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The Honourable Shane Thompson, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

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YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**Wednesday, February 11, 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, before we begin today, I want to take a moment to extend the condolences of this House, as well as my personal condolences, to those impacted by the tragic and horrendous events that occurred in Tumbler Ridge, BC, yesterday. Our hearts are with the residents of Tumbler Ridge at this time, and we will hold you all in our prayers. The flags at the Assembly will be at half-mast for the week to show respect and condolences for all of the families and community members impacted by this terrible event.

Colleagues, please join me in a moment of silence for all those who have been impacted by this tragic act of violence. Thank you, colleagues.

Ministers' statements. Minister responsible for Strategic Infrastructure, Energy, and Supply Chains.

Ministers' Statements**MINISTER'S STATEMENT 176-20(1):
UPDATE ON ENERGY INITIATIVES**

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Mr. Speaker, the Government of the Northwest Territories is making practical investments to strengthen our energy systems and make energy more reliable, affordable, and sustainable for communities across the territory.

The energy initiatives report released on February 3rd shows how we are building a strong foundation for long-term change. We are improving how energy systems are planned, regulated, and delivered, while moving forward with projects that meet local needs and reflect northern realities.

Mr. Speaker, a key part of this work is supporting the public utilities board and advancing integrated power system planning. This approach looks at the territory's power

systems across regions, technologies, and timelines so we can better coordinate investments, lower long-term costs, and support the transition to cleaner energy. Engagement with communities, Indigenous governments, utilities, and partners is central to this work, and those conversations are already underway. We are not just planning on paper; people across the territory are helping shape how power is delivered for years to come.

We are also proud to support projects that bring widespread attention to the North. Last month, Yellowknife hosted the Arctic Bioenergy Summit. People across the Northwest Territories, Canada, and from around the world came together to share ideas on sustainable bioenergy solutions for northern and remote communities. The return for our support of events like this gives us modern, practical and northern-led solutions that make a real difference in Northerners' energy options. These events also demonstrate that the Northwest Territories is leading in cold-climate energy innovation, firmly placing us on the national and international stage, and shows other jurisdictions what is possible in the North.

Mr. Speaker, I am also pleased to share that the Government of the Northwest Territories, in conjunction with the Northwest Territories Power Corporation, Indigenous governments and communities, and project partners, are working on energy related pilot projects across the territory. The aim of these pilot projects is to test new technologies and equipment for suitability in our communities and for our conditions, and with a goal of identifying new long-term energy options that optimize generation, reduce reliance on diesel fuel, increase efficiency of local power plants, and improve community well-being. The first of these projects will occur in Fort Simpson this spring, and we look forward to sharing details of this project as it progresses.

Looking ahead, together with the Department of Environment and Climate Change, we will be releasing a whole of government climate change and energy strategy. This strategy will set a clear and coordinated path for how we manage energy, reduce emissions, and support more resilient communities grounded in

practical northern solutions. These energy initiatives we are advancing are intentional stepping stones toward our long-term climate objectives. They support the transition to cleaner energy, help control costs, and strengthen community resilience while recognizing the unique realities of the North.

Mr. Speaker, these investments are not one-off announcements. They are part of a deliberate, step-by-step approach to how energy decisions are made and how projects are delivered. By strengthening long-term planning, supporting innovation, and working closely with our partners, we are building an energy system that is reliable, affordable, and resilient, one that meets the needs of Northerners today, while positioning our territory for a stronger, more sustainable future. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister responsible for Strategic Infrastructure, Energy, and Supply Chains. Ministers' statements. Mr. Premier.

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 177-20(1):
MINISTER ABSENT FROM THE HOUSE

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Mr. Speaker, I wish to advise the House that the honourable Member for Nunakput, the Minister responsible for the Status of Women, will be absent for a portion of the House proceedings today to virtually attend the federal-provincial-territorial Ministers' meeting on missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ peoples. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Premier. Ministers' statements. Members' statements. Member from Inuvik Boot Lake.

Members' Statements

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 860-20(1):
FEDERAL FUNDING FOR NON-INSURED
HEALTH BENEFITS

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, non-insured health benefits are meant to reduce barriers to care for Indigenous peoples, but today in the Northwest Territories this federal program is not meeting the needs of the people it is meant to serve. The GNWT administers NIHB on behalf of Indigenous Services Canada, yet ISC continues to underfund this program, leaving our territorial health system to subsidize a federal responsibility.

Mr. Speaker, it is like asking a small mom and pop shop to cover the costs of a billion-dollar corporation. It simply isn't fair, and it is not sustainable.

