriers are often more significant. Travel is physically demanding, especially for those managing chronic or serious illness. If we are committed to protecting our residents and strengthening care in the North, essential diagnostic services, including MRI, must be a service provided within our own health system.

Mr. Speaker, we spend millions each year on medical travel, sending residents south for services that could be provided here. We have invested in a new hospital. It should be fully equipped to meet the needs of our population.

Mr. Speaker, I have heard from constituents who say that when scans are performed in Alberta, local physicians sometimes receive written reports rather than full imaging access. If treatment is happening here, doctors should have full pictures. Mr. Speaker, it is time to bring MRI services to Stanton so our residents can access this important technology closer to home. I will have question for the Minister of Health and Social Services. Thank you.

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

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 877-20(1):  
BIOMASS ENERGY

**MS. MORGAN:** Mr. Speaker, what if we had access to a proven energy source that was not only cheaper and cleaner but also supported local jobs and economies for the long term and helped protect us from wildfire disasters? It sounds too good to be true. But it's already here, and I am talking about using wood for heating. I know that sounds boring. Lots of folks already have wood or pellet stoves. The GNWT already has installed lots of biomass boilers. So what's more to talk about?

People want to move on to talk about fancy new technologies and energy innovations, but the danger is we ignore the need to strengthen the human capacity, skills, and logistics to sustain even our existing biomass heating facilities. We're also missing opportunities to fully tap into the economic potential of a made-in-the-north wood-chipping industry.

Now, I am not saying that GNWT itself should be the main driver of biomass energy. Projects need to be community-driven. There needs to be local commitment and local people trained to maintain and operate these systems, with several backup maintainers ready to step in if someone goes on vacation or gets sick or leaves the community.

Arctic Energy Alliance is a key partner in ensuring that there are really small armies of trained biomass operators, and they could use funding to run even more courses as they have long waiting lists. And within the GNWT's Department of Infrastructure, we could use a more centralized and coordinated team of support staff.

Now, communities such as Teslin in the Yukon are already seeing the economic benefits from a local wood-chipping industry. They report that with district heating systems powered by locally harvested chips, up to 95 percent of the expense stays within the local economy

whereas only 10 percent of the money would stay with oil or diesel heating.

Led by ECC and MACA, our communities have already been doing a lot of FireSmarting, but we haven't yet made the link to plan to use that wood waste as fuel. Likewise, we've been siloing efforts at sustainable forest management, thinking mainly of preservation when we could actually be creating healthier forests and prevent some fires by doing more active thinning and using that wood as heating fuel. Mr. Speaker, I ask for unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

---Unanimous consent granted

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's time to start reinvesting the substantial savings we've already seen from biomass energy in continuing to expand its potential both for economic development and fire prevention. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 878-20(1):  
FORT SIMPSON DISTRICT EDUCATION  
AUTHORITY

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** Colleagues, over the past year, you have heard some of the challenges the Fort Simpson District Education Authority has been going through. I can tell you, I have spoke with and advocated along side of them to help improved the education system in the community. These seven elected representatives of the community are parents, aunts and uncles of the students in the school system. Today I would like to recognize and celebrate them - a team that stands strong in its believe, dedication, and resolve to create lasting change in education for the community of Fort Simpson.

In every community, education is the bridge between the present and the future. It is where our young people find their voice, our culture finds its continuity, and our community finds renewed strength. The Fort Simpson Education Authority has remarkable determination in meeting the challenges within our education system not to avoiding but by facing them head-on with courage and collaboration.

Change is never easy. It takes vision, conviction, and unity to challenge old systems and to ask difficult questions and to make decisions that put students first. This authority has done exactly that, working tirelessly to strengthen learning environments, support staff, and ensure every student has the opportunity to reach their full potential. Their

work is driven by a belief that every child no matter their circumstances deserves a quality education that reflects who they are, where they came from, and where they are going. By listening to students, teachers, families, and community members, the authority continues to shape an education system that is responsive, inclusive, and grounded in local values.

The efforts underway today are not about fixing what is broken; they are about building something better. They are about creating a system that honours cultural knowledge, celebrates student success, and empowers staff to grow and thrive.

On behalf of all who care about the future of our youth, I want to express sincere gratitude to the Members of the Fort Simpson Education Authority. Your resolve strengthens our community. Your leadership inspires trust. And your action remind us that progress is possible when we work together with open hearts and a shared purpose. May your commitment continue to guide the way forward for the students who are learning today, and for the generations who will follow in their footsteps.

Members' statements. Notices of motion. Motions. Returns to oral questions. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Replies to the budget address, day 6 of 7. Acknowledgements. Oral questions. Member from Range Lake.

### Oral Questions

#### QUESTION 1009-20(1): CRIME AND PUBLIC SAFETY

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this Assembly has made public safety a priority, and I am pleased to see that we have made progress in several areas in this but, of course, it doesn't matter if our constituent don't feel safe. So I am asking today will the Minister of Justice commit to leading a whole of government crime reduction strategy that is costed, time bound, and will increase community policing presence in all NWT communities, take proactive measures for northern youth to prevent crime and addictions, advocate for bail reform at the federal level to ensure violent and repeat offenders are taken off the streets, enhance in-territory addictions programs and create a resident addictions treatment centre, and provide dedicated formula funding to all communities for public safety and community policing. That would be the body of the strategy, but we need a whole-of-government approach here. It can't just be one department, and he needs to take leadership over it to ensure we have safe and secure communities. Thank you.

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

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, a number of the items that the Member has risen are certainly on the agenda, and I am definitely committed to ensuring that as a government, I fulfill my mandate that's within my letter to enhance community safety across the Northwest Territories.

Making a commitment on the floor is not how this government does business. We have processes, we have procedures, we have committee. We get input from all Members to do this work, and that is a big piece of how we govern in consensus government, Mr. Speaker. So I think that that process needs to be brought before the entire House for a further discussion if that's a direction. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, I have thoughts on how we govern but, Mr. Speaker, I mean, I could put this into a motion and then the government will respond to it. I don't think that's going to get us any farther.

Mr. Speaker, we started this conversation at a town hall. Would the Minister commit to hosting town halls across the Northwest Territories with his department, with the RCMP, and hear firsthand the stories people are going through. Because it's not pretty out there. He needs to hear these stories, not just from us, but from firsthand accounts of people telling these stories so he can understand the seriousness of the issues and how he could help. Thank you.

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I held co-meetings with the commander of the RCMP in communities where they have made that request of us, and I am certainly pleased. I will obviously not speak for the commander, but I am happy to make myself available if there's a request from a community to come and have a community meeting to discuss justice. I am very happy to do that and would be happy to reach out to see what the availability is of the commander of the RCMP to attend with me as well. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like the Minister to commit to something more proactive than that. It's fine to wait for the communities to ask but he needs to get out there, he needs to show leadership. Will the Minister take a proactive approach and roll out community consultations on how we're

doing as a government on public safety. Because how people are feeling about it -- it's not just about statistics, but it's about how people feel about safety in their communities. He needs to go out and hear those stories. Will he do it proactively? Thank you.

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, that's the exact approach I've taken. I've visited many communities across the Northwest Territories. I've had meetings with leadership. Certainly crime, drugs, and the impacts on those communities have been top of mind in those discussions, and I continue to have those conversations at the leadership level. And when the community requests of me to come and meet with community members or attend a town hall or a community meeting, I am more than happy to do that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister of Justice. Oral questions. Member from Yellowknife Centre.

QUESTION 1010-20(1):  
CRIME AND PUBLIC SAFETY

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't need a long preamble. I am requesting the Minister to host a town hall and community meeting. Will the Minister abide by that request? Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Yellowknife Centre. Minister of Justice.

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I previously stated, I am happy to accept an invitation from a community to attend a community meeting and speak on behalf of my portfolio as the Minister of Justice, so welcome any invitation. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. HAWKINS:** Mr. Speaker, I have a whole set of questions, but I am not going to get to them. I am going to keep repeating the same question. MLA Testart has asked twice. I've asked once. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to ask it a fourth time.

Mr. Minister of Justice, I am asking, MLA Testart's asking you, would you please organize a community town hall meeting so people can speak about their vulnerability and have ideas and options through your department in partnership with the RCMP so we can feel empowered and feel safe in our community again. Would you be willing to do that at our request? Thank you.

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I stated earlier, I am happy to accept an invitation from a community

to come in and participate in a town hall harding drugs or crime or any other concerns that the community may have that relates to my portfolio. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. HAWKINS:** You're fine, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, maybe I am asking it wrong. I am asking -- I am proposing an invitation to the Minister of Justice. Would he accept the offer by MLA Testart and I that if we organize a town hall meeting, would he attend? Thank you.

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I stated I am happy to attend a community meeting if I am invited to discuss the issues of my portfolio. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 1011-20(1):  
HEALTHCARE AND SUPPORTS FOR  
ELDERS IN SMALL COMMUNITIES

**MRS. YAKELEYA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister recently provided an update on the model of care in small community health centres, highlighting the improving care in small communities. Has the department examined whether an after hours home care support model should be added as a new policy direction to strengthen safety for elders in communities with limited emergency options? Thank you.

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

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as that -- the model of care is the health centre model; however, the home care program is currently an ongoing program that is in the small communities. It's in all of our communities. Within that program, the -- any community member can, you know, self referral or to have an assessment done for home care and home support services. As those home care and home services needs are, then the health authority then reviews the staffing that is needed for those areas. And so when it comes to after hours, if there's a -- you know, if there's a great need to be able to add extra staffing and evening and weekend hours, those assessments are currently done. Thank you.

**MRS. YAKELEYA:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. The Minister has noted the need to balance the right mix of healthcare professionals in health centres and health cabins. Has the department

assessed whether expanding the role of home care workers to include limited after hours support would help achieve this balance provided mix -- provider mix in small communities. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, just, the program itself right now -- and I believe within the -- especially within the small communities, you know, we get federal funding, we use some internal funding, and that funding is done through intake through home support assess -- or home care assessments. The needs of the clients are assessed by the nurse, then those -- the hours are given to the home support workers as the needs, and not always can every small community has extended hours. At this time, the -- you know, within the -- within their job descriptions and within their work hours, some of our communities do have expanded hours and, you know, we continue to do assessments in all communities to see the need if there is a need for expanded hours. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MRS. YAKELEYA:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Given that ongoing access to health care that is safe, reliable, and equitable is a top priority for the Minister for this government for the Northwest Territories health and social services system, will the Minister commit to engaging directly with community governments, Indigenous leadership, and local home care teams, to determine whether an after hours home support model aligns with community needs, cultural expectations, and existing capacities? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would just like to say my department is already doing that. Within the Department of Health and Social Services, we do have the northern wellness agreement, and we do have the First Nation and Inuit home and community care that we do provide services for our residents. Within the northern wellness agreement, the department works directly with every single community leadership, Indigenous, because that money flows to the Indigenous governments, and the Indigenous governments are the ones that come up with their community plans. So they could use that funding for health and health promotion in any way that they see fit and within that -- then they make the agreement, and then the funding flows directly to them. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 1012-20(1):  
ACCESS TO MAGNETIC RESONANCE  
IMAGING SERVICES

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Minister of Health and Social Services. I want to ask the Minister how many NWT residents are currently waiting for an MRI scan and what is the average wait time from referral to imaging. Thank you.

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

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I do not have that level of detail at my desk. Thank you.

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** At a later time, I would like to get that information.

Mr. Speaker, can the Minister provide the total annual cost to GNWT of sending residents to Alberta for MRI scans, including both medical travel expenses and payments to Alberta health facilities for the use of their diagnostic equipment. Thank you.

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, what I can do is I will bring that back to the department. I know that we are doing a feasibility study right now currently for MRI for Yellowknife, so I am sure we have some of that data. Thank you.

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

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, what is the Minister doing to ensure that essential diagnostic imaging is more accessible to residents of the Northwest Territories, and will the Minister commit to developing a plan to establish MRI services at Stanton Territorial Hospital. Thank you.

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And, yes, I have directed my department to do the feasibility study. That's the first part so that we -- you know, where we know what it's going to cost, what it's going to take. And they're currently in that process right now. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Minister of Health and Social Services. Oral questions. Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

QUESTION 1013-20(1):  
CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES  
COLLABORATION WITH ROYAL CANADIAN  
MOUNTED POLICE

**MR. EDJERICON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of health. Can the Minister explain how much child and family services works with the RCMP and the Department of Justice when homes with children is under investigation for criminal activity, such as drugs offences, to ensure that children are safely out of that home well before the police begin making arrests. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am not sure of the actual protocol that they use, but I am aware that in communities where they are -- you know, where there is concerns, RCMP, if there is a need to go into the house, they -- and they know that there's children, they will contact child and family services. The other way around, if child and family services get a complaint and needs to go in to a family's home and they suspect that there could be, you know, drugs and crime going on, that they will contact RCMP as well to escort them. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. EDJERICON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. How is the Minister ensuring that CFS staff can carry out welfare checks when concerns are raised about drugs and crime presence when staff may feel unsafe entering those homes? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I know that child and family services does collaborate with the RCMP, and in the smaller communities, you know, I recently was in the Deh Cho and had the opportunity to talk with some of the concerns that the social workers had when going into small communities. And so with the communities that have no social worker or no RCMP that they are to, you know -- they're to travel together but if it's high risk, then they will contact RCMP. Thank you.

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

**MR. EDJERICON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have families affected by crime who are stuck in the small overcrowded homes after evictions. Can the Minister explain how she ensures that her department has plans to help these families access stable housing after an eviction beyond

a simple moving them into with their closest relatives. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. LESA SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, when there is a -- you know, a situation arise in a small community or in a family or if people are living in a home that now they can't occupy or they have to leave in order to keep the kids, the goal of child and family services is to try to keep the family together and try to get them to a safe place as soon as possible, and they usually work within the family first. And so if they identify an area where there is a family that they can go and stay, then they will make arrangements and support them to try and get there. That work doesn't stop there. It continues on, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 1014-20(1):  
MUNICIPAL LAND TRANSFERS

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, further to my statement today, given that the City of Yellowknife has stated that it has little residential land for sale and the city therefore relies on the GNWT for land transfers before new development can proceed, what immediate measures can the department implement, the Department of ECC to be specific, to accelerate the release of priority parcels within the municipal boundary of Yellowknife? Thank you.

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

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in 2025, the Department of Environment and Climate Change signed a memorandum of collaboration with the City of Yellowknife and part of this document established a framework for information exchange, for coordination, problem solving, and planning between the department and the city to help support timely and effective decisions on land. So we continue to work closely with the city in that direction. Currently there are eight applications that are in -- nine applications that are in process. Two of those are with land titles department right now, one is waiting on a survey, and six are in the consultation process. So we continue to work closely with the city to follow that process and ensure that we are processing those applications as quickly as possible. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I certainly appreciate the Minister's responsiveness to the pressure in this House about this issue. Mr. Speaker, does the Minister feel that there are specific components of the department's review and approval processes that could be streamlined or conducted in parallel to reduce processing timelines for municipal level housing and development applications? Thank you.

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, maybe I will just go back a little bit to the process after devolution.

So during devolution, the delegation of administration and control of lands was delegated from the federal government to the Government of the Northwest Territories. So as part of that, we are an arm of the Crown and so part of that responsibility in the transfer of lands requires us that we must honour the rights of Indigenous governments and Indigenous organizations therefore that requires the extensive consultation process that we do not really put a timeframe on. The other component here that I think that is really relevant is that we don't have the ability to further delegate that authority down to another party. So this process and how we work collaboratively with the city, ensuring that we're moving this as quickly as -- ensuring that our internal processes are efficient, that we're reviewing applications quickly, noting any gaps or missing information, quickly responding to the city or the applicant to get that information and move that application forward. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister responsible for Environment and Climate Change. Final supplementary. Member from Frame Lake.

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I appreciate the Minister getting into more specifics on this issue and would just note as we were talking about in Committee of the Whole the other night, Mr. Speaker, the land and water board process is well celebrated in the Northwest Territories for Indigenous participation and land claim implementation, and that process has timelines associated with it, Mr. Speaker. So I think that it would be possible to put timelines around the process and still engage in that collaborative way that the Minister is speaking to. So would the Minister look into establishing timelines for that part of the process? Thank you.

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, happy to take that away and go back, have a conversation with my department to see which of the steps that we have control over that we're able to implement

some better time guidance. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 1015-20(1):  
BIOMASS ENERGY

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So further to my Member's statement for today, I wanted to ask questions of the Minister of energy, strategic infrastructure, and supply chains, in no particular order.

First, does the Minister see benefit in establishing a more centralized team of support staff within infrastructure to provide more coordinated, targeted support across government operations when it comes to biomass systems and the local operators and maintainers that are trying to keep them working? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, that's a fairly long list of folks that are being named, and this is likely one where there's strategic energy initiatives that reside with me and yet management of our facilities with, of course, Minister for Infrastructure and may well involve some work from MACA with respect to what's happening at a community level. So I'd certainly like to say that if it's a question of simply coordinating or ensuring that the right people are talking to each other that that's probably pretty easy to do. So let me take that back, Mr. Speaker, if there's something simple that needs to get done, that the right people know where to find the right people. I am confident that we can do that without having to bring about a lot more resources to these departments. Thank you.