Mr. Speaker, these shortfalls place growing strain on our system which cannot continue to cover the gap indefinitely. I have travelled with Cabinet and the Council of Leaders to Ottawa, and I have seen firsthand how strongly the Minister of health and her Indigenous government partners have pushed for ISC to address these chronic issues. The message has been clear: The federal government must fund its own program properly so Northerners are not left behind.

Mr. Speaker, we also know what happens if NIHB is handed back to the federal government to administer themselves. Services get slower, barriers increase, and patients and families must pay upfront and seek reimbursement for every medical trip. This is not what we want for NWT residents. But unless ISC steps up, we risk being forced down that path. Meanwhile, Mr. Speaker, we continue to face rigidity and administration barriers for escort criteria. This leaves families to apply for exceptions and wait for answers whenever their situation doesn't fit rigid outdated policies created in Ottawa, and every time a person is sent by air ambulance, one of the most frightening and vulnerable moments in anyone's life, families are again forced to apply for an exemption to be with their loved one with no guarantee of approval. At the moment when these patients need support the most, Mr. Speaker, NIHB makes them prove it.

Mr. Speaker, Indigenous residents deserve dignity, compassion, and timely care. I call on Indigenous Services Canada to fix these systemic issues, to work with our GNWT to modernize these policies, and properly fund NIHB so that people in our territory receive the fair and respectful service they deserve. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 861-20(1):
SUPPORTED LIVING RECOMMENDATIONS

MR. TESTART: Mr. Speaker, it took nearly a decade for the Government of the Northwest Territories to assess the services it provides to persons with disabilities, only to reveal significant failures in their design and delivery. Yet almost four years after this work accumulated in health and social services' landmark supported living review final report, only a handful of its 33 key recommendations have been meaningfully implemented.

Once you speak to families affected by these systemic failures, you will notice that these are not just service gaps but service canyons - fragmented disability and continuing

care programs, limited cross-departmental coordination, and inadequate mechanisms to respond to unique or complex circumstances force caregivers to fill operational and staffing shortfalls in GNWT service delivery, simply to ensure that adults with disabilities receive the care they need. Addressing these systemic failures are the very foundation of the final report.

Life for caregivers should not be this difficult, Mr. Speaker. In particular, I have witnessed the shock families experience when their disabled children age out of child and family services. Suddenly, they are cut off from support and left at the mercy of the income-assistant model, which is far from adequate given the rising cost of living. NGO supports exist, but these are often tied to employment, a requirement people with more profound disabilities simply cannot meet.

One recommendation with the greatest potential to support caregivers is expanding the supported living model to private homes, opening access to supports, respite, and paid caregiving resources that are currently eliminated to designated providers. The closest progress towards this goal was the paid family community caregiver pilot project which was successfully introduced before the final report but cut shortly afterwards.

This Minister knows that people want to stay in loving homes, and those homes want to stay whole. People with disabilities are not a burden. The burden lies with a government that fails to deliver the services they need. Now the Minister must answer what the families are asking. Why, years after the release of the final report, has there been no meaningful or measurable progress in addressing the gaps in access, coordination, and accommodation for adults with disabilities and their families? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 862-20(1):
POWER SUPPLY SOLUTIONS

MS. MORGAN: Mr. Speaker, we want electricity that is cheaper, cleaner, and more reliable with less power outages. Is that so hard?

The Minister of NTPC has been taking every opportunity to argue that the solution to all of these problems and more is the Taltson expansion and transmission line, most recently saying that power outages can only be prevented by connecting our two grids. I know

that there is an appetite for big ideas, big solutions to all of our problems, but it's dangerous to believe in panaceas, especially when they're estimated to cost several billions of dollars, especially when they may not deliver the level of reliability we're hoping for or the lower cost, and especially when it means we fail to focus on shorter-term, lower-cost practical steps we could be taking. We need to always ask what is the priority problem that we're trying to solve and then what is the most cost-efficient way to get there.

If our priority is to prevent power outages in the North Slave grid, well most outages are caused by a supply failure rather than a transmission failure and most outages last less than 15 minutes, despite our recent experience. Spending billions to tie our two grids together may or may not prevent future outages, depending on the location of any supply failure.