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I am happy to have a huddle with the Minister or speak about that in more detail later, but. What support is available from infrastructure to help communities do feasibility analysis if they want to establish local wood harvesting and chipping operations? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my first point of call would be to Arctic Energy Alliance who I know have struggled somewhat in the last couple years when we all saw a reduction in a fairly significant program from the federal government that's now been renewed for the

next four years with even a little more than what we had before. So there is going to be more funding available through Arctic Energy Alliance. Whether it will necessarily suit the needs of communities in the way the Member's suggesting, I am not sure. I would suggest perhaps this is an occasion where I'd like to be able to provide a more thorough response or a written response just to make sure that we capture any available funding that is -- that we know of both within our government but also if there is an opportunity to point to funds existing with the federal government. I can say that the Tlicho government has certainly been leading in this respect, and I think they've sought some funds from the federal government. And I suppose the one that -- one last thing that comes to mind, Mr. Speaker, there is specifically a biomass program with some funding proposed in these main estimates. So there's a number of things; perhaps we'll put that in writing, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

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

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And just to note, we did hear from Arctic Energy Alliance this morning that, in fact, they do work with communities in terms of analyzing buildings and putting in sort of boilers but not so much on feasibility analysis around supplying or producing that energy, so that's a new opportunity. So and on that note, can the Minister tell us what additional support could be provided to Arctic Energy Alliance on specifically expanding trainings for biomass operators and maintainers at the local level? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, I think I will be more succinct and just say this is a good opportunity for us to provide this response in writing. There are training opportunities through ITI, ECE, perhaps through MACA, NWTAC, and, again, I won't have all of those at my fingertips here, and I want to do my best to make sure we provide that information. It's important, and there are opportunities available in the Northwest Territories. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 1016-20(1):  
CRIME AND PUBLIC SAFETY

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do want to note the tone of frustration wasn't

intended at the Minister directly. I was kind of -- justice Minister. I was just hoping, and I think MLA -- my MLA colleague was hoping for a simple yes, we'll attend, not this long government answer.

Mr. Speaker, on the same topic, my question for the -- general topic, that is, Mr. Speaker, my question for the Minister respectfully is intended is this: Businesses are forced to deal with the cost of vandalism, shoplifting, etcetera, this is a cost passed on to the public. It's incurred the situation of hiring security guards and as such, the community is resolving the problem and it's hurting them hard. Mr. Speaker, does the Minister of Justice see a role for his department and some direction through the contract with the RCMP to find ways to bring a more stable and safe environment back to our community. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Yellowknife Centre. Minister of Justice.

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I think the Government of the Northwest Territories made significant investment within the RCMP contract program to ensure that we're getting all of the opportunities that we can to bring resources to the territory. There's been a significant number of items that have been added over the last number of years. We have general investigation section which has five investigators that are specifically dealing with fraud, controlled drugs and substances. We have added the special response unit. There's also the community policing officer which is a liaison with different communities. We've added the First Nations and Inuit policing program. So there are a number of commitments that we've made within that budget to ensure you are that the resources are there for the RCMP to provide that service to Northerners. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. HAWKINS:** And every one of those is to deal with serious crime, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, citizens are exhausted and not reporting crime on theft anymore, and they will say stats remain flat or stable, Mr. Speaker. The question specifically now is the fact that people are giving up on reporting crime because they feel the GNWT has directed the RCMP not to fully enforce the existence of the Criminal Code or even in some cases the Liquor Act provisions; is this correct, is it true or untrue? Thank you.

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I will start off by saying I do not direct the RCMP to do anything. We provide a mandate to the RCMP with the priorities of this government for each year and



what our expectations are, and the Criminal Code is -- and all of the laws that the RCMP enforce or investigate or act on is solely on the discretion of the RCMP. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. HAWKINS:** Mr. Speaker, in a roundabout way, the Department of Justice used to support community initiatives such as Citizens on Patrol, Mr. Speaker. It was a program in collaboration with the RCMP. Would the Minister be willing to revisit this initiative that citizens appreciated where they felt like they were being part of the bigger community solution making our communities safe? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we are currently running a pilot project in the community of Fort Liard, which is going to be evaluated. It's a community policing project. And as we look to this evaluation document, once it's completed, we're going to use that as a tool to approach the federal government to look at what resources could possibly be available for communities. I've heard this raised multiple times from small communities that they're looking for another presence within those communities. So this is a tool that we're going to use to look at how we can evaluate this and see how it can support other small communities in the North. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 1017-20(1):  
BIOMASS ENERGY AND FOREST  
MANAGEMENT

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My next set of questions are for the Minister of Environment and Climate Change. So also following up on my Member's statement, is the Minister aware of any feasibility or planning studies on how any of the wood harvested during FireSmarting operations could be used as heating fuel? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, right now I am not aware of any feasibility study that's currently being done in that regard. But what I can say is following the 2023 fire season, there was a

significant amount of FireSmart work that was done across the territory, and the department worked very closely with communities to identify where that resource could be used, could be shared with communities for home heating, if there was any commercial interest in harvesting that wood from our local woodcutters, etcetera. So that conversation was had in many communities, and I think that, you know, as we look for mitigation opportunities going forward and fuel reductions around communities, I think that conversation will continue. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And so my next question is, is there any work being done within ECC's forest management division to analyze how active forest management, such as regular thinning, could be used to both prevent fires and provide a source of heating fuel for local communities? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I I don't have specifics, but I am aware that there is a significant amount of work being done in that area across Canada as well as within forest management division. Certainly looking at fuel, reduction fuel modification, fireguards, firebreaks as part of the work that is done through the FireSmart program, whether it be around community boundaries or within communities themselves, and certainly a big part of the approach that the department is taking to support that FireSmarting initiative. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister of the Environment and Climate Change. Final supplementary. Member from Yellowknife North.

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I am encouraged to hear that the Minister is at least interested in pursuing this more.

So my final question is, is there any joint work underway or being planned between ECC and the energy division within infrastructure to coordinate strategies around biomass heating and forest management? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am aware that our departments certainly are speaking as we're looking at combining the climate change action plan and energy action plan into one document. I don't have specifics that I can provide on the floor today, but I am certainly happy to get that information for the Member. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 1018-20(1):  
ASPEN APARTMENTS PROJECT UPDATE

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I last asked about the Aspen Apartment in the last sitting, in October, and when residents would be moving in. I was told hopefully before Christmas however that's not come to pass. Can I please get an update from the Minister from Housing NWT when residents will be situated in Aspen. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member from Great Slave. Minister responsible for Housing NWT.

**HON. LUCY KUPTANA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Aspen Apartments, like I indicated earlier this week, there's been some electrical issues. Individual tenants would have their own power meters so they had to rework that out, and they were having issues with that, having tenants move over. That work has been done, and they're hoping to get them moved in over the next couple of weeks. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, has the Housing NWT sorted out the priority lists for the folks who are moving if they are moving in in the next couple of weeks. I recognize that Aspen is mostly one bedrooms; are all the units going to be filled? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. LUCY KUPTANA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in Yellowknife we have over 300 families on the waitlist and we'll have to do some reassignments, but of course Aspen Apartments will be full. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister of Housing NWT. Members' statements. Member from Frame Lake.

QUESTION 1019-20(1):  
BUILDING STANDARDS FRAMEWORK

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Appreciate -- I would love to deliver two Member statements a day, but that would be a lot of work.

My questions are for the Minister of Infrastructure. And in the last sitting, I was asking questions about establishment of building standards legislation. I am just wondering, the Minister had committed to follow up on that, if the Minister has any updates on

progress on that work with his department. Thank you.

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

**HON. VINCE MCKAY:** Yeah, thank you, Mr. Speaker. So the only update I have got is that we actually have slowed down on that work right now just because we've established priorities on working on legislation that they're related to the mandate essentially. Also, I mean, the work's still being done in the background, but it's just not a priority right now. And just maybe to add to that, I think there's more of a national view looking at this so we are going to continue working on it, just not at a priority pace right now. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was hoping for a walk forward as opposed to a walk back on this one. Last time we chatted about this, there was a commitment to get all the work in place so that we could be ready to quickly introduce legislation in the 21st Assembly. Can the Minister just confirm that getting the framework in place to do that is still on the table. Thank you.

**HON. VINCE MCKAY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I would agree with that, and we're still going to continue working to have that for the 21st Assembly. But also just to be clear, I wouldn't say it's walking back. It's just walking a little slower, that's all. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Final supplementary. Member from Frame Lake.

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And can the Minister just give us an update as to what walking slowly exactly looks like? So just if I could get some details as to what work is actually being done. Any details would be helpful for the public to understand that this is moving forward. Certainly, I have constituents who are interested in seeing this move forward. Thank you.

**HON. VINCE MCKAY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just follow me. No, I would just say that -- just to be clear with this, it's not that we're not working on it; it is being worked on. Again, we have legislative priorities that were put on the table essentially just to concentrate on, and that's what the department's been doing. So it's not that it's being neglected or wiped off the table or anything like that. We are working on it, and we'll continue to work on it, just not as fast as the Member had hoped and I would hope. Something we all want too. So thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 1020-20(1):  
ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE  
SPECIAL CONSTABLES

**MR. HAWKINS:** Mr. Speaker, in speaking to the chief superintendent about one of the things that could help the Northwest Territories policing division, and not just in Yellowknife, although that's important to me, but all the territory at large, would be special constables. Now, we currently have at least one that I am aware of. Mr. Speaker, what is this government doing to support that need and request by RCMP of getting more special constables into our communities? Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Yellowknife Centre. Minister of Justice.

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the request for resources from the department come through a process -- from the RCMP come through a process to the department. Those requests are evaluated and put forward as an ask. And so that specific item, I am not -- don't currently have information on any requests that may be outstanding but happy to get that information for the Member. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will talk that offer. Mr. Speaker, is the Minister aware of the type of community policing that special constables provide outside of the regular standard RCMP officer. Thank you.

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am not up to speed on the job description of a special constable. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. HAWKINS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In brief, they provide community policing almost identical to RCMP but they are a better -- a more direct resource from the community. So, Mr. Speaker, would the Minister be willing to meet with the RCMP directly, including with colleagues like myself and Mr. Testart, to talk more about how we can support this initiative in the Northwest Territories. Thank you.

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I've told the commander of the RCMP that my door is always open. He's welcome to reach out to me at any time, and I am happy to discuss any matter that is of importance to him. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 1021-20(1):  
ENERGY SECURITY AND RELIABILITY

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So I have another set of questions for the Minister of Strategic Infrastructure, Energy, and Supply Chains.

So there's been much discussion after the recent power outage, speculation about what could have prevented it, but we need to avoid knee-jerk responses without understanding the specific source of the problem and whether it represents a systemic problem or just a freak accident. It seems that last week's outage was not a problem of insufficient generation capacity within the grid or a lack of backup power but a problem that must have prevented even backup power from reaching the grid. So will the Minister ensure that the power corporation conducts an investigation into what specifically went wrong to cause the recent power outage that lasted four to five hours and makes the results public? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker. I am happy to say that that work happens as a matter of routine and is made public as a matter of routine. So the Northwest Territories Power Corporation does root cause analysis on all outages and the public utilities board, in fact, has jurisdiction to then review outages. So there's a couple of layers whereby these kinds of reviews do take place, statistics are made available. For example, there was, you know -- when the last GRA work was done, there's reviews that are put out start -- goodness -- charts and statistics are provided. And, Mr. Speaker, I'd be more than happy to provide that here. The documents are fairly detailed and lengthy so perhaps by link if not by physical means. Thank you.

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So that is good to know, and I am eager to review the stats and trends produced by the power corporation on regular supply site failures.

How will the Minister ensure that capital improvements being made within the power system are prioritized based on careful analysis of these trends around problems and interruptions over time rather than hasty responses to the most recent event or

catastrophe that we've experienced? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, again, with respect to specific outages, there is this process I've already described. It is formally done but with respect to capital planning, there is a capital planning process that does take place within NTPC in terms of the staff who are involved with outage investigation and reviews but also involved in terms of wanting to deliver upon their mandate as an organization. Anything that is over 5 million, which for a lot of more major investments, certainly would be. That also gets reviewed by the public utilities board. And, of course, I will just highlight and keep in mind that the NTPC board has fairly recently seen its full shift to a hybrid board after some years, so there's a solid matrix of experience there. So we have the level that happens at NTPC, the level of review that happens at the PUB, and then, of course, to the extent that strategic infrastructure's involved, we have our capital planning process as well. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 1022-20(1):  
ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE  
CRIME REDUCTION UNIT

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's been -- well, the crime reduction unit in the RCMP that this Assembly put in place has now finally -- or is now fully implemented and off to work. We know that one of our biggest challenges here is the flow of illicit drugs into the Northwest Territories from the south. Can the Minister of Justice tell us how this -- how the crime reduction unit is making a difference in fighting the drug trade. Thank you.

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

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the crime reduction unit is an integral part in investigating organized crime within the Northwest Territories as well as they have worked together with other jurisdictions across Canada. You know, this unit has, as you can see by the many actions that have taken place across the Northwest Territories, have certainly provided support to officers and community investigations to put a very small dent in the drug trade and certainly have helped to disrupt that trade as well. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, and I believe the largest ever drug seizure, 4.7 kilograms of cocaine and over \$360,000 of cash was seized. So just want to commend the crime reduction unit and the RCMP for doing that.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister just said it's a small dent. How can we enhance this unit and our efforts to combat drug traffickers? We need to do more than a small dent. We need to take the fight directly to them and make sure we make the biggest impact with our limited resources. So is the Minister working on that? Thank you.

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, certainly agree with that statement. I think it's important that we make a big dent in the drug trade, and I think that right now the RCMP have focused on a campaign to attract more Members to the Northwest Territories, I think with some success. When I spoke of this item last time I stood up in the House and talked about staffing, we were at a 30 percent vacancy rate. That number is now 18 percent. So that's a move in the right direction. You know, in my conversations with the commanding officer, they're focused on the recruitment and encouraging people to come to the Northwest Territories. And I think a big part of this is that we continue that communication with the citizens of the Northwest Territories to support the work of the RCMP and to support all of our communities in ensuring that that information that's required to disrupt this drug trade is getting to the people that need to have it. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The youth aspect of the drug trade is very concerning. We heard stories about it last night. Although this is not really in the Minister's mandate, it is definitely related to the drug trade and definitely related to the RCMP. So can the Minister work with the RCMP to do more youth outreach and education to ensure the risks of the drug trade are well understood by young people and they are making more positive choices. Thank you.

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, certainly very engaged in that area. I think that that's really important. In recent conversation with the commanding officer, you know, he was telling me about the level of engagement that the Members are having within the communities all across the territory, including the city of Yellowknife, to try and get involved in activities with the youth, whether that's through sports or other devices,

and ensuring that we're getting that message out, you know, through the schools and through our activities as being part and a really integral member of the community. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister of Justice. Oral questions. Written questions. Returns to written questions. Replies to the Commissioner's address. Petitions. Reports of committees on the review of bills. Reports of standing and special committees. Tabling of documents. Notices of motion for the first reading of bills. First reading of bills. Second reading of bills. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters, with Member from Tu Nedhe-Willideh in the chair.

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

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** I now call Committee of the Whole to order. I am going to go to the Member from Inuvik Boot Lake.

**MR. RODGERS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, your committee would like to consider Tabled Document 448-20(1), 2026-2027 Main Estimates, the Departments of Infrastructure, Municipal and Community Affairs, and the Department of Justice, Mr. Chair. Thank you.

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay. We'll take a 20-minute break. Thank you.

---SHORT RECESS

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Committee, we have agreed to consider Tabled Document 448-20(1), 2026-2027 Main Estimates. We will now resume consideration of the Department of Infrastructure on the strategic infrastructure, Energy and Supply Chain's key activities. Does the Minister responsible for Strategic Infrastructure, Energy and Supply Chains wish to bring witnesses into the house?

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

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

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

Would the Minister please introduce her witnesses.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. On my left, I have Kim Wickens, assistant deputy minister for energy, strategic infrastructure, and supply chains. And on my right, Miranda Bass, the director of corporate services.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. Strategic Infrastructure, Energy and Supply Chains, beginning on page 279, with information item on pages 281 to 283. There's questions, I am going to go to the Member from Frame Lake from where we left off yesterday. Thank you.

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just wanted to first speak to the Mackenzie Valley Highway environmental assessment and planning.

I note that in 2025-2026, we spent \$11 million. This year, we're spending \$3.5 million. Can the department give us an idea of the total amount the department has spent over the term of this environmental assessment that has been spent to date.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I may need to come back. Oh, let's see here, Mr. Chair, we may -- oh well, so there is -- yes, there's \$40 million allotted entire and \$35.9 million in prior years, Mr. Chair. Thank you.

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

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. And I appreciate that information from the Minister. And that certainly is a pretty significant amount of money for an environmental assessment. And I just note when you go on the review board's website, they have a very handy tracker on their new website that tells you how an EA is proceeding and gives you a breakout of time that is on the developer, so in this case the GNWT, time that is on the board, and time that is with the Minister. Now, the project hasn't been approved yet, so it hasn't gone to the Minister.

I would just note that the board time for that EA is currently sitting at about one year, 11.75 months. The amount of time sitting on the developer, the GNWT, is 120 months, so 10 years. And so we've spent just over \$35 million on an EA that is not finished. I am just curious to understand why this process has drawn out for as long as it has and been as expensive as

it has for an EA that hasn't concluded yet. I just can't help but note that the timeline that we're looking at here is extremely long for an EA. I am curious to know a bit more of an explanation behind that. Thank you.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I would also like to know why it has taken perhaps some of the time that it has. I can give you only some of the history. Obviously, I've had the opportunity to work on this project only in a focused way in the last couple of years since assuming this role, and particularly in the last year.