Alternatively, we could install a complete battery backup that meets peak grid demand with its own substation. Right now, there's a battery being installed in Alberta, sized for 80 megawatts, so more than what we need, that would provide backup power for two hours, and it costs \$120 million. Still pricey but a fraction of the cost of Taltson. If we just wanted 15 minutes of reserve energy to prevent a majority of the outages we currently experience, we could get a smaller 10 megawatt battery at Jackfish for maybe 10 to \$20 million. This idea and others were proposed by NTPC itself and a backgrounder listing potential solutions to chronic low-water challenges.

Some other ideas proposed by NTPC were to install modular units at Jackfish, increase the generation capacity at Bluefish, and add more solar and wind energy to the Snare system. Mr. Speaker, I ask for unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

---Unanimous consent granted

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my point is that if we want to reduce power outages, Taltson is by no means the obvious answer. Let's look at each of our electricity challenges one by one and find the most practical solutions to each. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 863-20(1):
ON-THE-LAND ADDICTIONS TREATMENT
PROGRAMMING

MRS. YAKELEYA: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. [No Translation provided]. Happy birthday, Rosemary.

Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Across the Northwest Territories communities to face the devastating impacts of drugs and alcohol. These challenges affect individuals, families, and the well-being of our community as a whole. While clinical and facility-based treatment options are important, they cannot stand alone. We must continue to invest in on-the-land programming that brings people back to the places where healing as always begun - on the land, guided by elders, culture, and traditional knowledge.

Mr. Speaker, on-the-land programs reconnect individuals with purpose, identity, and belonging. For many at risk of substance use, the structure and teachings found on the land offer a path forward that is culturally meaningful and emotionally restorative. Whether it is building a fire, harvesting from the land, travelling by river, or learning stories and teachings from elders, these experiences provide more than skills. They provide grounding, pride, and hope.

Our elders remind us that healing is not only about treating symptoms but about restoring balance. When individuals spend time with knowledgeholders, they build relationships that strengthen resilience and reduce isolation, two of the most significant risk factors tied to substance abuse. Participants gain confidence, reconnect with culture, and rebuild their sense of identity.

Mr. Speaker, investing in these programs is not just an investment in cultural preservation. It is an investment in prevention, recovery, and long-term community health. I urge our government to continue expanding accessible, sustainable, and community-driven on-the-land opportunities, ensuring that those most at risk have a chance to heal in ways that honour who they are and where they're from. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 864-20(1):
HEALTHCARE EXPERIENCES
ENGAGEMENT

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last October, my colleague from Yellowknife North expressed frustration with the lack of transparency on what changes are made for improvement based on data collected by the Office of Client Experience and also with past iterations of the NWT patient experience

questionnaire. While I am happy that the desire to understand the patient experience continues, Mr. Speaker, and while the 2025 questionnaire Have Your Say website notes that a what-we-heard report will be produced that will guide delivery -- service delivery and quality improvements, I want to get back to an even more foundational question: Are we asking the right questions?

The two survey options were explain your last appointment in the outpatient questionnaire and an inpatient questionnaire for folks who stayed at NWT hospitals for at least one overnight stay. Most people's primary care experience would fit into the former, and that is my focus today.

I understand that HSS tracks 40 performance indicators on behalf of the health and social services system since 2019, Mr. Speaker, but to understand the patient experience in the NWT, we have to dive deeper than just what happened during a one-off appointment.

I consider myself a frequent user of the health system, and I have good experiences and not so great ones, Mr. Speaker. As we hear in this House regularly, there's too many not so great ones. In assessing those less positive experiences, it's crucial that people are able to give meaningful feedback.

Mr. Speaker, when the 2025 patient experience questionnaire was promoted on GNWT social media, one comment I saw really stuck with me. Quote, sadly, this survey misses what really matters, how the system works over time across multiple points of care. It doesn't ask about the ease of moving through typical, sometimes iterative processes from booking an appointment to getting referrals, results, and treatment. It doesn't explore patients' deeper experiences, especially patients with complex needs. I hope HSS considers more substantive structured engagement with the public to complement these annual surveys. End quote. I could not put it any better myself, Mr. Speaker.

My constituents who are frequent users of the health system flag consistently the need for better continuity of care. It's best to map that journey with feedback from the people who are experiencing it. I will have questions for the Minister of health at the appropriate time. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 865-20(1):
DEDICATED TLICHO ADMINISTRATIVE
REGION

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to speak about the need for a dedicated Tlicho administrative region to improve coordinations of government programs and services for Tlicho communities.

Mr. Speaker, one of the challenges with the current North Slave regional structure is that it combines Tlicho communities with Yellowknife, the largest urban centre in the territory. This creates an imbalance in planning and resource allocation because regional priorities are often dominated by the needs of Yellowknife, which has a population of over 21,000 compared to over 3,000 across the four Tlicho communities. As a result, smaller communities like Behchoko, Whati, Gameti, and Wekweeti struggle to have their voices heard and their unique needs addressed.