My quick assessment on the history would be going back to roughly 2013-2014 when this was first initiated in a formal environmental assessment capacity, or in a more concerted capacity. I think the project's been generally spoken about even longer than that, but it was originally scoped out at that time and then some funding was received as an entire route all the way to Inuvik. It was then scoped down to being only as far as Norman Wells and some additional work done to do that before putting a formal proposal into the board back, again, I believe sort of in the roughly 2014-2015 stage. The project moved forward a little bit to its assessment. Proposals were made to start with bridge work, particularly Great Bear River Bridge, as being, I think -- I think, I was not here, but I think notionally as a capacity building in anticipation of a future road, and money was received for that project. Then COVID came along in 2020 after that money was received but no project was finalized. While -- meanwhile, the rest of the road was sitting in its EA stages. There had been, I will suggest, perhaps some incomplete engagement with some of the communities along the route, in particular the Pehdzeh Ki First Nation who are at the very outset of the route, and that relationship back then remained rather tenuous. And then, as I said, we were at COVID years. There was a couple of years where communities really quite actively did not want anyone in their community. And that just about leads up to 2023-2024, when I had the opportunity to come into this role. And at that time, we had just finally filed the DAR, or were about to do so when I began this role that I am in. So the history to -- up to the last two years was long. Things were not moving very quickly. And as I say, I mean, I -- from when I've been in this position now, we filed the DAR. We filed an amended DAR to suggest that there's an optimized way to construct this. We have been in the communities. We were in the communities just this week looking to get our community readiness working groups ready now, not only

at the end, and to optimize the construction schedule as well as to bring back phase two, which was originally part of the project, and to be very active in terms of soliciting the potential funding for it. Thank you.

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

**MR. MORSE:** Okay, thank you, Mr. Chair. I don't want to dwell too long on the past on this one. I just want to note that I hope we are learning some lessons here. I think that the EA process is a process that proceeds much more efficiently when a developer has the good sense of what their project is and has a solid project description and is ready to proceed to EA. So I would just note maybe we can learn from this lesson that dragging out an EA is an expensive process, and it eats up a lot of resources for everybody involved. And so I hope we're learning from that.

So to that end, I would just ask the Minister what are the next steps in this timeline, and how soon do they anticipate being able to satisfy all the conditions of the EA and to bring this project to a conclusion at least insofar as the review stage of it is. Thank you.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thanks, Mr. Chair. And, Mr. Chair, I share my colleague's view on this. There's a lot of lessons to be learned, and we can't build projects in pieces. It's not effective. And this is a message for the federal government as well. When we're given small -- really what are small amounts of money to do simple, small parts, but without knowing whether or not the whole of the project is ever viable, you are building something that is massive in tiny pieces. It's not effective, and it's not efficient.

Next steps, Mr. Chair, as I said, we had members of strategic infrastructure in all Sahtu communities this week. They are there to deliver and to ensure that we are moving forward with our community readiness so that when we get to board hearings, which we expect to be -- and sorry, maybe I should back up. Sorry, Mr. Chair.

So Pehdzeh Ki First Nation and us have signed a work plan to ensure that we have a final defined route that is a hybrid route, drawing on their knowledge of the region as well as on information and research studies that have been done over years. That is expected to come up with a finalized route here in the next couple of months, such that a DAR addendum can be filed by July. And with that, my

expectation is that public hearings can begin this fall. We are in the communities in advance of that so that everyone's ready for those public hearings. My hope is people don't have to wait to the public hearing to ask questions. They can be asking questions now and when we get through that process, the process will hopefully go smoothly and efficiently. Hoping on a decision as early as possible thereafter upon the completion of those public hearings.

And then with that in hand, Mr. Chair, there are, of course, still some regulatory pieces in terms of our land availability, land access, water licenses, but hopefully we are looking to what we can do to do some of that work simultaneously so that we are more ready to proceed come next year, come 2027.

And meanwhile, Mr. Chair, as I said, phase two has reignited, and we are already discussing the phase two project with both SSI and the Gwich'in on whose lands this would traverse. Thank you.

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

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So I appreciate that update from the Minister, and we'll just let my comments stand on how we're using EAs. But certainly I don't think EAs are a good place to figure out what your project is going to be. I think EAs are a good place to bring a project that is fully thought through so that you can proceed through that process in a timely manner. And I just want to put that little plug in there for my friends in the regulatory system, that projects that do come forward in that manner tend to proceed through the system quite quickly.

On that note, I wanted to move to the Slave Geological Province Access Corridor. I know we spent \$6.8 million on this last year. We're spending \$5.2. Can the Minister help us understand what is entailed in that spending. Thanks.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So the state of this project is one where it had a fair bit done in terms of one proposed route. There's of course -- I shouldn't say of course, there are multiple -- there has been multiple work done on different routes ultimately over time on this project as well. We were ready to move forward with one particular route but have dialed that back a little bit in order to actually have what will hopefully be a better -- and going to the earlier comment, a better project description at the end of the day

that is supported by the traditional landholders and the landholders in terms of the Tlicho government who are landowners where very likely some portion, or a large portion of this route, may well traverse. So with that, we are now working as -- in a working group fashion with those two groups to determine a final routing. Obviously, out of other groups and land users also for the region who will need to be consulted on that final route but want to have that ready to go by this summer with the public hearings to follow thereafter and hopefully a report of environmental assessment in the 2027 year. And that's -- so that, that'll be the next step, Mr. Chair. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I will go to -- oh, time is up on that one. I am going to go to the Member from Great Slave.

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. One moment, please. Thank you.

As my colleague from Yellowknife North noted earlier today in oral questions, we did have the pleasure of having the executive director of Arctic Energy Alliance present before us today in economic development and environment. He kindly pointed out to committee that several items have been cut in this budget, including community energy planning and the low income program to adjust energy poverty -- maybe not program but I guess grants, contributions and transfers. So the funding has ceased to continue. Can the Minister provide a substantiation as to why? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So I believe it was all three of those programs were unfortunately cut as a result of the sunset and conclusion of funding that we had been receiving from the federal government, a fairly substantive amount coming from the federal government now with the signing of the new low carbon economy fund. That should -- that now is, in fact, more than what it was previously, at least for the next some period of time, a short period of time. We do expect to be able to bring back a significant amount and more than cover the losses in funding. But whether or not or what specific programs that funding would be directed to, I would suggest we do want to just get through the process of putting out the new climate change and energy strategy to ensure that this new or renewed funding goes to the best possible uses. Thank you.

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

**MS. REID:** Yeah, thank you. And, you know, further down that sort of avenue of thought that my colleague was going to earlier today, we heard at the biomass summit -- which was, you know, grateful that the GNWT was a funder of that summit -- that community energy planning is, indeed, core and crucial to help communities assess what it is that they think they want to do in that space, how they can grow energy reliance and self-sufficiency in that space. And so I would argue that that's a good thing to fund, and I hope that it does get reinstated. However, I know the Minister is not going to speak about the actions and outcomes planned in the forthcoming plan that has yet to be released and yet to be brought to committee, but is there any way that the data from Arctic Energy Alliance's successful programs and well-subscribed programs are, indeed, going into at least some of the thought process there? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** If I could send that to the assistant deputy minister, please.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** ADM.

**MS. KIM WICKENS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thanks to the Member for the question. Absolutely, I mean, we had a fair number of staff attend the conference as well and taking a lot of that feedback and then helping build into our joint strategy that will also then form our implementation plan. And a lot of those actions will be covered in there.

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

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I cede my time.

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

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair; I appreciate your indulgence.

Mr. Chair, I wanted to turn now to the Taltson expansion pre-construction. I know we spent \$7.1 million on it last year. We've got \$11 million to spend this year. Similar to the question I asked about the Mackenzie Valley environmental assessment, does the Minister

have offhand how much we've spent on Taltson expansion pre-construction to date.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I suspect we will be able to find that number here in just the next few minutes. I don't have it at the tip of my fingers, but somebody else does.

\$18,265,000 in previous years, 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 that would be, by my rough math, about \$29 million that we've spent. Can the Minister help us understand what we'll be using the \$11 million for this year. Thanks.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So planned work for 2026-2027 includes advancing to the regulatory phase which would include being ready for the beginning or the initiation of an environmental assessment process, also continuing, and I hope concluding, commercial partnership discussions amongst the Indigenous partners of this MOU group. And, Mr. Chair, also importantly, advancing -- and I think maybe not concluding but advancing to a real state of readiness, the discussions and work to deal with the legacy impacts for the existing hydro facility. Thank you.

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

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I appreciate that answer. And can the Minister maybe help us better understand -- and this is something she can follow up later if she wants to, but what are the line items involved in that? So \$11 million is a fair amount of money for having discussions. Can the Minister help us parse out what exactly the money is being spent on. Thank you.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Yes, thank you, Mr. Chair. Certainly, I agree it's a lot of money, and I think it's probably appropriate to put that out in some writing so that I am not just spitballing that size of a dollar fund. I mean, certainly some of it -- there are quite a large number of groups involved, and so to the extent of there being, you know, work happening with



each group to discern the traditional knowledge, traditional knowledge studies, those are amounts that are provided directly to Indigenous communities and governments. So there's three groups, three Indigenous nations involved, but each one then also has regional groups within them. So, for example, within the Akaitcho, Mr. Chair, there are more than one group involved and that -- so each group is being asked to advance their own traditional knowledge work and then as well as doing the technical and design work for -- to prepare for the environmental assessment. So, again, I will take that back so that we can provide something with a bit more detail in a more organized fashion. Thank you.

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

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. And, certainly, I don't want to put the Minister in the position of spitballing on the floor, to maintain our parliamentary behaviour.

My next question is, in some questions earlier this week, or last week -- weeks are all blending together, Mr. Chair -- we talked -- the Minister, in one of her answers, spoke to the Snare stabilization project. She may be able to correct me on the terminology for that, but can the Minister speak to that project. And the line of questioning was about some smaller projects. Because I know we're putting a lot of focus on Taltson and stabilizing our system by connecting our grids. But knowing that we're sitting in the situation we are now, I am curious to hear more about what we're doing in the short term -- in the shorter term to stabilize our grid and system against power outages and failures. Thanks.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So a few examples, Mr. Chair, in addition to -- and I know people say there shouldn't be any more planning, we've done enough planning. The reality is a lot of the planning is quite out of date and/or was talked about but actually non-existent. So a plug again, Mr. Chair, for the long list of policy directions that were offered and issued out to the public utilities board which still involve strategic infrastructure and energy as well as Northwest Territories Power Corporation to go out and do that work, in particular with respect to integrated systems planning and the Snare resiliency study, which is, I think, the study that the Member might be referencing.

In addition to that, from a delivery side, there is still the outstanding Whati transmission line

project, the Fort Providence-Kakisa transmission line project, a Fort Simpson diesel relocation, which would be combined with adding LNG capacity and potentially battery replacement capacity there, Mr. Chair. And also some other work alongside Northwest Territories Power Corporation and work with some of the smaller communities to see if there's opportunities for micro hydro. Thank you.

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

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. And can the Minister help us understand, is the Snare resiliency study something that is going on right now, is it yet to occur, or has it already occurred?

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, it is due any day to me, so I don't know exactly where it is in terms of its print but I suspect it's at a stage of fairly final draft. Thank you.

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

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I appreciate that answer. I am looking forward to seeing what comes out of it and potentially seeing some -- yeah, some projects that come out of it that will help us.

Is the Minister aware of whether we've looked into the possibility of expanding any of the reservoirs in the North Slave region to better adapt to the low water levels that we've been seeing over the past number of years? I know we've done -- we've seen work from our water survey folks who have told us that this is going to continue to occur. And is that what the Snare resiliency study is focusing on? Thanks.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Expanding reservoirs in terms of new flooding, I would say no, that's not been put forward, which isn't to say that there's not additional hydro capacity. So, for example on the Taltson, there is significant additional hydro capacity but also, I think, a real reluctance given the impacts of flooding on the land and the impacts therefore to people's communities and ways of life. There is some look at what the Lac La Martre reservoir would be in its current state. Again, not -- to just be clear so that there's no mistake from the public, if there are folks paying attention, not looking at damming or flooding

but that there is existing capacity in the Lac La Martre area, which would be a project in conjunction with the Tlicho. Resiliency study does certainly include a hydrology component. There's hydrology analysis done. I know every year we were certainly looking at it -- those reports were coming through Northwest Territories Power Corporation and to me in the lower water years. It's a roughly every-nine-to-ten-years cycle, but the last cycle was shorter than it had been in the past. So I will pause there to make sure I don't run out of time, Mr. Chair.

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

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. And I appreciate the thoughtfulness and caution on the part of the Minister. But I would also just note that, I mean, in conversations like this I think there's trade-offs to consider and people's cost of living is probably the thing I hear about the most and is one of the areas that us politicians, I think, struggle the most to address but it's certainly one that I get at the doors any time I go out. And I think the public would appreciate us, if nothing else, just having the conversation, putting ideas out there, considering the pros and cons of expanding a reservoir or whatever measures need to be put in place to help us control the escalating costs of our power system because I think people would appreciate having that conversation, you know regardless of what the outcome might be. So I would encourage the Minister to not leave options off the table out of an abundance of caution and rather put things out for conversation and see what people have to say about possibilities. Thank you.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I couldn't agree more, and I spend an awful lot of time wondering and worrying what has happened to our energy systems and why we find ourselves in the situation that we are in. Without finding customers who are not residential customers and who are large-scale customers, it is going to be very difficult to meaningfully and sustainably bring down the cost of power other than through subsidies from the government, which really just takes away resources from the government that could be spent on other programs and services and/or obviously requires us to, you know, raise taxes, which I can assure is equally unpalatable from the perspective of maintaining an affordable cost of living in the Northwest Territories. So we are -- part of what I wonder is what we can do to -- if there's a way to generate power more

economically, if there's a way to bring power to people or entities that want to buy the power and therefore spread the cost of power out differently, those are all things that 100 percent agree. We need to be looking for those customers everywhere, finding out how we get ourselves to those customers, and continuing to also look at ways to generate power more cheaply all at the same time. And at the same time when we build those things, not putting the cost of those things on the ratepayers, which is what it would be every time there's an infrastructure investment. So we're in a difficult situation on this, Mr. Chair, which is why there's both the investments I just named on the smaller projects. There also has to be the planning. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I am going to go to the Member for the Deh Cho.

**MRS. YAKELEYA:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. My question to the Minister is what's happening with the expansion line to Fort Providence from where Kakisa-Fort Providence? Thank you.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, there's still work happening on that line. It is at this point -- I am sorry, Mr. Chair, I don't have it in my -- sorry, in my list in terms of the budget for the coming year. We do have potentially some federal funds available to it. So it's not -- it's a capital project. But, Mr. Chair, where we're at on that is we do need to have some further conversations with Naka Power. So Naka Power are the distribution agency or distribution company within Kakisa and Fort Providence. NTPC generates the power out at the Taltson facility, and the vision is to connect to hydropower to what is still a diesel-run community out in Fort Providence, but that then will require the NTPC system to connect into the Naka system and determine who will own some of the power in between the two. There is budgeted \$25 million for the coming year to see this program through. So -- sorry, my mistake. There is some money in this current budget. But at this point in time, what I can say is that there's a real desire to (audio) still some details to work out between the two entities. Thank you.

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

**MRS. YAKELEYA:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. The Minister said \$25 million. Is that correct, or is that a mistake? Thank you.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Oh, sorry, Mr. Chair. It is in the -- it's in the capital budget, and so that's why -- yeah, I was thinking it's not showing up on this budget, which is our operations, but there is an amount budgeted for capital for the coming year. So we were just able to pull it up over here. Thank you.

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

**MRS. YAKELEYA:** The number is \$25 million? Thank you.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** That was what was budgeted for 2026-2027 in the capital plan, Mr. Chair. It wouldn't necessarily -- it wouldn't be the total cost of the project. The total cost of the project to run a transmission line from Taltson's facility all the way to Fort Providence would be well, well beyond that.

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

**MRS. YAKELEYA:** Thank you. Yeah, because there's -- I guess people want to know what's -- the constituents in my riding want to know what's going on with that and how is it they're going to be impacted by this.

And the other question I had was in regard to -- sorry, I lost my -- supply chain -- I am looking at -- I want to know how Enterprise can get phase 3 power. And this is the Minister to ask, so I am asking now. Thank you.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So, Mr. Chair, this too has a bit of complication in that there's more than one utility involved. There is, right now, an existing line between Hay River and Enterprise that does provide hydro power from Taltson, which is NTP asset, into the Naka distribution system in the community of Enterprise. And in terms of what, whether or not to go single phase to three phase, unfortunately, Mr. Chair, although NTPC provides the power, the distribution decisions about what kind of power or how it is -- how it exists essentially within the community is one that will rest with Naka Power. So I am not, unfortunately, in a position to support -- or to assist the community, but we could certainly -- I mean, we do meet with Naka Power and are trying to have a more -- a better working relationship with them. So I'd be more than happy to put the question to them and to

support the Member in finding out that answer. Thank you.

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

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

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Are there any further questions? I see no further questions, please turn to page 280.

Strategic Infrastructure, Energy and Supply Chains. \$6,104,000. Does the committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Committee, we have concluded Strategic Infrastructure, Energy and Supply Chains. We will excuse the responsible Minister and her witnesses, and I thank them for appearing before us today. I will invite the Minister of Infrastructure to return to the witness table for consideration of the remainder of the department. Sergeant-at-Arms, please escort the witnesses from the chambers.

Does the Minister of Infrastructure wish to bring witnesses into the House?

**HON. VINCE McKAY:** Yes, please, Mr. Chair.

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

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

Okay, thank you. Would the Minister please introduce the witnesses.

**HON. VINCE McKAY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Deputy minister Cathy Maniego and director of corporate services Miranda Bass.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Committee, we will now continue on consideration of the Department of Infrastructure.

Committee, there are additional information items on page 284 to 292. Are there any questions?

Thank you. Please return now to the departmental summary found on page 259 with information items on page 260 to 264. Are there any questions?

Seeing no further questions, I will now call the department summary. Infrastructure, operations expenditures, total department for 2026-2027 Main Estimates, \$322,314,000. Does the committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you, Minister. Thank you to the witnesses for appearing before us. Sergeant-at-Arms, please escort the witnesses out of the chamber. Thank you.

Committee, we have agreed to consider Tabled Document 448-20(1), 2026-2027 Main Estimates. We will now consider the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs. Does the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs wish to bring witnesses into the House?