Issues such as housing shortages, aging infrastructure, and health service gaps can be overshadowed by urban priorities, making it difficult to ensure equitable service delivery and accountability for Tlicho residents. A Tlicho administrative region establish a clear administrative boundary for planning, reporting, and accountability so that commitments to housing maintenance, health staffing, education support, and local infrastructure are clearly tied to the needs of Tlicho communities.

Mr. Speaker, it would allow for better coordination of GNWT programs and services, reduce duplication, and improve transparency in how resources are allocated and delivered. By improving coordination and accountability, this change would help address longstanding gaps in housing, health care, and infrastructure, and strengthen trust between government and Tlicho communities.

Mr. Speaker, a dedicated Tlicho administrative region is a practical step toward better outcomes for families and communities across the Tlicho region. Mr. Speaker, I will have question for the Minister of Finance at appropriate time. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 866-20(1):
ADDICTIONS TREATMENT, RECOVERY
AND AFTERCARE

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The drug crisis sweeping the North is a tragic example of what happens when intergenerational trauma meets the modern marginalization of our communities. Cut off from vital services and with limited access to

employment and education and opportunities, our people are increasingly vulnerable to the rising flow of drugs into the territory.

Moving people struggling with trauma and addiction into treatment programs is critical, but the absence of these services in the North is a serious gap in our healthcare system. And even when people complete the treatment program in BC or Alberta, what comes next? Recovery doesn't end when they leave treatment. The next vital step is aftercare or a sober living program. That is why it is so disappointing that my constituents are denied funding for these programs.

The Minister said that she supports people seeking help in the North yet critical gaps remain, especially in our communities. Community leaders do their best with what they have and healing camps and culture programs, but these are only part of the larger and still incomplete network of services. To deny this support is to deny my constituents to their treaty rights to health and well-being. It's a shift responsibility on to communities and Indigenous governments who try their best but simply lack the resources.

Aftercare and sober living programs cost far less than treatment, about a hundred dollars a day compared to \$600 for a 50-day minimum treatment program. Yet these essential services remain underfunded. Without them, recovery is fragile and incomplete.

I am calling on this Minister to fund the wholistic recovery process. Anything less is a failure to uphold the long-term health and dignity of our people. I will have questions for the Minister at the appropriate time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 867-20(1):
CLEAN DESIGN PILOT PROJECT

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Colleagues, today, my Member's statement brings great news. Sometimes in life, you find yourself in the right place at the right time.

Last summer in Yellowknife, I had the privilege of meeting Mr. Kenneth Peter Judge, visiting from Monaco. As we discussed his work, businesses, and personal life, I learned he was part of the legendary Australia II crew that ended America's 132-year winning streak in the 1983 America's Cup, a historic sailing triumph. Despite his achievements and honours like the Order of Australia, Ken came across as refreshingly down-to-earth. Our conversation turned to Clean Design, a Canadian company

specializing in AI-driven hybrid energy solutions. With over 15 years of proven success and 25 plus systems operational, including the B@ Gold's Goose Mine in Nunavut, this technology is transforming remote energy challenges. We explored bringing it to the Northwest Territories, zeroing in on Fort Simpson as a prime opportunity.

Clean Design focuses on reducing diesel consumption, cutting emissions, minimizing blackouts, and enabling silent running at night via advanced hybrid and battery integration. For diesel-reliant communities like Fort Simpson, these innovations deliver reliability, affordability, and environmental gains essential for our North.

It is my understanding that Ken and Clean Design have collaborated with the Minister responsible for strategic energy and staff, including NTPC, on a pilot project being launched in Fort Simpson, tentatively scheduled for April 1st, 2026. While the terms of the pilot project are still being finalized, I am confident it will make a real difference. In conversations with the Liidlii Ku First Nation and Fort Simpson Metis Nation 52, they expressed excitement about this pilot and its potential future impacts on the community and their local governments.

I extend my thanks to the Minister, her staff, and Peter Judge and the Johnston family for prioritizing our community and partnering across the aisle. I also thank Minister Wawzonek and her team for their urgency in advancing this. My hope is this pilot succeeds in Fort Simpson and scales as a permanent solution for NWT communities reducing diesel dependency for generations.

Members' statements. Member from Yellowknife Centre.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 868-20(1):
CLEAN DESIGN AND POWER SUPPLY
RELIABILITY

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we need to move from a very fickle power system to an opportunity of resilience.

Mr. Speaker, last Thursday evening, in case some of you might have missed it, Yellowknife sat in darkness for four hours as temperatures plunged at minus 25. Mr. Speaker, a four-hour outage in a southern city may be an inconvenience but in the subarctic, it's a ticking clock that's deafening.

Mr. Speaker, again, an inconvenience to some, but a tragic experience for many. I heard over the weekend stories of frustration where pipes

in modular homes had frozen and broken in some cases, Mr. Speaker. With today's understanding of technology and opportunities, there must be a better way.

Mr. Speaker, as you just alluded to, Clean Design may be that opportunity to help stabilize our power. The technology is there. It's proven. It manages ups and downs of power waves. It even turns on the system when it gets interrupted. Again, an uninterruptible system working for people. It reduces the consumption of diesel, Mr. Speaker. I am not sure where there's a problem here. It sounds too good to be true. But it's real, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this is proven technology, Mr. Speaker, and this potential investment will save tragedy as well as massive amounts of stress for Northerners who worry about power. Mr. Speaker, at the same time, as pointed out just moments ago, the diesel system could be turning off which reduces noise pollution in the evening in some communities. Mr. Speaker, this will give folks a much-needed night's rest.

Mr. Speaker, people are dreaming of the future, but the truth is the future is here. Mr. Speaker, this smart technology has been in effect for decades, and now we could be doing it here. Wait a minute, Mr. Speaker, we are doing it here.

Mr. Speaker, the project moving into Fort Simpson, your community, is bringing this technology to life. I say now let's bring it to Yellowknife where we need it. Because when the power goes out, there is no plan B, Mr. Speaker, other than hope, and as we said yesterday, we can't eat or spend hope. Mr. Speaker, on our biggest investments, we can't put them at risk, and we can't count on luck. In the North, energy security is public safety. Last week was yet another warning that if the outage had lasted 14 hours instead of four hours, we'd be discussing a disaster, Mr. Speaker, not an inconvenience.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, Clean Design provides intelligent energy management. It helps the system to ensure the faults are smoothing out and, Mr. Speaker, it demonstrates a reliable power in places like Fort Simpson, and I hope in Yellowknife, will be there for Northerners at the greatest risk and when we have the greatest need. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Yellowknife Centre. Members' statements. Returns to oral questions. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Replies to the budget address, day 5 of 7. Acknowledgements. Oral questions. Member from Range Lake.

Oral Questions

QUESTION 993-20(1): SUPPORTED LIVING SERVICES

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I've been contacted by families that are affected by the lack of action on support to persons with disabilities. So I'd like to ask the Minister of Health and Social Services, the supportive living review has only, as I've mentioned in my statement, had a handful of its 32 recommendations implemented. When will the Minister get around to completing the implementation of this very important report? Thank you.

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

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I believe that the supportive living review, the ones that were -- the actions that have been implemented currently within the funds that the health authority and the department has; however, a large portion of the recommendations are tied to significant costs. And so what we're doing at the department right now with NTHSSA is working through that with our partners. We're also establishing -- there's a review going on currently with the amount of residents that are living out of the territory and what the needs would be in bringing them back into the territory. So within that area, there's also the -- it is flagged, and it's one of the top priority areas under the health sustainability unit that is doing a review on this. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's always disappointing when we make recommendations that we can't afford because we should be just doing it. That should be with our top priority when we make them because why make them otherwise.

Mr. Speaker, what policy or formal mechanism exists to ensure individualized accommodation and access is ensured for persons with disabilities across departments and programs, so not just with health and social services but across the entire government. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, when clients come into the health system, the system works with individual, whatever the -- if there's disabilities, if there's health issues, if there's other areas, then they support them within their system and then there are ways that they interact with other systems. However with many adult placements, we do have an adult placement worker and that

can help with navigating, you know, what systems are available to the family in the territory. There is also the NWT disability that we fund that helps navigate families to different areas of support. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So what this all reveals is there's not a single coordinated pathway for someone -- for an adult experiencing these difficulties to access government. There's no one-stop shop that they can go and receive that support if they're having trouble accessing that support. So will the Minister commit to establishing that coordinated support, so it's very easy for people to get the help they need, and also attach service standards for it so there are clear measures that kick in if someone has not received the help they need within a timely manner, not received it at all, or is struggling. Because we can't leave these people, you know, quite frankly, you know, banging their heads against the wall trying to get help that they desperately need. So will the Minister establish that centralized coordinated service pathway with clear measurements for service standards. Thank you.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, under the supportive living review, I am going to be waiting for the health sustainability unit. There will be recommendations coming from that and when I do have that, I will, you know, bring those to my colleagues, and we will also be working with the Regular Members on some of those recommendations that come back. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 994-20(1): HEALTHCARE EXPERIENCES FOR NWT PATIENTS

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, can the health Minister please tell me how the methodology and the survey questions for the 2025 Patient Experience Questionnaire and previous questionnaires, as I understand as it tracks the same metrics over time, were selected. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Great Slave. Minister for Health and Social Services.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I don't have that level of detail. Thank you.