**HON. VINCE McKAY:** Yes, Mr. Chair. Thank you.

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. Sergeant-at-Arms, please escort the witnesses into the chambers. Would the Minister please introduce his witnesses.

**HON. VINCE McKAY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. With me, deputy minister Gary Brennan. And also Catherine Boyd, director of corporate affairs.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. The committee has agreed to forego general comments. Does committee agree to proceed to the details contained in the tabled document? Committee, agreed?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Committee, we will defer department summary and review the estimates by activity summary beginning on the community governance starting on page 339, with information items on pages 341 and 342. Are there any questions? No further questions, please turn to page 340.

Municipal and Community Affairs, community governance, \$4,260,000. Does the committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Moving on to community operations beginning on page 243, with information items on page 345. Are there any questions?

I will go to the Member from Yellowknife North.

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just a simple question on this one. What is the position that is being lost under community operations in headquarters? We're going from 13 positions to 12 positions. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. VINCE McKAY:** Yeah, thank you, Mr. Chair. It's an admin position in community governance.

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

**MS. MORGAN:** Nothing further on this section. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. No further questions, please turn to page 344.

Municipal and Community Affairs, community operations, \$2,231,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Moving on to the directorate beginning on page 346, with information items on page 348 and 349. Are there any questions?

I will go to the Member from Yellowknife North.

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So looking first at the active positions, there seems to be a net change of three. But can the Minister tell us both what additional positions are being proposed and what reductions are being proposed in directorate. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. VINCE McKAY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. We have an increase of four positions here: director of emergency management legislation and systems review; manager of emergency management policy; legislative policy analysis; director of finance and administration; and a decrease of an administrative assistant.

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

**MS. MORGAN:** Okay, thank you, Mr. Chair. In terms of those four additions, can the Minister tell us which are intended to be term positions and which are indeterminate. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. VINCE McKAY:** Mr. Chair, they're all indeterminate positions.

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

**MR. GARY BRENNAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So the director of finance admin is an indeterminate position, and the manager of emergency management policy is an indeterminate position. Legislative analyst and the director position sunset in 2028-2029. 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. So what's the rationale for needing two new director positions? That's quite significant. Especially given that one is only to be there for two years, why go to all the trouble of establishing a new director that's only there for two years as opposed to an additional staff person at some other level? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. VINCE McKAY:** Yeah, thank you, Mr. Chair. I will get the deputy minister to answer that. Thank you.

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

**MR. GARY BRENNAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. First, I will speak to the director of finance and admin position. So what we've done on that one there is we've taken the director of corporate affairs position, which was in charge of both policy, legislation, and communications and finance, and what we've done is split that position so that we can focus more on policy, legislation, communications, including some of the emergency management and other legislative requirements that we have. We're actually -- and then created a new director of finance position, which is funded from within, there's no new other funding associated with that there. MACA has grown in recent years with returns to funding, especially around the emergency management, and we're looking to basically have some more financial oversight in that regard. The director of emergency management was designed to be a temporary position overseeing the implementation of the recommendations under the after-action review. We're actually reviewing that position right now to see if it makes more sense to make

it a lower-level position, such as a manager, and that would sunset in a couple of years so -- or an assistant director-type position. So I think that work is still ongoing, and we're hoping to have that figured out here in the coming months. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. Before I go to the Member from Yellowknife North, just for the translators maybe we could slow down just a bit.

I am going to go to the Member from Yellowknife North.

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So I would like to pursue more information. I don't imagine you have it now, so I will be doing some research on my own. But just looking at how many director positions there are in each department and how many ADMs compared to the amount of staff in each department, I think it would be interesting to look at because we're -- you know, we don't really have anything to compare it to right now when there are new, for example, director positions being proposed as to what is an appropriate ratio for each department.

I did want to ask more about -- it seems that there's a new finance and administrative division being created within MACA. So why is there a need for this whole new division; can the Minister explain. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. VINCE McKAY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. For the details on that position, I will just get the deputy minister to answer that. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MR. GARY BRENNAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yeah, and thanks for the question. So MACA is the only department in government that doesn't have a specific division for finance basically, finance administration. And what we've decided to do is to, you know, provide more financial oversight and to amalgamate some of the other functions that happened within the department. So as an example, we have lotteries, the PASR fund, the physical activity and sport and recreation fund, and we've seen some challenges with that in the past year as in previous briefings and -- that's come up. And we're going to move the lotteries funding under finance because it's largely a finance function instead of reporting to a director of sport and recreation, just so that there's more financial oversight to that fund.

We also have about \$250 million of federal funding that's being managed out of the community operations, so we're taking some of that work and pushing it into the finance as well, again so that you have more oversight.

And as I mentioned earlier, as well, we have a significant amount of disaster recovery work underway and continued into the future possibly, and we want to make sure that we have more financial oversight over those type of activities as well. And we felt that we needed more leadership on the finances in the department which is one of the main reasons why we're setting up this new division. And just to clarify, there's only one new position being added, which is funded from within. 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. So my understanding is that there was a community financial services group. Can the Minister clarify whether that is now going to be within this new finance and administration division and if it's remaining separate, what's the justification of having two different sort of financial oversight divisions? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. VINCE McKAY:** Yeah, thank you, Mr. Chair. So that part of the department or that division is -- it's not going to be combined yet but -- so that is, what that involves is supporting the community governments with their financial work that they do in the communities and supporting their budget work and, you know, support for the communities. The other one is essentially a role for the Department of Finance essentially to work with their government finances. Again, like the deputy minister said, we're the only department that doesn't have that role within the government to work with our financial part -- or finance part of the Department of MACA, considering all the funds that we're dealing with and the grants and contributions and federal funds that we're working with. 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 do hope that there's someone sort of analyzing and looking into ways to make it most efficient within the department and make sure there's no duplication. That's the last thing we need at this point.

But, finally, I am noticing that overall for the department, in terms of expenditures and the categories that under the category of travel, there's been a somewhat significant increase in the travel budget from last year's main estimates to this year. We're looking at about a 21 percent increase. So what is the reason for requesting this kind of increase in the travel budget? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. VINCE McKAY:** Sorry, if the --

**MS. MORGAN:** -- That's on page 335, the overall summary.

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

**HON. VINCE McKAY:** Sorry, I am just trying to get to that.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay. Yeah, did you find it? Okay, so I will go back to the Minister.

**HON. VINCE McKAY:** Yeah, thank you, Mr. Chair. Just going back there.

It's all related to disaster assistance for training and travel related to that. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. In your estimates, there is \$300,000 identified to develop a legislative initiative to broaden regulated gaming activities in the NWT but no positions created. So my question to the Minister is what this funding is to be used for and what is unique about this work that needs the funding but no position. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. VINCE McKAY:** Yeah, thank you, Mr. Chair. So this is a specialized kind of field that nobody in the Government of the Northwest Territories is able to do, understanding gaming legislation and how to implement it and so on. So the funds are essentially to find a contractor to start the process and whatever else that needs to go along with starting this process of governing online gambling within the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. And thank you to the Minister for clarifying.

I note, too, in your business plan that one of the legislative initiatives listed is the Senior Citizens and Disabilities Person Property Tax Relief Act. There is a target for 2026-2027. Could the Minister clarify if that target is for an LP or to introduce the bill. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. VINCE McKAY:** It's for LP, Mr. Chair. Thank you.

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

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. And considering the target in the later part of the fiscal year, is it, then, expected to be an LP before the end of this Assembly? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. VINCE McKAY:** Yeah, thank you, Mr. Chair. That's the goal, yes, it's -- yeah. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. To the Member from Great Slave.

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. No, I appreciate that clarity and that update. I've been hearing a lot of Members talk about relief for seniors, so thank you. Nothing further at this time.

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

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just wanted to build on the question asked by my colleague about the initiative to broaden regulated gaming activities in the NWT. Does the Minister have an idea of what kind of revenues we might be able to expect from doing something like that? Has the Minister -- or has the department done any preliminary work to understand what we might get out of doing this exercise, or am I getting a bit ahead of myself and that is indeed what the exercise is for? Thank you.

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

**HON. VINCE McKAY:** Thank you. If I said any amount, I'd probably be taking a gamble on that but I don't want to say that. Thank you, Mr. Chair. That's all part of this work, is we want to make sure that we're able to capture the rough estimates on what could -- the revenues that could potentially be brought in. And from what

we've heard through meeting with industry is there's that potential to have quite a bit of money in there in revenues, which I would hope and -- you know, I would like to see a lot of this money come back to the territories and be used for, you know, things related to, like, youth and sports and stuff, like, we use our Western Lottery stuff for. But the whole point of this money is exactly that, to research, to find out, and do engagement with Indigenous governments and the community and find out potential revenues. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. Just so you know, the House always wins. I am going to go to the Member from Frame Lake.

**MR. MORSE:** Mr. Chair, I don't know how to -- I am certainly not going to start throwing my own dad jokes and puns on the table.

Yeah, I just say in response to that, no, I do appreciate the department doing the background work. Certainly, we've seen lotteries funding declining over the years and, you know, gambling's changing, and so maybe this is a part of that and insofar as it funds so much of our sports activity, it would be nice to see us be able to stabilize our -- oh, it's on the tip of my tongue. But our -- it's on the next page. The fund that funds the sports. Sorry, Mr. Chair. But thank you. That's it for me for questions on this item. Thanks.

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

**MRS. YAKELEYA:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I agree with one of my colleagues who said we need to avoid any duplication in positions. That new director position they talked about, is that a remote position or is that in Yellowknife? Thank you.

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

**HON. VINCE McKAY:** Yeah, thank you, Mr. Chair. This position is here in Yellowknife. Thank you.

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

**MRS. YAKELEYA:** So it's a two-year position. Is it going to be canceled after two years; the person's got to look for another job, and. It just seems like it's creating insecurity for a person that has to work for two years and then is there going to be a -- like, how is that going to work for the individual coming into that director position, and then it's going to get phased out? That person's got to look for another job, or

is -- what's going to happen with that? Thank you.

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

**HON. VINCE McKAY:** Yeah, thank you, Mr. Chair. Maybe I will ask the director to answer this question. Thank you.

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

**MS. CATHERINE BOYD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. The intent is to create a unit for a project specific, which is to review and update the Emergency Management Act. That has been identified as a priority. The intent is we'd stand up a team on a temporary basis to do that, and then when the project has reached -- moves into the legislation phase, then we would stand down the team. People will be hired on a term basis. And we haven't determined what the actual positions will be yet. We've just asked for three positions and the funding to do that for the next three years. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MRS. YAKELEYA:** Thank you. Was there thought given to pulling resources from inside the department? Thank you.

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

**HON. VINCE McKAY:** Yeah, thank you, Mr. Chair. So that thought was given, but this is part of implementing the recommendations of the after-action review. There's already people doing some of this work off the side of their desks, and it's to essentially give this priority -- or give this a priority to implement the after-action review. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MRS. YAKELEYA:** Thank you. So what exactly will this department do? Thank you.

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

**HON. VINCE McKAY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Again, just implementing the after-action review and all the recommendations that are essentially being approved. And I will just ask the deputy minister to add some remarks to that. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MR. GARY BRENNAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yeah, so some of the more detailed work, adding to what the Minister already said, includes we have working groups with the NWT Council of Leaders. We have working groups with community governments as represented by NWTAC and LGANT. And there's lots of consultation that we need to do around the review of the Emergency Management Act. Our Indigenous government partners have indicated that they want more of a role and be partners in the emergency management, so we need to understand what that means. And so there'll be lots of consultation going on with those partners as well, working with our community governments, identifying some of the comments that they've made as well about improvements that need to be made to the emergency management system. And then, of course, updating the legislation and, you know, the policies that go along with that as well. So all that work will be undertaken by this unit. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MRS. YAKELEYA:** Thank you. Thank you for that information.

The other question I have is I know there's a lot of seniors in my riding or in my communities that are getting tax arrears from lands that they have lived on for years, and now we're getting -- they didn't have tax arrears before and then all of a sudden they're getting -- they're getting arrears for taxes into the thousands of dollars. So these people have lived in the communities all their life and then recently started getting these taxing -- these tax arrear notices. So I want to ask about that. What's going to happen with that? Thank you.

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

**HON. VINCE McKAY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So with the taxes, that's related to the municipality and they're within the municipal boundaries. So they set their tax rates, and then they do their billings and stuff for the taxes within the municipal boundaries. Yeah, from there, it's however the community handles it to take the tax payments on the municipal lands. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MRS. YAKELEYA:** Specifically seniors, people over -- I don't know -- what does the government classify as seniors here, 55 or 65? Thank you.



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

**HON. VINCE McKAY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just confirming here, but the seniors legislation that we have for land taxes only covers a portion of it. It's up to the municipality for the other portion. So that might be the issue is that there's not a full coverage of land taxes within municipalities. It's up to the municipality. And, again, that's related to within municipal boundaries with it up to the municipality on how they collect their taxes from seniors. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MRS. YAKELEYA:** All right, so I need some kind of -- I guess I need some level of certainty that the seniors will not be put in a really bad place that they cannot afford to pay their land -- the land taxes in the community. So I am not sure what to ask the Minister other than to say that I -- you know, I really don't want to see the seniors being put in a not good position because of the land taxes. So I am not sure what to ask for right now. Can we just -- can the Minister -- maybe I could just ask -- the Minister can get back to me on -- or can we have a conversation about this at another time? Yes, thank you.

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

**HON. VINCE McKAY:** Yeah, thank you, Mr. Chair. I can meet with the Member, and we can explain the seniors tax program that the GNWT has and how the communities implement it. So thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. Is there any further questions from the Deh Cho?

**MRS. YAKELEYA:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. No further questions, thank you.

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

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Okay, well, with reference to some of the positions two of my colleagues mentioned, talked about, the two jobs that were created. You know, with the mine closing, just letting you know -- or maybe you're aware of it -- but you know that Tlicho communities -- Tlicho region is going to be the hardest hit because all our -- a lot of our young people, all of -- many of our people are -- you know, are employed, and we're going to need more jobs. That's why I am advocating -- I would like to see more jobs

advocated -- I mean, I would like to see more jobs transferred to -- created or transferred to Tlicho region. And I am sure my colleagues over there across from us are listening too. We're nearby. But how do you tell a person who worked over 20 years to go on income support? So that's why I am asking that, you know -- like, I am really advocating to have more jobs transferred to Tlicho region. So at the end of this job, you said it's for two years, will the Minister commit to having these two jobs transferred to Tlicho region? Thank you.

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

**HON. VINCE McKAY:** Yeah, thank you, Mr. Chair. Again, some of these positions are specialized positions, not necessarily just anybody can fill them, people with backgrounds in emergency management or stuff like that. So this is a term position. After two years, these positions are done. So I mean, transferring them to the Tlicho region would just end in a couple of years anyway. So, you know, I appreciate the comments by the Member. The impacts of the closures will affect every community in the Northwest Territories, so. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** So what you're saying is that you're saying my people cannot do this job, it's a specialized job; is that what you're saying? Thank you.

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

**HON. VINCE McKAY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. No, I did not say that. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Okay, so, well, I am going to get away from that because I already got the message.

You know, with this community operations, regional operations, I know we passed the funding formula. We don't have a breakdown of what each community is getting. Will the Minister -- I would like to know how much of this regional operations money is coming to Tlicho region. Thank you.

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

**HON. VINCE McKAY:** Yeah, thank you, Mr. Chair. So we provided that a few times in committees, and then also just recently I sent

out an email to all the Members with community fact sheets that have all the communities with their formula funding on there and what they're receiving. So all the information the Member's asking for has been shared previously and shared with all the Members. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. I've just been informed that regional activity information will be coming up shortly. So if we could just continue on with pages 348 and 349. Thank you.

I will go back to the Member for Monfwi.

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Okay, thank you. Thank you. Yes, but it would be nice for next time that if it's part of this budget, so that way we don't have to ask about it all the time. But in the community, the regional operation and community operations, in small communities -- with the mine closing, you know, we're going to be needing more jobs, more employment. I know that the money that's allocated in small communities where if the money is allocated based on infrastructure, small communities are going to be losing out. In small communities like the community I represent, it's going to lose out even though we're the largest Dene community is Behchoko. And we're going to lose out on lots of this operation -- community operation money. We know that services such as water, sewer, garbage, waste management, they're all essential services, and it needs to be funded adequately. But right now we're not getting enough where there is a disruption with the service delivery. So for that reason, that's why I am saying that, you know, like with the mine closure, will the Minister commit to revisit and do another funding formula to calculate -- to change the funding formula that goes to the small communities. Thank you.

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

**HON. VINCE McKAY:** Yeah, thank you, Mr. Chair, and appreciate the comments. First of all, there was a lot of work done in that funding formula that we had, and the recommendation came from a working group established by the NWTAC, which had all the communities involved. So this was implemented last year to basically establish -- although not enough funding, obviously, we know that already. But it was established to, you know, distribute the funds fairly and equitably across all the communities. Every community is impacted, every community is underfunded, so we're all feeling -- all the communities are feeling similar pains with infrastructure deficits and lack of funding. And that's not only in the Northwest

Territories, it's across Canada. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Okay. For the record, I want to ask the Minister did Tlicho communities, the leaders, agree to the funding formula that's before us? Thank you.

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

**HON. VINCE McKAY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. There's a working group formed, and there's ongoing discussions. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Okay, thank you. You know, there's some regional allocation. There's 70 for the upcoming fiscal year -- 72 jobs. Five in North Slave, and there's Tlicho. I thought we were a part of North Slave. I thought Tlicho was part of North Slave and here it's -- there's three in Tlicho region. So can the Minister tell me, are these active positions? Are they fully active? Are they filled? Are they indeterminate positions? Thank you.

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

**HON. VINCE McKAY:** Yeah, thank you, Mr. Chair. Those are indeterminate positions, that's correct. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Can the Minister tell me where are these jobs situated? I represent four communities.