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, what work is contemplated for a Yellowknife patient journey and will it review patient experiences with quality of care over time and multiple interventions from intake appointment to diagnosis to referrals, results, and treatments? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you. What I've directed the NTHSSA to do is to do the mapping, and I think currently right now, that's what they're doing, is looking at what they're going to be monitoring and bringing all of the concerns and the complaints that have come through my offices, BFs, the things that have come through the Office of Client Experience, and then working within the staff to try and navigate. This is the same thing as they did with the Deh Cho journey. They heard from the residents. They heard from the staff. And then they -- part of that was following through different areas with the patient through the mapping -- I meant through accessing the primary care clinics. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am sure committee will look forward to that scoping and work together with the Minister. Mr. Speaker, will the proposed medical travel case management initiative with the three proposed positions focus solely -- their work solely on identifying cost savings, or will these positions also be looking for trends in patient experience and suggest improvements? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the case management pilot that is proposed is -- what the goals of this would be to real time case management to ensure medical travel is necessary and that virtual options are considered, redirecting patients to in territory service when it's clinically appropriate, developing best practice at reduced travel costs, and help patients navigate the system, improving patient experience by reducing unnecessary travel, and when travel is needed it would also ensure appointments are scheduled in a way that supports patient and avoids preventable delays. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 995-20(1):
MUNICIPAL LAND TRANSFER POLICIES

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in speaking to my friends and contemporaries at city hall, they are telling me about the challenges. They still don't have any land, and there seems to be a land grid lock. And they often ask me, is there a policy with ECC to not transfer land, and I'd like to get that clarified, because the city wants to maximize its tax base with opportunities.

So, Mr. Speaker, with the Minister of ECC, I'd like to clarify, is there any type of policy that obstructs transfer of land that has been identified for their needs? Thank you.

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

HON. JAY MACDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, no, there is not.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, when an application comes in, it should have sort of a -- we'll call it a target time. In other words, this application must be fulfilled within 90 days. Mr. Speaker, I believe the Minister agreed to that earlier in this Assembly. Mr. Speaker, is that policy being implemented that upon an application received in good order, it will be processed within 90 days? Thank you.

HON. JAY MACDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the process through which a land application goes, once it becomes into the system, it has multiple steps. Not all of the steps are within the control of the department. So there's consultation that's involved. There's documentation, the moving into the legal realm. There's reviews by counsel on both sides, either for the department or for the purchaser of the land. So many of these components do not have specific timelines associated with them however we do make every effort to move the land applications through as quickly as possible. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. HAWKINS: Mr. Speaker, if I was in the city administration, I go to the cupboard and I open it up, the cupboard of land is bare, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, if they ask for too much, they say, oh, well you don't need that land, so no, we deny it. So, Mr. Speaker, what is the department of ECC planning to transfer this spring to the City of Yellowknife to ensure that

they can keep the opportunities of maximized tax base and a growing economy here in Yellowknife?

HON. JAY MACDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, recently, the department signed a memorandum of collaboration to work with the City of Yellowknife, and we have been working together on many files to transfer land within the city. Currently, there are eight files in process, two of -- six of which are currently in consultation and two of which have moved to the next level. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 996-20(1):
NON-INSURED HEALTH BENEFITS

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Following up on my Member's statement around the shortfall between the NIHB program and what GNWT's paying, my questions are for the Minister of Health and Social Services. Could she provide the latest cost -- what it's cost our government to cover the shortfall from NIHB. Thank you.

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

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I believe the shortfall for 2023-2024 was \$7 million, and the shortfall for 2024-2025 was \$13 million. However, I'd just like to add that these two years, we were provided the first time ever a supplementary additional payment on top of what they normally give us, which was a total of \$25 million for each year. And previous years before this, as long as we've been administering NIHB, they've never been -- they've never given us that money. So the years before, we could probably calculate \$20 million, \$25 million on average, that we've been overspending. And with the cost of inflation, it's only going up. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you for that. And obviously the concerns I brought up in my statement were certainly verified by the cost it's costing us.