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

**HON. VINCE McKAY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Those MACA positions are in Behchoko.

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

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Will the Minister commit to transferring superintendent of the North Slave position to Behchoko? Thank you.

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

**HON. VINCE McKAY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. No.

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Why?

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

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** I want to ask the Minister why.

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

**HON. VINCE McKAY:** Yeah, thank you, Mr. Chair. The regional superintendent for the North Slave covers the whole North Slave region, so it works out of Yellowknife and goes to the communities, smaller communities around Yellowknife and the entire North Slave. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** At one time I know Tlicho region was part of Fort Smith region, and now it's part of North Slave region, so I don't see any issue having this position transferred to Tlicho region and can still serve my colleague Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh's riding too as well. So it could be done. Why are they hesitant to move that position to Tlicho region? Thank you.

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

**HON. VINCE McKAY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Again, the superintendent covers the whole North Slave region, which, I mean, you can fly out of Yellowknife to get to all the other communities in the North Slave region, and it's more central. So thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. Is there any further questions from Members? Seeing none, please turn to page 347.

Municipal and Community Affairs, directorate, \$5,610,000. Does the committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Moving on to Energy Management, beginning on page 350 with information items on page 352. Are there any questions? No further questions, please turn to page 351.

Municipal and Community Affairs, emergency management, \$2,597,000. Does the committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Moving on to public safety, beginning on page 353 with information items on page 355 and 356. Are there any questions?

I will go to the Member from Yellowknife North.

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I first wanted to ask about ground ambulance. I know that many -- there are some communities with ground ambulance and many without. And in some communities there is not any way for someone to, say, get to a health centre if they have an emergency or a problem at home or somewhere else. What is MACA doing to try to work with communities who might be interested in establishing some sort of either ground ambulance or just emergency transport system? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. VINCE McKAY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So we've been working with the department of health to try to come up with a plan for some of the smaller communities where services are not provided in a way of having a pre-facility transport service to a nursing station or a health cabin. So we have kind of plans in place or visions in place, whether that can fruition is the next thing and how we can go about it. But we're still working on this. We're still working together with the department on having a plan in place for the communities with no ground ambulance service. Thank you.

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

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So just to clarify, is the plan to come up with sort of one overarching strategy or something in collaboration with HSS, or are you just working community by community in terms of what the specific needs might be on the ground on a case-by-case basis? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. VINCE McKAY:** Yeah, thank you, Mr. Chair. It would be essentially -- well, there's an overarching idea; it's whether or not the community capacity can support that and that's, I would say, the key thing there, is there has to be some community supports from the members to provide, you know, essentially the service. And the goal here is hopefully for the government to provide equipment and support the community in a pre-facility transport. The communities essentially that are already established, there's goals of supporting that already, and we have some funding available for them that are already provided. But, overall, the pre-facility transportation, we're working on that right now. So thank you.

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

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So does MACA provide, like first aid training so that people can become trained as basic emergency responders or -- like what specifically does MACA have to offer, or if a community comes forward can you just give them funding to start up a service like this? Like, what do you have to offer if the community is interested in wanting to get this up and running? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. VINCE McKAY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So if everything works out here, there will be an increase to training funds for communities for emergency services and part of that the ability to use that for first aid training in the communities and that can be arranged, you know, with the community so that they can train local people to do first aid and, hopefully, at some point being able to use those individuals to be part of this pre-facility transport. Thank you.

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

**MS. MORGAN:** Okay, thank you, Mr. Chair. I also wanted to ask about the Office of the Fire Marshal. Let me just go to the business plan. Here we go.

So in the business plan, there's mention of a program evaluation for the Office of the Fire Marshal. And I am not clear from this chart, has the program evaluation been completed already or is it just starting? It's saying data collection to inform full review by January 2026, and I wasn't clear if the evaluation is to be complete by January 2026 or ready to start. Can the Minister clarify? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. VINCE McKAY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I will ask the deputy minister to answer this. Thank you.

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

**MR. GARY BRENNAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So under the government renewal initiative, there was a review completed of the fire inspection program, which is one area of the Office of the Fire Marshal. And one of the recommendations that came out of that review was that they should undertake a full review of their office, all responsibilities under the Office of the Fire Marshal. That work is not completed

and is currently in procurement to hire someone to do that work. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MS. MORGAN:** Okay. I appreciate that clarification. Do you have a sense of when that program evaluation will be complete, then? A timeline. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. VINCE McKAY:** Yeah. Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's going to be within this calendar year. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you. And so from the GRI review that was already done, there was a number of recommendations about the fire inspection program, at least. What is MACA doing to implement those existing recommendations? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. VINCE McKAY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I will ask the deputy minister to answer this. Thank you.

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

**MR. GARY BRENNAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yeah, so for the fire inspection review, one of the big things that was noted was that we're currently not meeting the requirements of the program. We didn't have enough resources to do so. We have added another deputy fire marshal to support getting more inspections done. And one of the other things that was noted was that, really, in order to look at the fire inspection program, we need to look at the resources that are available across all areas and that's why we're going to a larger review. So once that larger review is done, we'll start implementing other recommendations as well, and we thought it best to do it as a whole rather than piecemeal some of the recommendations there. So thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MS. MORGAN:** Okay. And so the new deputy fire marshal position, was that just implemented in 2025-2026; can you just remind us. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. VINCE McKAY:** Yes, thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes, it was, and currently it's being filled by a person in Fort Simpson. 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. So is there anything to report yet in terms of an increase in the number of inspections that the office is able to carry out or an increase in services as a result of adding that position last year? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. VINCE McKAY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. With that detail, I am just going to pass it off to the deputy minister, please. Thank you.

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

**MR. GARY BRENNAN:** Yeah. Thank you, Mr. Chair. So in the business plan, we committed to increase our number of inspections by 25 percent to the end of 2028. We do an annual report that I do believe is made public. And I don't have the information with me today about where we ended up last year. But there were some delays in getting that position filled with job description reviews and whatnot. That position was recently filled. Unfortunately, it was a current person that ended up getting -- being successful. We're making progress with other AFM -- sorry, assistant fire marshal positions and getting those fully trained and to increase the inspection. So I don't think we'll see a significant increase in this fiscal year, but we expect good things in 2026-2027.

And one of the other things that we did in the program this past year was to have the assistant fire marshal positions, because there's one in each region, report directly to the Office of the Fire Marshal to allow for more consistency so that we can support other regions better and be more consistent in how we do business, including aligning up the work and the number of inspections. So I think we're in a good place going forward on that one there. So thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you to the Minister and the staff for providing that additional detail. I will

be looking to monitor improvements in services going forward. That's all. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you very much. Any other Members? Okay. No further questions, please turn to page 354.

Municipal and Community Affairs, public safety, \$4,126,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Moving on to regional operations, beginning on page 357 with information items on page 359 and 360. Are there any questions? Continuing on, no further questions, please turn to page 358.

Municipal and Community Affairs, regional operations, \$106,612,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Moving on to sport and recreation and youth, beginning on page 361 with information items on page 363 and 365. Are there any questions?

Member from Great Slave.

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I know the Minister and his staff have briefed the Standing Committee on Government Operations on what I am about to ask, but I think some of it should be out in the public and so I will start with is the increased funding plan for sport and recreation expected to be a one-time adjustment, or do we expect this to be a multi-year trend to support sport and recreation; can the Minister and his staff paint the picture of what they expect to do with PASR? Thank you.

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

**HON. VINCE McKAY:** Yeah, thank you, Mr. Chair. It's planned for three years and to review and plan, go ahead after that. 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. Yeah, so it's my understanding that the PASR fund has faced ongoing challenges because lottery revenues have dropped. And the reason the GNWT is funding is to sort of maintain, I guess, equilibrium for that fund so we can support athletes and coaches, which is good. But is there anything the Minister is willing to talk about here today that the department is looking

to do to address this ongoing problem? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. VINCE McKAY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Maybe I will start, and then the deputy minister can maybe just add a little bit.

I would say a couple things. We're always looking at ways to, you know, save money or get more money. I've had conversations with the federal minister in regards to, you know, added costs, like with travel and all that kind of stuff. But I guess, you know, one of the big things that we've noticed the last little while with the increase of online gambling, with all the sports betting and everything like that, we're starting to see an impact to our lotteries. And the hopes here is maybe some of the stuff that we're doing with the online lottery and online gambling work and studies that we're doing with the money that's coming forward, you know, we're able to grab some of that and slow down some of this online gambling resources that are going and leaving the territory. So with that, hopefully we can either increase it or balance it out and help protect funding sources for sports and youth activities in the territories. That's the overall picture goal, I guess. But I don't know if you want anything? No? Okay, so that's it. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay. Did you want to -- okay, good. Thank you. I will continue on with Member from Great Slave.

**MS. REID:** Thanks, Mr. Chair. Yeah, so can the Minister speak to whether or not there's any evaluation, performance monitoring of the fund, any policy work that's happening? Any -- like, this is -- beyond just saying, you know, iGaming might come in and fix everything, which I have some general doubts about, what other work are we looking to do on this fund? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. VINCE McKAY:** Yeah, thank you, Mr. Chair. You know, we're planning on doing a couple reviews. The multi-sport game review is what we're also looking at doing. So I think there's an overall big picture of work being done here to try to stabilize the funds and help support them even more. So thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MS. REID:** I don't have anything further on this item for now. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Okay. Maybe I am jumping ahead here, but I was trying to go to page 368. Is that for the next section?

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Yes, go ahead. To the Member from Monfwi, yes, we can do that section. Thank you.

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Okay. Okay, community capacity building fund, okay, it's a federal government. It's coming from Infrastructure Canada. So can the Minister explain to us how this fund is being allocated? Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Yeah, just before I go to the Minister, I just wanted to let the Member know that page 368 is just a little further down. But if the Minister wants to respond, right now we're on page 363 to 365. Minister.

**HON. VINCE McKAY:** Yeah, thank you. I guess just the simple answer to that is it is all part of the community funding, so we use the community allocation model to distribute that fund. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Okay, thank you. So formula funding, so then it's probably, like -- probably small communities probably do not get a big chunk of that \$18.7 million so -- with the formula the way that it is set out. So it's a disadvantage for small communities. And we have lots of aging infrastructure too as well, so that's why I thought I'd just mention it because -- yeah, so -- but I do have questions for sports and recreation.

Okay. You know, recreation funding, it's 4.0. It went up from last fiscal year to the upcoming fiscal year. The recreation funding, is it being allocated the same as the MACA formula for community operations? Is that part of the community government -- the formula that they use to allocate money to small communities? Thank you.

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

**HON. VINCE McKAY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. No, this funding is not used that way. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** All right, thank you. I will go back to the Member from Monfwi.

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Okay. So this funding, it keeps our recreation programs operating in small communities, regional youth sports events, youth centres. In the budget, they all stay the same. Why there -- you know, with the high cost of living, with the fuel, with the electricity, and some of them they have their own standalone youth centre, I am not too sure why, but can the Minister explain to us why the funding never really, like, increase. Thank you.

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

**HON. VINCE McKAY:** Yeah, thank you, Mr. Chair. So, yeah, this is, I mean, a general fund for the sports and recreation. You know, through fiscal sustainability, we've all applied for funds, we've all sat at the table to try to get funds for certain things, and then this has pretty much stayed the same. So, yeah, there's no increases here other than a couple things. So, thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Okay, thank you. You know, in small communities we have addiction issues, especially with young people. So the addictions and diabetes is on the rise. So these funding, does the community have to apply for these funding? Is that how it works or -- thank you.

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

**HON. VINCE McKAY:** Yeah, thank you, Mr. Chair. Not all of them. Some of them are application-based but yeah, so they're -- some of them are application-based. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Well, thank you. Because I know we need more programs. We need more fundings to operate some programs. And it is getting expensive for -- to access some funds or to operate some programs too, you know. So these are really important. So if it's -- if they have to apply and it's based on a first come/first served basis, then some of the smaller communities, I am just wondering if they're -- if they're ever considered, or do they -- does anybody get left out with this funding? Thank you. Or communities, I mean.

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

**HON. VINCE McKAY:** Yeah, thank you, Mr. Chair. For, I mean, that detail, I couldn't tell you. But like I said, a lot of the -- you know, some of this is all application-based so they might get some funds. They vary through the communities on how active their community sports and recreation programs are and who's at the helm of their recreation programs in the communities. Some communities may get more funding from different NGOs across the territories and different -- yeah, different funds from the federal government, so. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** These programs, they're for youth so I just wanted to ask the Minister if the MACA are working with -- for allocation of funds, are working with the school. Thank you.

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

**HON. VINCE McKAY:** Yeah, thank you, Mr. Chair. So we don't work directly with the schools. The regional coordinators may be working with the schools, but essentially the schools would be the ones applying for the programs or applying for funding. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Okay. Well, that's interesting to know because the schools do provide a lot of program and services, especially with youth and recreation programs. So I am just wondering if the department ever thought about transferring these to the education body. Thank you.

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

**HON. VINCE McKAY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So some of the programming dollars that were essentially given to schools all the time have already done that, and we did that last year. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Thank you. Well, thank you to -- it's good to know. But, I mean, because it's concerning youth and in small communities, that's where you will find most of our young people, and they're very

active so that's why I am saying that, you know, especially in small communities where, you know, the school will benefit more from these programs, and it can go a long ways. So that's why I am asking so if the department have ever considered, you know, transferring these and then allocate it to the regional schools. Thank you. That's it for now.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Is there any further questions? Okay, seeing none, we'll continue on. Please turn to page 362.

Municipal and Community Affairs, sport and recreation and youth, \$9,961,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. There are additional information items on page 366 to 368. Are there any questions?

I will go to the Member from Inuvik Boot Lake.

**MR. RODGERS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. My questions are around the GNWT contribution for the revenue. And I know we -- myself and others have done Member's statements around the Arctic Winter Games, just ensuring that the games are funded. I know with the decrease in revenues, we've seen some cutbacks. We saw -- snowshoeing, for example, was no longer in there last year, and I know I and others have made statements on that. I just want a reassurance, Mr. Chair, from the Minister, that now we are -- you know, we feel going forward that we are adequately funded for the Arctic Winter Games and that the important events will get what it needs to continue to be as robust as it should be. Thank you.

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

**HON. VINCE McKAY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. That is the goal behind this. Yeah, I would hope that it's successfully funded but I guess we won't know until after everything's all tabulated after the games are done. But, you know, we're pretty confident that it should be fine. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay. I will go back to the Member from Inuvik Boot Lake.

**MR. RODGERS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. And that's certainly good to hear after having to do a supplemental appropriation for it, I think, a couple years ago. I am glad that the department is ensuring that this important -- that the Arctic Winter Games will continue and be successful. So no further questions. I just wanted to follow up on that. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Are there any further questions? Okay, seeing no further question -- oh, I am sorry. My apologies.

I am going to go to the Member from Frame Lake.

**MR. MORSE:** Sorry, Mr. Chair. I didn't get my hand up very quickly there. But I just wanted to -- just to the point that Mr. Rodgers was speaking to -- or sorry, my colleague from Inuvik Boot Lake was speaking to just now.

Yeah, I know in last year, it was a supplemental appropriation. This year I see we're funding to the tune of \$2.7 million. I am guessing that that increase is related to the Arctic Winter Games happening this year. Are we anticipating that we're going to have to keep contributing to this fund year over year to sustain it?

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

**HON. VINCE McKAY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am going to pass this off to the deputy minister to answer. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay. Deputy minister.

**MR. GARY BRENNAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yeah, so just to clarify, the \$1.8 million is for the Arctic Winter Games. This year, the \$2.7 million is not related to the Arctic Winter Games. The goal for the next three years -- as we indicated earlier, we have three years of funding -- is to come up with a plan of how we can ensure that important events like the Arctic Winter Games are funded going forward and what that might look like. As anyone who can read these financial statements, the PASR fund is in financial difficulty. We anticipate by the end of this year, we'll be at a \$2.9 million deficit, and the limit on the fund is \$3 million. So we're basically right at the edge of the cliff, so to speak. This funding is going to help us get through the next couple of years and maintain the current level of funding that we are providing our sport partners, including Sport North, Indigenous Sports Circle, Mackenzie Rec Association, and our territorial sport organizations, so that we can come up with a sustainable plan how we fund all of these recreation and sporting events going forward. So thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay. I am going to go back to the Member from Frame Lake.

**MR. MORSE:** Thanks. That's it for me, Mr. Chair.



**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Is there any further questions? Okay, seeing no further questions, I will now call the department summary.

Municipal and Community Affairs, operations expenditures, total department, 2026-2027 Main Estimates, \$135,397,000. Does the committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you, Minister, and thanks to the witnesses for appearing before us today. And I am going to ask our Sergeant-at-Arms please escort the witnesses from the chambers.

Before we move on to the next item here, we'll just take a 10-minute break, give the interpreters a little bit of a chance to rest for a little bit, and we'll come back. Thank you.

---SHORT RECESS

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

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

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

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

Okay, thank you. Would the Minister please introduce his witnesses.

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, on my left I have Charlene Doolittle, deputy minister/attorney general. And on my right, I have James Bancroft, director of corporate services. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. The committee has agreed to forego general comments. Does the committee agree to proceed to the details contained in the tabled documents?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Committee, we will defer the department summary and review the estimates by activity summary, beginning with community justice, starting on page 302, with information items on 304 to 305. Are there any questions?

Member from Frame Lake.

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. There's a number of reductions in here in the -- sorry, Mr. Chair, just getting oriented here.

There's a reduction of about \$1.7 million to victim services and a significant reduction of over \$2 million to victim assistance support projects. So can the Minister help us understand what happened with all those projects, and -- yeah.