To better alleviate some of the time zone challenges and certainly better communicate with departments and residents, has there been any consultation with NIHB regarding moving the NIHB office to Yellowknife where it should be to be in our time zone and for it to be able to have advocacy here as we know we are a contractor, not advocates, Mr. Speaker.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I know that within Indigenous governments and the GNWT over the years, you know, we work closely with the northern region district. However, the NIHB, like, program is housed for not just with us, with Nunavut as well, in Ottawa. And due to the fact that our two territories administer the program, they provide the Indigenous governments with navigators, like so there's NIHB navigator, I think at least within Inuvialuit, and then there's an NIHB navigator with Dene Nation. And that's what they've committed to be supporting residents in the Northwest Territories. However, there hasn't been any question of having an office here because GNWT administers the program. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I appreciate that. I just think how good it will be to have that office right next to the medical travel office here in Yellowknife, would make way more sense. Having said that, I know the Minister has been working with ISC, working on a new agreement. Can the Minister please provide when she would anticipate that the new agreement will be finalized. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there's ongoing conversations between my department and Indigenous Service Canada. You know, we need to have an agreement before March 31st as our agreement did expire last March 31st. So that's the work that we're working on right now. And the important piece to understand is that when the new government was -- when they prorogued and then the new government was elected, they didn't resume conversations on a lot of this until after the budget. So we've been in mad meetings with ISC trying to make sure that this agreement is what we need for the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 997-20(1):
RELIABLE ENERGY IN FOR THE NORTH
SLAVE REGION

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So my questions are for the Minister of Strategic Infrastructure, Energy, and Supply Chains, or if I have that wrong it's something along those lines.

In my Member's statement, I referenced a backgrounder that's available online produced by NTPC. It's not dated. But it's a list of ideas and possible strategies to respond to energy challenges; in that case, specifically around low water levels. And so one of those ideas -- my question for the Minister is, first, has NTPC pursued the idea of installing a 10-megawatt battery at Jackfish that could store up to 15 minutes of reserve energy and thereby eliminate most of our power outages in the North Slave grid. 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, if we're all talking about the same backgrounder, and it would appear from the list read that we are, this backgrounder dates back to 2015, which would be the last time that we were in a low water cycle as we were a couple of years ago when Yellowknife ended up on diesel here in 2023-2024 roughly. So back in 2015, this backgrounder was developed. I can certainly speak to the extent that I am able, that there was some consideration back then given to it. I obviously wasn't here at Cabinet, and the board has certainly changed over somewhat significantly, particularly in the last few months on that. So at this point, Mr. Speaker, it makes it a bit difficult to say whether or not -- or to speak for what decisions might have been made by the Cabinet at the time or by the Assembly at the time. I certainly can say, Mr. Speaker, that looking at battery storage does continue to be something that NTPC and strategic infrastructure are doing with respect to both the integrated systems planning work that's underway for the whole of the territory as well as for the North Slave resiliency study that we are expecting out this spring. Thank you.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So I can appreciate that some of these ideas may have come a while ago but still may be relevant, and so I am wondering if the Minister has any information about whether the idea is being pursued of installing modular units at Jackfish plant. At the time it was referenced that they could be up to 5.75 total megawatts, and the idea was to increase capacity and improve efficiency and reliability. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, I can confirm that NTPC did install modular units at Jackfish to increase the capacity. There were installations completed back in 2018 and 2019, and there's also a new 4.4 -- I don't know the capacity of those two, but

there is a 4.4-megawatt generator also at Jackfish plant. It does remain, Mr. Speaker, that the system is still reliant on these -- on this single generation facility and so, again, that doesn't necessarily answer all of the challenges we have within the lack of a wider grid or redundancy in the grid but that element was taken care of. 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. So that's good news. And so finally, I mean, ideas are raised from time to time, especially with our lowest water years, which we didn't necessarily have last year, but of the need to increase energy generation capacity -- yeah, so has the Minister -- or is the Minister aware of whether NTPC has actually been pursuing ideas to increase energy generation capacity within the Snare system such as increasing the capacity of the Bluefish reservoir and wind and solar potential? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Yes, indeed, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, there's a number of efforts underway, not only -- not only within the Snare but across the Northwest Territories in terms of micro hydro capacity in some smaller communities that would be unlikely to ever find themselves on our existing hydro grids, as well as with the Tlicho government and opportunities within the Tlicho region near Whati. So that is a project that's also being looked at, as well as to increase the transition -- or transmission capacity to some of the communities who would be on the grid. So in order to also, again, just to be able to provide some more communities with power. But so yes, the short answer is yes. There's also efforts being undertaken, I understand, to examine wind capacity here closer to Yellowknife, solar capacity. And with that, Mr. Speaker, we do have the experience of battery systems in both Colville Lake and in Inuvik, which would be then necessary to support a smoothing out of the intermittent power that would be generated by those systems. There is not one solution here, Mr. Speaker, and I am happy to receive further questions on it, but we will continue to look for whatever opportunities there are. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 998-20(1):
ON-THE-LAND RECOVERY
PROGRAMMING