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

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

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

**MR. JAMES BANCROFT:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. The Member is correct. The reductions -- or sorry, the decrease in budget, not reduction, related to community justice is tied to sunsets related to the victim services federal funding agreement of \$750,000, which also encompasses a \$647,000 reduction for the independent legal advice under the same stream. There's also an increase in that budget area for community consultative groups, which is a new agreement signed this year. 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 you help us -- or can the Minister help us understand what it is we're losing with all of these cuts and who's going to be affected? Is it NGOs that are losing all this money? Are these projects that were completed and now they've been sunsetted but it's going to be okay? Because, yeah, it just seems like pretty significant reductions in an area where we certainly have no shortage of need. Thank you.

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

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

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

**MR. JAMES BANCROFT:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. The victim services agreements are dispersed from the community justice budget to communities. The \$750,000 deduction in the budget should be replaced shortly as we have, under reasonable terms, secured an extension of that victim services agreement of \$675,000. So a small overall reduction of 10 percent, but

the funding in that regard will be reinstated to flow again to communities. 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. So that is good news. And I will just make sure -- so, yeah, I probably should have asked specific questions about each line item rather than jumping around. So the victim assistance support projects, that's over \$2 million reduction. What are we losing there?

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

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Sorry, Mr. Chair, we need a moment.

Mr. Chair, I will pass that to the director.

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

**MR. JAMES BANCROFT:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. The decrease for community justice overall is \$1.1 million. Thank you.

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

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. To be clear, I wasn't -- I appreciate the clarification on the funding but I was more asking what programming is being lost as a result. Thank you.

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

**MR. JAMES BANCROFT:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. The overall loss in programming there is related to the victim services independent legal advice federal funding agreement. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MR. MORSE:** Okay. And is there not going to be a replacement of that program?

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

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I will go to the deputy minister, please.

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

**MS. CHARLENE DOOLITTLE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. That is correct, that funding, we did seek

to have it renewed with the federal government. We received an email on February 6th that there will be no more funding as of the end of March 31st; however, we are looking internally in community justice to see if we can -- we're exploring options and see if we can fund internally for the short term but that will be indeterminate and, again, no federal funding approved for that item. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. That certainly is disappointing to hear. And I appreciate that the department is looking into what they can do in the short term. You know, I just -- that program is one that I've referred a number of constituents to and has helped out a lot of people that I've worked with. So I see it as an essential program so would very much support the department finding resources to use to ensure that that program continues. I think it's an important one and one that we don't want to lose, so I would just put my plug in for that. If we do have to use territorial money, I am open to a supplementary appropriation coming forward. Thank you.

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

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Sorry, Mr. Chair. I didn't hear the question.

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

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. No, there was no question there for the Minister, simply a comment and just expressing support for the Minister finding funds to continue that program. And certainly if he has to come to Legislative Assembly, he'll get my support. Thank you.

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

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would echo my colleague's comments on that particular program. It is one I also refer my constituents to. It's a very excellent program, and I look forward to finding a supp in the future on it.

This is more of a housekeeping item than anything else, Mr. Chair, and I will cede my time after I point it out. But YWCA of Yellowknife has not been YWCA of Yellowknife since 2017. Can we update it to their proper name? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Noted, and we will make that correction. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MS. REID:** That's all. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I will just start by echoing my colleague's comments about the importance of the independent legal advice and representation for victims of violence. I've also referred constituents to this so would echo the comments that it is a really essential program that people are relying on, especially in some of their toughest times in their lives. So that one is extremely valuable, even if we have to find a way to fund it ourselves.

I wanted to ask next about the men's healing programs. It's in the business plan to support communities to deliver community-led approaches to men's healing programming. And it looks like 100 percent of that funding has been allocated, which is good. Has there been demand for that programming that our budgets were not able to meet? Like, has it been considered to increase the budget if there is more need out there for men's healing programs? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So, yeah, this is a very popular program. It's been fully subscribed every year. So 2025-2026, six communities are completing the final year of their funding under the multi-year agreement supporting this programming. And the department advertised an expression of interest for multi-year funding -- sorry, wrong line.

Six communities applied and were approved in 2023-2024. So the program is running in Behchoko, Liidlii Kue, Tulita, Aklavik, Fort McPherson, and Fort Providence. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MS. MORGAN:** And has the department been monitoring any outcomes of those programs, any successes we're seeing? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

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

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

**MS. CHARLENE DOOLITTLE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes, the department uses the following metrics to monitor programming: So expenditure, 100 percent of the budget has been allocated; agreements in place, and six community agreements are in place; number of participant program supports and number of culturally appropriate healing activities; and, participant and community feedback that is reported year-end in May. 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. Thank you for that. I hope that we're also making some attempts to try to assess some of the more qualitative outcomes of what difference these programs are making in communities and in people's lives, but. And I would also just encourage the department to be looking at how many other organizations might be applying that we're not able to fund and be increasing that budget for next year accordingly because I think it's a really important program.

Secondly, I wanted to talk about -- okay, community justice committees, which it's also in the business plan in terms of trying to ensure that as many communities as possible have the opportunity and can establish community justice committees. And it looks like there's 23 active community justice committees. Does the department have any information about whether this number has been increasing or decreasing over time to try to see how much chance we have of trying to get those committees in every community? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Yeah, thank you, Mr. Chair. So, Mr. Chair, the ability for a community to participate in this program really comes down to their capacity within that community to have the available participants within their groups to participate. The number of communities that participate has remained fairly steady. 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. Can the Minister tell us what difference it makes in those communities that do have community justice committees; how does that impact outcomes for those going through the justice system or what options are available to people. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, the communities that participate have a higher success rate in restorative justice as well as in -- oh, I lost the word -- diversions. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So I do hope that we can delve a little further into what are some of the barriers in those communities that have not been able to establish justice committees because I think every resident of the territory and every community should have access to restorative justice, and so I am hoping that we will set a goal of increasing the number of communities with those committees and seeing what can be done to address the challenges.

I also wanted to highlight -- so elsewhere -- okay. On the page 22 of the business plan it talks about reintegration supports and the fact that as of last September we had established four justice navigator positions. Can the Minister explain what those justice navigator positions are supposed to do and what they've been able to accomplish so far? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. My apologies.

Thank you, Mr. Chair. I will pass to the deputy minister.

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

**MS. CHARLENE DOOLITTLE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes, this is a new and exciting program for community justice. It's designed to help people safely navigate the justice system by building stronger connections between justice service providers and community support, so sort of a transitioning program to help people

reintegrate back into their community, develop wellness plans, culturally relevant referrals. So just assisting them and not leaving them once they leave a corrections facility or probation or something of the sort. So hoping to get some good results out of this program. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MS. MORGAN:** Thanks, Mr. Chair. So is that service available to all of our communities in the territory or just some of them? Can you explain which communities the justice navigator positions are serving. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, that program is available in four communities: Yellowknife, Fort Smith, Tlicho, and Liidlii Kue. 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 so I understand the program is fairly new but are we sort of monitoring -- I am not sure if it's considered a pilot or not. But are we monitoring how well this program works or is doing with an eye to potentially expanding in the future; is that part of the long-term plan? Are we, you know, keeping data and keeping track of what benefits there are, yeah, to potentially expand in the future. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yeah, this is a pilot program, and it's funded under the guns and gangs funding. And we'll have to have a look at the program once the pilot is complete. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MS. MORGAN:** Thanks. And, finally, can you just confirm when is the pilot phase complete, so when will we see some analysis of, you know, what's been accomplished and any proposal to expand; what's the timeline on that. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I don't have the timeline on the

completion -- Oh, my apologies. It will run to 2026 -- the end of 2027 fiscal year. So we do have some indicators that we will be monitoring, so:

- Number and type of referrals;
- Number and type of program partnerships established;
- Number of clients and their time in the program;
- Number of years involved with the justice system;
- Number and type of wellness plan outcomes attained, whether that be housing, cultural supports, employment or counselling;
- Number of recontacts with justice system after involvement with the program;
- Voluntary participant program feedback; and,
- Client challenges and successes.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. Are there any further questions on pages 303?

I will go to the Member from Frame Lake.

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate it. I just have another question I wanted to ask.

For the gun and gang strategy, can the Minister provide an update on how this funding has meaningfully addressed violence in the NWT. So are there metrics that are being tracked with relation to this strategy to determine whether it's successful.

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

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

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Deputy minister.

**MS. CHARLENE DOOLITTLE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. And this is a federal agreement that we have -- when we receive federal funding for. So for all those agreements, we have to have a reporting and monitoring and those are generally within the agreement. Some of the items used under this four-year federal funding -- this goes until 2028, are community-based action's already underway,

including school drug awareness sessions, community toolkits on toxic drugs, partner training, and then we just mentioned the new justice navigator pilot to support safer reintegration after court or custody. Those are the items in this -- dealing with this fund. 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. Is the reporting under this fund something that Members have access to publicly? Is there somewhere we can find this on the justice department website or are they simply able to provide us with reporting? Thanks.

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

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So the program itself will be online. The funding agreements are internal but we can provide that information. 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. I appreciate that commitment from the Minister. And yeah, it's really not so much reporting on the funding agreement itself but just the outcomes that are being achieved through the funding. That's where I am interested in getting some information. And if I could just build upon the question.

What the deputy minister communicated back, I mean, going into schools, there was a couple of different items there, but what I didn't hear anything about was actual law enforcement related to the gangs themselves, or guns for that matter. So, you know, forgive me here, but when I hear gun and gang strategy, I am going to assume that it is focused on addressing gun crime, gang-related crime. Can the Minister perhaps clarify a little bit for us what exactly this funding is intended for and what it's looking to achieve.

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

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

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

**MS. CHARLENE DOOLITTLE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's an unfortunate name, in all honesty, for this fund. Jurisdictions are able to use it. There's some flexibility to use it for different things. We've always used it for prevention,

with youth specifically, to have them not, you know, enter the criminal justice system, try to keep them out, out of the criminal justice system and have programs and opportunities to keep them out of the system. 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 that certainly is a good clarification to have. And I want to be clear, it's work that I support. We definitely want to keep youth from entering the criminal justice system. If these programs are helping to do that, which I am looking forward to seeing in the reporting that we've asked for, I'd be happy to see that. But I think that residents would probably be interested to hear about what police are doing about -- I know that there's been a lot of news stories, at least in my community over the past number of years, of, you know, criminal -- organized criminal elements -- forgive my wording there -- organized crime effectively sending people to the North to conduct crime, and they are victimizing people in our communities and that this has been a growing problem. We've been seeing gun crime starting to grow. And it seems like a lot of it is coming from the outside as opposed to internally. So I am wondering if that is being addressed by some program or if that is more just kind of -- just falls under general policing duties. Thank you.

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

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, the crime reduction unit would sort of fit into this area, and it is funded through the TPSA. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MR. MORSE:** Okay. And just we're always kind of flying by the seat when we're going through these pages. Can the Minister just clarify would now be the time to ask about those questions, or is that at a later page?

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

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Yeah, those questions would be more suitable later when we get into the section on policing. 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. Appreciate that tip from the Minister, and I will save my questions for then. Thanks.

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

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, for your indulgence. Can the Minister clarify if this is a good place to ask about the community safe safety officer pilot? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

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

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

**MS. REID:** Thank you for that clarity, Mr. Chair, and to the Minister. It's my understanding that there was an evaluation of this pilot. Is that -- and I am just -- I am looking at the business plan, and the dates seem a little bit off to me. It might have been just a typo. So I am just trying to understand if that evaluation of the pilot is being enacted now or is completing now. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So, Mr. Chair, a comprehensive evaluation of the program is underway to identify strengths, gaps, and opportunities for improvement. A RFP was put out in January, and the final report is expected by the end of March 2026. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. No, that's helpful information. The business plan has different dates, so I appreciate the update. Thank you, Mr. Chair. That's all.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. Is there any further questions from Members? Okay, thank you. No further questions, please turn to page 303.

Justice, community justice, \$6,791,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Moving on to corrections, beginning on page 306, with information items on page 308 and 309. Are there any questions?

I will go to the Member from Yellowknife North.

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. In terms of active positions, it looks like two positions are being reduced from corrections service, one in the Sahtu and one in the North Slave. Can the Minister explain what those two positions are that are proposed to be lost? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I will pass to director Bancroft, please.

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

**MR. JAMES BANCROFT:** The two positions that the Member noted there, one would be the correctional officer, North Slave Correctional Centre in Yellowknife. The other being a probation officer in Deline. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MS. MORGAN:** Okay. No further questions, then. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. Is there any further questions on this line item? Okay, continuing on. No further questions, please turn to page 307.

Justice, corrections services, \$39,732,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Committee, moving on to court services, beginning on page 310, with information items on page 312. Are there any questions?

Member from Frame Lake.

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, what is the current backlog of jury trials in the Northwest Territories?

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

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, that's not data that we have in front of us but happy to get that number for the Member. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate that follow-up -- or I will appreciate that follow-up.

The main estimates propose a \$1.68 million decrease in amortization for court services. Can you explain why this adjustment has been made.

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

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I will go to the director.

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

**MR. JAMES BANCROFT:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. The reduction there in amortization is as a result of a single project within the Yellowknife Courthouse which had to be amortized in line with the pending end of the lease of the courthouse, and that was in relation to accessibility in washrooms. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I do remember that project now that they mention it.

Next question: A Yellowknife Courthouse security post for the sheriff officer has been included as adjustment in the main estimates. Can you provide details on how this will support current court services and why it's necessary. Thank you.

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

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

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

**MR. JAMES BANCROFT:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. The sheriff position was added this year following a security assessment which highlighted security gaps within the operation of the Yellowknife courthouse, and this is one of the many protocols that we put in place to address those gaps. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MR. MORSE:** Excellent, thank you, Mr. Chair. I am happy to hear that they've addressed that gap. I think that's it for questions from me on this page. Thank you.

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

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Can the Minister explain what is the position being lost in the South Slave? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** That's a court officer. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MS. MORGAN:** Okay. And there is a very significant reduction in the budget for court administration. Can the Minister explain how we get from \$2.6 million to a budget of \$941,000 in this coming year? Thank you.

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

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. That's a change in amortization. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MS. MORGAN:** Okay, thank you for clarifying that. And then, finally, I just wanted to clarify, so the role of enforcing evictions, does that fall exclusively on the sheriff's office? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. No, the sheriff's role in the process is to deliver the decision of the Court. 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. So who are the officers that are authorized to actually, like, enforce an eviction if, you know, the person is not leaving voluntarily? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Perhaps I wasn't clear in my earlier response. That is the role of the sheriff's office, and they can ask for assistance from the RCMP to enforce the eviction notice. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MS. MORGAN:** Okay. Do the sheriff officers receive special training in order to conduct those evictions, and are there established sort of standards and protocols in place as to how that is to be carried out? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, the training required to do that work is part of the training package that all of the sheriffs receive. 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. But just to clarify, is -- does the sheriff's office have a specific written protocol or standards that lay out exactly how an eviction's enforcement is to be handled or carried out on the ground? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So it's part of their overall internal process of how the sheriff's office would carry out that work. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MS. MORGAN:** Okay. No further questions on this page. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Thank you. For justice of the peace, I know at one time we had a justice of the peace position. I just want to ask the Minister if that position is currently active. Thank you.

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

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. There are a number of justice of the peace across the Northwest Territories. I don't have the specific locations of all of those judges. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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



**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Okay, thank you for that information. I know it was just recently we had one.

Another one too is that there's -- for correctional services, there's two in Tlicho region. And there's -- in Tlicho region, we have three active positions. Are those two -- can the Minister explain to me where these positions are located.

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

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Those are two probation officers and one court worker, all in Behchoko. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** So because correctional services, it says two, so those are the probation officers. Are they currently -- are they active? Are they all active? Like, right now, are they filled? Thank you.

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

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. We're happy to get back to the Member with that information; I don't have that in front of me. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Okay, thank you. Because we're -- court services or active positions -- I need to get my -- Okay, here -- because we're on 311? Okay, 311. Court -- okay, no, this doesn't have that but court services, there's North Slave, 57. 57 positions, are they all -- can the Minister explain to me which -- what are these 57 positions that the court services that's in North Slave region? Thank you.

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

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, those would be positions in the Yellowknife courthouse. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Okay, thank you. Yeah, there are 57 active positions in North Slave, and there's nothing in Tlicho region. Because this North Slave, it's all Yellowknife, you know. I am sure -- and there's nothing for Deh Cho and Sahtu. So is there a

plan in place that maybe the department -- you know, have they ever considered transferring some of these position out to some of the small communities in the regions? Thank you.

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

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. These are the positions within the Yellowknife courthouse that support the Territorial and Supreme Court as well as -- not the Territorial and Supreme Court, but support the justice department within that facility to support the courts in the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Okay. That's a lot of positions to support the court services. And it also goes the same for the correctional services. There's, like, 200 and -- what was it -- there's over 200 positions that's in North Slave region to guard our young people. No, 122 positions in North Slave Correctional Centre and South Slave Correctional Centre. That's a lot of position to guard -- can the Minister tell me how many -- how many inmates are in the North Slave and in South Slave? Thank you.

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

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, as of today, there are 141 inmates in the North Slave Correctional Centre. And in the South Mackenzie Correctional Centre, there are 14. And in the Fort Smith Correctional Centre, there are 13. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Thank you. So there's -- I think the Minister said 140 in North Slave? Is that what -- and South Slave, 14. And to guard 14, we have 73 people to guard or to work with them. So I just wanted to ask the Minister if there's any improvement made in this area because that's a large -- there's a lot of people that are working over there, and I am sure a majority of them are Indigenous youth or Indigenous young people. Thank you.

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

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. The facilities all run 24 hours a day/365 days a year, and that's the reason that those

staffing levels are required. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Okay, thank you. I just needed to know that. And then I just wanted to ask the Minister if there's -- what kind of services or what are they doing to help our young people that enter justice system. I don't know what kind of program and services they provide over there besides for the wellness. So are some of these positions -- are there educators that can help our young people to get their high school education? Thank you.

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

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes, there are certainly -- there are a number of opportunities within the territorial justice system to take a variety of programming to help assist the inmates to integrate back into, you know, their regular life as their time within the system comes to an end. And, certainly, there's been a focus to try and engage as many of the inmates as possible into those programs.

And if I can, I can just go back to a previous question. The two probation officer positions in Behchoko are filled. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Okay, thank you. Thank you, that's good information to know. These regional allocations, headquarters, that's Yellowknife. North Slave is Yellowknife. But can the Minister explain to -- can the Minister explain what are these -- they're full-time -- they're previous to upcoming fiscal year is the same. So where are these -- what are these correctional service positions that are located in headquarters? Headquarters is also Yellowknife. North Slave is Yellowknife. Thank you.

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

**MR. JAMES BANCROFT:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. The corrections service positions that are located in headquarters are the corrections service headquarters administration which would include the director, the assistant director, and their support staff, including

regional trainers for the corrections service in the territory. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. Next on my list I have is the Member from Range Lake.

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, we're just -- the Standing Committee on Social Development was just in Hay River touring on the Trespass Act and in speaking with the community, we heard about the lack of a sheriff's officer that used to be local to the community that is slowing down the processes of justice such as evictions, process serving, etcetera, and that it was a great benefit to the community when that position was there. Is that position still on the books so to speak; can the Minister speak to the Hay River sheriff. Thank you.

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

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, the challenge with having one position in Hay River was that the sheriff that was based alone was unable to fulfill some of his duties because he was a single resource. So that position is now located in Yellowknife. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Well, the community, including many people who are serving on town council and in the community wellness committee, were very clear that this was a gap in the community. And when I think of my experience with the sheriff's office, I know we were -- we had an officer down there when I was a sheriff, and it was very useful to the operations of the sheriff's office because it allowed the office to more effectively complete the role of the sheriff's office in the community, whether it was evictions, vehicle seizures, property seizures, process serving, court services. It was also used to accompany the court circuits in the South Slave region as well. So I wonder if that can be re-evaluated and, you know, if it is something -- the sheriff's office has expanded greatly since I was there. If there is an issue with resourcing, perhaps move two positions down there. But it just seems like when you have a large community that's going through an awful lot of crime issues related -- well, crime. Just crime. Flat-out crime related to the drug trade. And we have the opportunity to help expedite some of these processes with a simple personnel and resourcing change, it seems prudent to do so, especially if it's going to help the community. So will the Minister reconsider those positions,

whether one or more, to better service the community of Hay River which, again, is beset by a lot of issues that these officers could do a lot of good at helping. Thank you.

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

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, part of the reason for the relocation of the position was that the call for service within that position in the community was minimal and did not require a full-time position for the work that didn't require two officers. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Again, I am only speaking of the conversations that I recently had in the community, and this did come up. And I am always keeping my ears open for issues related to the sheriff's office because, again, I spent five years of my career there and it was a very transformative process for me to go through. I think the sheriffs do a tremendous amount of good for our communities and could be a resource to address a lot of the gaps that we see out there to support the RCMP and support -- you know, even bylaw officers and enhance community safety rules. And I am always going to keep talking about them. But I would strongly encourage the Minister to really consider whether there is not a need and whether or not this position could be restored and, you know, work around it to make -- to maximize its efficiencies and maybe even look at expanding the role of sheriffs generally. I know in speaking to some of the sheriffs, there's been talks of a Sheriff's Act, you know, to actually lay out the more powers and responsibilities for the sheriffs, you know, talk about expanding their role into other areas of civil and even criminal enforcement, like we see the sheriff's service in Alberta for example. There's lots of opportunities here. And unlike the RCMP, they're directly under our management and control so we have a lot more to say about how they pursue their roles and do their work. We could even move it under the solicitor general so there's even more say that the Minister could have over the sheriff's service. But it just seems like when we have these crisis situations with crime and criminality in the Northwest Territories, we have this uniformed service. They are peace officers. They are trained to do the jobs that we need them to do. We should be using every opportunity to maximize our limited resources as a government. So it's a bit of a rant but, again, I believe strongly in the service. They're professional. They're well trained,

incredibly competent, and they can get the job done. And, again, Hay River was sorely missing this position when we spoke to some of the residents. But, I mean, some of those residents were decision-makers so I take their -- I take their commentary quite seriously. So I would encourage the Minister to have that conversation with the community of Hay River and to seriously consider restoring a sheriff's position to the community. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to the Member for that comment.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay. Is there any further questions from the Member from Range Lake?

**MR. TESTART:** Not on this topic, Mr. Chair. Thank you.

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

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I will stay on the same general topic. I am curious if justice tracks the number of evictions executed by the sheriff's office. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Not data that we have directly in front of us but certainly able to provide that to the Member. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. And in the suite of public safety legislation coming forward to us this year, such as SCAN and the Residential Tenancies Act review that has been pushed a little bit to the back burner but, you know, I think is still very much a consideration for this Minister, will it be looking to track more data about -- will any legislation be looking to track more data about evictions and trends over time and if not, in a statute in interest and policy that the department has? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I mean, I am a big supporter of, you know, having that data type of collection as part of our processes to ensure, you know, we can actually see those things, trends over time. I

think that's a little perhaps deep into the workflow of the proposed bills that are coming forward to be able to give a real true comment on that at this time. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. And, yeah, no, I can appreciate that and I don't want to get into the weeds of something that's not yet before us. But I appreciate the Minister is interested in tracking data over time and success of any actions such as evictions over time. So more of a comment, and I am happy to follow up with the Minister later. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Is there any further questions?

Member from Frame Lake.

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I wanted to ask about a few different programs that are run, I believe, out of court services - the wellness court, drug treatment option program, and the intimate partner violence treatment option court. Are those under this page? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Yes, they are, Mr. Chair. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MR. MORSE:** Excellent. Thank you, Mr. Chair. So on that subject, Mr. Chair, how are we tracking outcomes associated with those programs; how do we measure success?

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

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So the programs were recently reviewed by the court but we do have some statistics that we have been tracking over time.

So the wellness court, as of December 8th, 2025, we had 217 individuals who were referred to the wellness court of which 112 participated in the program for some length of time, and 29 completed their wellness plan and graduated from the program.

The wellness court program has five active clients and one client in an assessment phase.

The intimate partner violence treatment option court, 264 participants have successfully completed the intimate partner violence

treatment option program. In-person intimate partner violence treatment option programs were run in Inuvik in January and July of 2025. There were 11 successful candidates. These semi-annual programs are expected to run for the foreseeable future. Overall, we had -- participants were -- 82 percent were male, and 18 percent were female. This continues to increase in the female -- there continues to be an increase in the female referrals in January of 2026.

Specialized courts will be running a women's group using a trauma-informed lens, and there are currently nine women registered for this program. 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 the third one there -- and I do forgive the Minister because I had listed a lot there -- was the drug treatment option program, if he could just list the success associated with that one.

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

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Okay, thank you, Mr. Chair. So that's the same as the wellness. The wellness court is the same program. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate the -- I appreciate that. Can the Minister help us understand are these programs helping us to reduce recidivism in the justice system, is it reducing repeat offending or severity of crimes? Are we tracking those kinds of statistics?

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

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

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

**MS. CHARLENE DOOLITTLE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I will just repeat. The Minister did say there was a review in 2023-2024 of the wellness court and IPVTO court, so we do have that report and recommendations which the department is reviewing and implementing as appropriate as well. Recidivism is something very difficult across the country to track. When you have so many different partners in the justice system, like the judiciary, courts, RCMP, public prosecutions, GNWT, we don't all track

data consistently. So this is a national issue. We do our best, but it's very hard to track when a person leaves the criminal justice system and then comes back, how many times they come back. It's just we all collect data differently as partners and stakeholders, so we haven't perfected that yet in the territory and across the country. 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. And I appreciate that. And is that report something that MLAs can have access to or already do have access to? Thanks.

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

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. That's a report that was done by the judiciary, so we'll have to confirm if that's available. 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, certainly, if it's a confidential item, I am sure we could probably find a mechanism to get that to social development.

Lastly, on these programs, Mr. Chair, what can justice do to ensure appropriate and necessary interconnectedness between these programs and other services to ensure that the aims of the programs achieve their goals? So connecting them with mental health services, medical services, housing, etcetera. 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 deputy minister.

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

**MS. CHARLENE DOOLITTLE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. And we at the department certainly work with our partners, the ones I just mentioned, largely the RCMP. We have corrections services within and other court services within. But we work together to try to align our services and intentions to rehabilitate and reintegrate folks into the community as well as within departments. At GNWT, we have our own social committee, deputy ministers, and committee of Cabinet that we work with as well to align social issues across departments in programming. And some of those do focus on

rehabilitation, programming, and reintegration with our partners across the department. For example, in EIA, they have a government services officer, so we help try to connect our recently released inmates in communities with those types of services as well as our own. We just mentioned the navigator program earlier today. So there is strong attempts, I would say, to align within government and within the territory to support our folks and reintegrate them as best we can. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Member from Frame Lake.

**MR. MORSE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate that that work is being done.

Just on the point that the deputy minister made about the issues that we have with data collection, I mean, what is being done to -- I wanted to say streamline but streamline isn't the word I am looking for -- to better coordinate that data collection? I mean, this seems like -- I am always blown away by how difficult it is in this country with the various different things that we regulate. Every single jurisdiction does things differently. Anyways, focusing on this issue, is there an effort to streamline that data collection? Because, I mean, when you're talking about recidivism, I mean, if you're tracking recidivism for each individual person, I mean I would assume that their data travels with them and it would be a relatively simple thing to track, I would think. But the fact that we're having difficulty with it, I think is a problem, simply for the reason of the questions that I am asking. It's hard for us to determine if our programs are working, if we need to change them in different ways. So, yeah, is there any effort going on to try and better coordinate that data collection? Thank you.

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

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So there is work on a couple of fronts. So the Department of Justice works directly with the RCMP to help to address some of the data challenges as well as there's work at the FPT table that's going on nationally on this issue as well. 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 back to the data collection issue, I mean, I guess I would just -- yeah, I look forward to seeing the report that was produced. Generally speaking, I am just hoping to see if we can point to local successes of these programs and, most importantly, just track whether the programs are having success, whether anything about

them needs to change, whether we need to resource them differently. That's all information that will help us decision-makers make better, informed decisions.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

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

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

**MS. CHARLENE DOOLITTLE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes, that is something we're trying to do. And one initiative that is also new is bail summary reports. This is a commitment we've made, but it's information to support tracking repeat offenders in our system. And this is new.

A bail summary report will help the courts in making informed bail decisions, so territorial court, JP court. And this is something that we're hoping will improve the consistency of information available to the court when they do make their decisions. It'll be timely, more information that will protect victims, enhance community safety, and promote accountability. So this is something new we're trying, and I think it will benefit folks in the system as well as the public with having better information and data. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. Okay, what we'll do now is I will just take a quick recess, and we'll come back in about 15, 20 minutes. Okay, thank you.

---SHORT RECESS

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay. Welcome back, everybody. We're going to continue on.

Is there any further questions on pages 310 to 312? Are you waving at me? Okay, there we go.

Okay, Yellowknife North.

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just wanted to quickly confirm whether the decrease in the budget for specialized courts, is that a result of amortization as well or something else. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. That was a reduction of a psychologist position. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MS. MORGAN:** Okay, thank you, Mr. Chair. Can you explain what this position was meant to do? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

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

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

**MS. CHARLENE DOOLITTLE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. It was a position with the wellness court and intimate partner violence treatment option Court to support clients in there. We had a very difficult time recruiting into that position. There was several attempts, but now we use contract services to support those clients, as well as there is a psychologist if the emergency arises in SMCC and FSCC. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay. YK North Member.

**MS. MORGAN:** Okay, thank you, Mr. Chair. So the use of contract services, does that end up adding up anywhere close to the full-time position that was previously allocated, or do you have an estimate for how often those contract services are needed? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. No, the annual cost for the contract services does not add up to the cost of the full-time position. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

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

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Is there any further questions before I move on?

I will go to the Member from Monfwi.

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Yes, this is regarding our sheriff services, court services. I think it is a good career opportunity maybe for many of our young people that wants to learn more about what this department does. I just want to ask, you know -- like, I am really after -- going after jobs here because, you know, like, I want more jobs to be transferred to Tlicho region.

So sheriff services, I know they're all situated in Yellowknife. I want to ask the Minister if there's any plan in place or like possibly transfer and/or create a sheriff position in Tlicho region. Behchoko has the highest population, and there's over 3,000 in Tlicho region alone. Thank you.

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

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. No, Mr. Chair, at this time, there's no plan to transfer or create new positions in the sheriff's office. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Well, then, I want to ask the Minister if he -- if they can do -- or put a plan in place for the next fiscal year. I know this 2026-2027 we're talking about, so -- but upcoming fiscal year, if there can be a plan in place, if they can work on it to possibly create a sheriff positions in Tlicho -- Tlicho region and that will serve for Tlicho communities instead of waiting for somebody from Yellowknife. Thank you.

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

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, the standard practice is to establish sheriff positions in communities where the courts are located. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Okay. Well -- okay, we may not have a courthouse but we do have court services there and we are close, you know -- the judge, everybody, the court parties, they come to Behchoko. So it would be nice if we can have one over there so that will accommodate the court services coming from Yellowknife. I know there -- it's a traveling court services. So there's two probation officers there already so why not add another -- court workers or sheriff -- or sheriff's department to go into the court services. Thank you.

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

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, similarly to the earlier question regarding the sheriff in Hay River and the position that was moved to Yellowknife, there's a requirement for the sheriff to work in tandem with an additional sheriff so -- and the other

piece would -- there would be a requirement to look at the potential workload within the community to determine if that was something that was viable. But I will pass to the deputy minister for additional comment. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MS. CHARLENE DOOLITTLE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Another factor in this consideration is the changes in the court circuit, so that's the purview of the judiciary. That's -- involves their independence of the court. So those have changed, so the needs for sheriffs have also changed with them. As well as they travel -- they're the security for the judiciary, so they travel with them. They have to leave from the exit point into the community back in the courts, the courthouse in Yellowknife. They are security for the courthouse and the judiciary, so that is why they travel directly with them and have to leave from Yellowknife to the circuit community. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Thank you. I was going to ask the Minister what is the requirement but -- you know, in Tlicho region, we do have court on the court date. It's usually full. The dockets are usually full with a lot of our young people. And so that's why I am asking about that. And then we do see sheriffs come to our community alone without court, without court parties, to confiscate or to take, you know, like, vehicles or to evict. So they do more than court services. That's why I am asking that if -- it would be nice if we can get a sheriff office in Behchoko or Tlicho region to accommodate the people. And it's a good career opportunity for our young people. For that reason, that's why I am asking that maybe work around it to create -- have a sheriff's office situated in our community.

Another thing I want to ask the Minister is that is -- maybe what they can do is establish a satellite court registry in Behchoko. Can they do that? Thank you.

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

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

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

**MR. JAMES BANCROFT:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. The court services are currently operating remote appearances through all

communities in the Northwest Territories, 20 communities in the Northwest Territories, through the local RCMP detachments. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Okay, thank you. Okay. Yes, that's it for now.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay. I am going to continue on now. I am going to go to page 311.

Justice, court services, \$16,624,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Thank you. Moving on to legal aid services, beginning at page 313, with information items on page 315. Are there any questions?

Member from Great Slave.

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So in the program detail, each of the line items, save except for the Office of the Children's Lawyer, which remains static, in the 2025-2026 Main Estimates to the revised estimates, all of the totals go up, some slightly, some not fairly -- fairly significantly, and then again for these main estimates they have dropped back down. And I guess I am just looking to understand the general budgeting approach that the department takes here considering that it seems like the need for all of these line items is higher and the budget is, again, lower. So just looking for some clarity on that. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

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

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay. I will pass it on to the director.

**MR. JAMES BANCROFT:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. The supplementary appropriation in year was higher as a result of the amendment of the access to justice agreement with the federal government. That was then adjusted for this year to 963. And I can get into further detail of that breakdown if the Member likes. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MS. REID:** Thanks, Mr. Chair. I will always enjoy more detail. Thank you.

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

**MR. JAMES BANCROFT:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. The \$963,000 is made up of roughly \$250,000 for compensation benefits for an additional outreach lawyer for the legal aid clinic, bringing the total outreach lawyer to two. We have \$223,000 being added to travel to allow legal aid services to travel throughout the territory at a greater rate. \$5,000 from chosen supply is connected to that outreach lawyer position. And \$590,000 for contract services related to panel lawyers, which are utilized when there may be a case of conflict within the office and as well to look into recruitment consultants for legal professionals into the legal aid office, along with a small \$7,000 chargeback for GST. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. And, yeah, I appreciate that detail. What I think we hear from many Members in this House and this Assembly, and past Assemblies going back quite a ways, is the frustration around the lack of a child and youth advocate. We have seen positions lapse in the Office of the Children's Lawyer, and I am just curious if the Minister and his staff are tracking demand for those services and, indeed, demand for services of a -- like, function for the GNWT considering that it's something that we are hearing from our constituents, and I am curious if he's hearing it as well. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, currently we are doing an evaluation of the Office of the Children's Lawyer, and it's scheduled to be completed in the 2025-2026 fiscal year. I don't have specifics on how far into the process we are. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MS. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Would he be willing to share specifics with committee? Thank you.

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

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. The deputy minister can speak to that. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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



**MS. CHARLENE DOOLITTLE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. The bids are being assessed right now to assign the contract, and it might take a little bit more time. My understanding is possibly four months once the contract is signed for the evaluation to be complete. 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. Nothing further.

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

**MS. MORGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So building on my colleague's questions about the legal aid increase in funding, I don't see any targets or goals in the business plan. But, I mean, I am happy to see that there are increased resources being put into it but I would also like to see some goals or measures of what we're trying to accomplish to know that those increased resources are making a difference. Does the department have any goals in terms of, you know, increased number of clients or increased number of visits or number of communities that it can get to, or have those kinds of targets been set? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So the increase in resources are tied to a federal cost share agreement amendment, and I will have the deputy minister speak to some more detail. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MS. CHARLENE DOOLITTLE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. The Legal Aid Commission is an independent commission, and they report on their own metrics. They file an annual report every year, which I believe the department tables, and there are metrics in there from the court, on the court workers, on circuit court, on a number of deemed eligible people in the court system who -- in the criminal system who plead guilty and are sentenced without a trial. So there are a bunch of metrics that they keep and provide that publicly every year in their annual report. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MS. MORGAN:** Okay, thank you, Mr. Chair. I can certainly look up that report. Can the Minister tell us, or the deputy minister, beyond metrics are there actually targets established in those reports? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

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

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

**MS. CHARLENE DOOLITTLE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am sure they have laudable goals to decrease, you know, people entering in the criminal justice system and reduce recidivism and encourage reintegration and keep people out of the system, but I think they largely track, you know, those involved in the system and it's probably more on the end of the criminal justice system as opposed to the beginning. So 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 mean, what I am trying to get at here is not -- I know earlier I was talking about sort of the broader outcomes, societal outcomes of these programs, but in this case I think we could certainly just set, like, some measurable targets in terms of what this additional funding is intended to accomplish in terms of, you know, number of visits in communities, number of days that -- if you're able to travel more, how many more days are you able to spend in communities, you know, how many more appointments or, you know, things like that. And so that's what I would be looking to see. But I can go back and review those legal aid reports myself. But just, you know, anytime we increase funding, it's great, but I think it's also good if we have a clear sense in our heads of what we're expecting to get out of it. And just the difference that people will see on the ground. Will they see people coming more often in their communities, will they notice. You know, these are the kind of things that make a difference to people. I will just -- I will leave it there for now. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, the Standing Committee on Social Development has recommended that legal aid be provided -- or be expanded to provide services for matters in rental court. And this is

already a service that does exist in Nunavut's legal aid structure as well. I note that with the current level of resourcing, it seems doubtful that this budget is prepared to offer those services. So can the Minister confirm if we can expect the rental office to be covered by legal aid anytime soon, because it is an important consideration for our residents. 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 deputy minister.

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

**MS. CHARLENE DOOLITTLE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. As I mentioned, the Legal Aid Commission is an independent commission so they do set what they fund, what are eligible services in their program. It's largely family and criminal, but they do have an outreach lawyer who does assist people in rental decisions and applications. With this legal aid funding increase, there will now be a second outreach lawyer for the one-year term and hopefully that will assist more folks who need help with the services that outreach lawyers cover, including rental advocacy. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. This is good news, of course. But I would imagine that the outreach that's being provided is a set number of hours to clients who attend clinics, but I will allow the witnesses to correct me if I am wrong. This is not representation at rental hearings rather this is advice provided through clinics. Is that accurate? Thank you.

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

**MS. CHARLENE DOOLITTLE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. In the past, there have been instances where an outreach lawyer would attend a hearing with someone and advocate or support. They are not assigned a lawyer to take them through the whole process, but that's not to say you can only see that outreach lawyer one time. You do have a time limited appointment. They are not assigned your lawyer, but you can go back more than once. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MR. TESTART:** So that's a little different than -- thank you, Mr. Chair. That's a little different than what was being recommended by the committee and what happens in other

jurisdictions. When it comes to landlords -- and I am talking about the larger and mid-sized landlords who have lawyers on retainer -- they are represented in these hearings by lawyers, and tenants are not, because most of them are not in a position to pay for a lawyer to represent them in these matters. So that's what I am talking about here. And I just want to confirm that that's not going to be happening in this budget or potentially in the future, unless there is a plan to bring that on. But as far as the current policy environment is for legal aid services, can the Ministers confirm that that is not going to be a service provided by the Legal Aid Commission. Thank you.

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

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. That is currently not in the plan. But I will pass to the deputy minister to provide some detail. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MS. CHARLENE DOOLITTLE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's my understanding that the Legal Aid Commission is not opening up assigning lawyers to cases for the rental hearing process. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you. So if you wanted -- if the government or this Assembly, indeed, wanted to expand legal aid service provision, how would we go about doing that? Because I understand that the commission is arm's length and independent in the services it provides and is overseen by an independent board but, obviously, if we make a political decision to provide that service and appropriate funding for it, the commission logically would have to provide it. But the details would be helpful, I guess, because I am not sure what we're supposed to do here if, indeed, we are making recommendations for something to happen and we're not able to make them because it's an independent body. So just clarification on that point because we want to continue to advocate for residents who are in need of these services, so their legal rights are well represented in matters of hearth and home, which is fundamental to wellness; we all know this. So if the Minister can explain more how we would bring about these services in the Northwest Territories that are currently enjoyed by our sister -- residents of our sister territory of Nunavut. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

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

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

**MS. CHARLENE DOOLITTLE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. In the recent review completed by the legislature of the Legal Aid Review Act, the executive director did appear before committee and along with some department officials. This would have been a good time to communicate that, but there's no saying that this can't be communicated now if that is the desire of committee. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MR. TESTART:** Thank you, okay. Well, it was communicated by committee through one report. I'd have to look at our review of the Legal Aid Commission. I am -- no doubt it was brought up in questioning. But, anyway, notwithstanding those points, I am just going to assume that if a decision is made, funding is appropriated, then that would be provided. It sounds like that would be the case. So I am going to leave it there. I eagerly await seeing the official response to that report, that comprehensive report. This is, I think, a key area that we've been hearing is a gap for long, long periods of time. And access to justice is, of course, an important matter for any government. And I know there's a cost involved in providing that level -- that service for that type of hearing, but I was quite pleased to see that other jurisdictions have taken the plunge, so to speak, and done that, including Nunavut, which has a lot of similarities with us and a very similar rental market, including the same players in the private market space. So I think there's a lot of value in this, and I hope to see more progressive leadership around legal aid services for rental court in the future. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. Is there any further questions before I move on? No further questions, please turn to page 314. Sorry, oh sorry, mMy apologies. The Member for Monfwi.

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Legal aid clinic, so it's lawyers providing services. I just want to ask -- I know that, you know, like I said, in the small communities, the only time that we get to see lawyers, especially legal aid, it's only on the court date, so -- and they're giving advice. I would like to know is -- are they giving adequate advice? Because, I mean, there's 140 inmates at the North Slave Correctional Centre, so how many of those got adequate advice? And, mostly -- I am sure most of them are Indigenous. Thank you.

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

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I will just respond to the 141 inmate comment. There are 18 sentenced inmates out of that 141, and there are 116 that are there on remand. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Yeah, really. So that's -- 118, you said, that are -- 16 that are -- they're on remand? Okay, well, I think there's something seriously wrong with the justice system in the Northwest Territories. I think we need to do a better job.

Another one too is that -- so how many of these that provide legal aid clinic are lawyers from the Northwest Territories or employed by legal aid? Are there out-of-the-province lawyers that don't understand our language, our culture, our traditional way of life? 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 deputy minister.

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

**MS. CHARLENE DOOLITTLE:** Mr. Chair, all of our clinics -- and I believe there are four in the Northwest Territories -- are staff lawyers, family and criminal, and the outreach lawyers, and they all live in Yellowknife. We do have panel lawyers, so those are not staff lawyers. They receive payment. They're contracted, and they -- some are from the Northwest Territories, and some -- we do require some because of conflicts and other issues from southern jurisdictions, perhaps like Alberta or BC or Ontario. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Mr. Speaker -- I mean, Mr. Chair, the reason why I ask is because, I mean, a lot of us are here for a reason, and I am worried about our young people, especially young boys, because it's only young men that we're talking about, and I don't hear much about the women, and the kind of advice they are represented in court, are they providing adequate court services, you know, that's -- it's just more of a comment. It's up to them if they want to answer, but -- if they want to elaborate more on it. But I do worry about our young people, especially young men. You know, most of them are probably, you know, not

serious crime but still, you know, something that -- if we have sentencing circles and, you know, that restorative justice, maybe a lot of this would have been avoided and just -- I do care about our future generations. And it's -- yeah, it's -- it's ridiculous. Thank you.

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

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

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

**MS. CHARLENE DOOLITTLE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I will just say all lawyers have ethical obligations, and they can be disciplined and sanctioned by the law society who regulates them, so that would include all the lawyers that I spoke about, including lawyers not from the Northwest Territories, in that they're required also to take continuing legal education every year, and this involves ethical legal education. Some jurisdictions, and I know our law society in the NWT, is looking that -- at specific cultural training and working with Indigenous clients and people in the system. So that is on their radar, their self-regulating body. But it is something that they monitor. And, again, all lawyers are required to take ethical training every year. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. Next on my list here I've got is the Member from Deh Cho.

**MRS. YAKELEYA:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. When you talk about the legal aid clinics, are they held in every region once or twice a year? I couldn't remember. Or are they done quarterly? Once a year? How are they done in each region? Thank you.

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

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. If the Member is referring to outreach, there is an informal schedule that is shared with all the MLAs that outlines the proposed dates of the visits to the communities. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MRS. YAKELEYA:** Okay, thank you. Thank you for that. You said there was 118. My colleague from Monfwi was asking -- you said there was 141 incarcerated. 18 or something and 116 are remand? 18 are -- thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So the 18 number refers to inmates that have received a sentence from the court and are currently incarcerated. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MRS. YAKELEYA:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Can the Minister tell me why there's 116 in remand? Is this a backlog, or the courts are not able to do the sentencing, or what is the -- what is the holdup there? Thank you.

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

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, the remand inmates are waiting for a trial or a hearing, and that is at the direction of the judiciary, not the Department of Justice. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MRS. YAKELEYA:** Okay. I, like my colleague, too am concerned about how many incarceration rates we have in our communities. I go to a court hearing, and it's standing room only in the small communities, our Indigenous people. And we had something years ago called the Dene Laws. And I used to be a community justice worker way back, and I used to say that if we followed the Dene Laws we didn't need a justice system because we would be governing -- or we would be organizing our own selves and following those laws, the principles of the laws. But that's not the case. So is there room, or is there something that the justice department can do to look at incorporating some of the teachings, using -- utilizing the community resources, like elders and stuff we have in the community? To do on the land stuff -- like, there's on the land programming so that these things could be looked at and dealt with in a way that reflects the community's needs. That's what I wanted to say. Thank you.

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

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Maybe I will just -- I will make a comment, then I will pass to the deputy minister. But criminal items within the court system are federally directed, not territorially directed. Having said that, we do have programs within the Northwest Territories that sort of fit into what

you've described. So for some detail, I will pass to the deputy minister. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MS. CHARLENE DOOLITTLE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. And specifically on-land-based programming, we do do that in the department. Our specialized courts that we spoke to earlier do have a contract with Protect Your Path operated by Rainier Erasmus. This is on-the-land programming for that court. As well as we have another -- had another contract with Shake the Dust Consulting. That's operated by Frank Pope. And we've also partnered with YK Dene First Nation for the wellness court as well. In corrections, we have four program areas that are delivered by a traditional counsellor. They're located in the facility, but they are outside of the facility. So on the land there. Elders also attend land-based events in corrections to share their traditional knowledge, and they meet with inmates on the land. SMCC in Hay River offers a made-in-the-NWT Indigenous pre-treatment healing program that prepares offenders for their healing journey, and this is with the participation of elders and rooted in Indigenous tradition, spirituality, and world view.

Our community justice funding funds on-the-land programming. We -- so far, they've had seven events with five organizations: YK Dene First Nation, Liidlii Kue. Echoes of the Drum, that's a Yellowknife-N'dilo land-based aftercare. Deline Got'ine government annual on-the-land spiritual gathering. And Acho First Nation. Kakisa fish fry and community gardening workshop. And then there's also our men's healing program which are often on the land as well, and we spoke to the six earlier. So we have stuff in our facilities but also preventative programming in our community justice where we take applications from communities where they develop their own initiatives as they know best what's good and preventative for them and their folks and their young people as opposed to the Department of Justice in Yellowknife. 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. Yeah, what an extensive list. Thank you so much for that. And I, like my colleague Mr. Morse, am thinking about how this day and age we -- how it's amazing that we don't track and look at -- we can measure things by saying this year or last year we had 54 programs. Of the 54 programs, 256 people participated. Of the 256 people that participated, 75 people are working, went to

treatment, went to -- back to school, did something good, you know, so that way we have something to report that's so positive that people will say, you know what, I can do something like this too. I can change my life. It's that easy. But we have nothing to say these are what's -- these are -- this is what's happening. If we had more success stories -- like, I see some of it on Facebook now. I've seen people talk about their -- how their addictions has kind of changed their way of life. So that's a really good thing. So some of these success things, we need to talk about it. We need to start talking about it because lately we've been focusing on the not-so-good impacts of what's happening in the North. And, you know, if we change -- start to look at it in a way that the glass is half full, we might see some changes in the way things are being done. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay. I will take that as a comment. I am going to continue. Oh sorry, I am going to go to the Minister.

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Yeah, thank you, Mr. Chair. I'd like to speak to that. I mean, we do track some of the information on these programs. One of the reasons we don't do extensive tracking is a lot of these are community-based and community-run, and we don't want to increase the burden on the community to have to track a whole lot of data and report as part of the reporting back process. Having said that, we certainly could do better. So point well taken. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I am going to go to the Member from Monfwi. And then the matter of time, I am just going to go until about 7:45. Thank you.

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Since we're still, you know, in small communities, we have a lot of addiction issues. We have a lot of drug dealers, things that are happening in small communities. So -- and with reference to the inmates or to the North Slave or South Slave, I just wanted to ask the Minister, how many of those that are incarcerated are non-NWT inmates? Because lately we've been seeing a lot of drug busts in the Northwest Territories. So I would like to know how many of those are non-NWT inmates. Thank you.

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

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, that's not a statistic that we keep. The reason that the inmates would be remanded in the Northwest Territories is because they were charged here, so they

become part of the system here in the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Yes. Okay. We're trying to keep our community safe, and it's good that, you know, there's more -- the police are doing the job of going after many of the drug dealers that are coming in. So once they are there, after the convictions or remand, are they going to be just released into the NWT population and/or do you send them back, or how does that work? Especially, they're transient. They're just coming here to do the job, to deliver and leave. But in the process, I am glad that they are incarcerated. They're in jail. But then I just wanted to know how does the court deal with them. 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 deputy minister for some detail. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MS. CHARLENE DOOLITTLE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. So inmates who are sentenced or folks who are sentenced to two years less a day, they'll serve their time in the Northwest Territories in one of our facilities. If they're sentenced to two years and more, they are sent south to a federal institution. They are -- if they do serve their time in the Northwest Territories, immediately they're starting to be case managed. So they're connected with supports, with counselling, with programming, with housing options or information. And they have to have a release plan, which the case manager who's assigned to them works with them on before they're released, and includes all these things. They can be released into a community, but, you know, they would have to -- there would have to be a reason why they would -- you know, they have a support plan, they have housing there, they have support people. So they wouldn't be released into a community where they don't have any of that. But it sounds like the Member is speaking to significant offenses where a lot of those folks would probably -- could be assigned -- or sentenced to a penitentiary time or a time of two years or more and be sentenced -- sent south. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG:** Well, I am worried because many of these are part of

gangs, and we know that they are ruthless, and many of the community members, they are, you know, fearful for their life because a lot of them, they do associate. They have runners in small communities. So that's why, I think -- that's why I am asking, like, if they're not -- you know, if they don't have a permanent residence here, I think that's another thing that maybe the court can consider or look into the matter. And we know that lately young people are being used, teenagers are doing the work, so it's just that I do worry. I worry. We all do here, that we worry about our regions, our communities. And it's just -- just seeing some of the pictures or videos in the apartments here in Yellowknife that are part of gangs and they have guns, you know, and it's something that we're not used to. So I think that's where -- that makes a lot of our residents that are -- they're fearful. Everybody's scared for -- that's why nobody talks about these -- the drug dealers or, you know, that might be affiliated with gangs from the south. So I am speaking as a concerned leader, and I am concerned citizens as well. So thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay. Does the ministry want to respond to that?

**HON. JAY MACDONALD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. You know, I think we all share the concern with the escalating level of crime and guns and, you know, more serious criminal activity within the territory. So, you know, I think that's an area where we're certainly all trying to work toward, you know, improving the situation and dealing with some of these offenders. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay. There's no more questions from Monfwi. I am going to continue on. Please turn to page 314.

Justice, legal aid services, \$9,041,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay, thank you. I am going to go to the Member from Inuvik Boot Lake.

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

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon):** Okay. There's a motion on the floor to report progress. The motion is in order and non-debatable. All those in favour? All those opposed? Motion carried.

---Carried

I want to ask the Sergeant-at-Arms to escort the witnesses from the chambers, and I want to say thank you to all my colleagues and all the

translators. Mahsi. I will now rise to report progress.

---SHORT RECESS

### Report of Committee of the Whole

**MR. SPEAKER:** Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh. I was thinking ahead again.

**MR. EDJERICON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Your committee has been considering Tabled Document 448-20(1), 2026-2027 Main Estimates, and would like to report progress. 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? Now I can say Member from Monfwi. All those in favour? Opposed? Abstentions? Unanimous.

Reports of the Committee of the Whole. Third reading of bills. Mr. Clerk.

### Orders of the Day

**CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Harjot Sidhu):** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Orders of the day for Friday, February 13th, 2026, at 10 a.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 7 of 7)
7. Acknowledgements
8. Oral Questions
9. Written Questions
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
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 Friday 13th, 2026, at 10 a.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 5:46 p.m.

UNEDITED HANSARD