MRS. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Minister of Health -- responsible for Health and Social Services. Can the Minister explain what steps the department is taking to expand on-the-land programming and ensure that these opportunities are available consistently throughout the year. 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, the department administers two funds designed to support the delivery of community-based mental wellness and addiction recovery program, and the suicide prevention program. So these funds are application-based for Indigenous governments, Indigenous communities, NGOs, to apply to provide programming. And through the program that they provide, this is part of the work that was done with the Council of Leaders that the -- we don't -- they decide how they spend those monies within their community and on the land or however they choose to provide those programs in their community. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MRS. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We know that elders play a critical role in guiding people through healing, cultural learning, and reconnection. Can the Minister outline how the department is supporting elders' participation in on-the-land programs, including proper compensation, coordination, and recognition of their knowledge. Thank you.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned, Indigenous governments and Indigenous organizations determine their own priorities and programming. They engage with elders and other community knowledge holders as they see fit, and the fund allows for communities to compensate elders for their service. We, you know -- we've heard from Indigenous leaders that they want to be doing these types of programs themselves in the communities and that, you know -- so we're just providing the funding to them to allow them to do this. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MRS. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, communities often tell us that short-term or uncertain funding makes it difficult to design consistent impactful on-the-land programs. Will the Minister commit to establishing longer term predictable funding

arrangements so that communities can plan, deliver, and sustain on-the-land healing programs for individuals at risk of substance use? Thank you.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the mental wellness and recovery fund, we have many groups. I believe the Deh Cho also are in a multi-year funding Access This funding and have a multi-year agreement. Many of our Indigenous groups do have multi-year agreements as that fund is eligible for multi-year agreements. The suicide prevention fund, however, is a smaller amount, and so, you know, communities, based on their need, they may come forward if they've had different scenarios. So that one is an annual application. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 999-20(1):
TLICHO ADMINISTRATIVE REGION

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, would the Minister agree that establishing a Tlicho administrative region would improve transparency by allowing GNWT to track and report housing, health, and education investments, specifically for Tlicho communities, rather than only at the territorial level? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Tu Nedhe-Willideh. I believe it's gone to Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And Mr. Speaker, not necessarily. The challenge that we have, some years ago, before I was in government, there were more regions -- or sorry, more specific services offered specific to the Tlicho region with some reporting, but it wasn't necessarily capturing services that would be, for example, funding that gets issued to district education authorities or funding for services that cover multiple communities or services across highway regions for instance. So it -- it's going to be very difficult to fully capture everything that is happening within a particular region.

Now, that said, Mr. Speaker, there is a working group that was established after bilateral meetings with the Tlicho government to try to figure out a better way to provide that kind of information, to identify where there are gaps. And I understand that the attempt to get that back underway has already begun. Thank you.

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Yeah, I was looking for a different answer; I was hoping

that she would say yes. But does the Minister recognize that a dedicated administrative region could enhance efficiency by reducing duplication in service delivery and ensuring resources are better in line with the unique needs of Tlicho communities? Thank you.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, again, there's 11 departments, multiple different types of services. There's Tlicho, TCSA already, and district education authority services. So there already are some services that are delivered directly, then there are other services that go through the North Slave regional office. And the effort, as I understand, of having a working group set up with the Tlicho government is to ensure exactly that we do not have duplication between our governments or between what's happening in the region and in headquarters functions. So that work does need to get done. That does need to happen so that we can ensure that there's seamless provision of service, not duplication, and clarity so that if there are gaps and where there are gaps, that they get filled. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Final supplementary. Member from Monfwi.

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Tlicho do not want feasibility studies. With that in mind, will the Minister commit to establishing a potential Tlicho administrative region to make it easier for government to monitor progress and respond quickly to local priorities. Thank you.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Mr. Speaker, again, there's some of the groups -- the housing corporation may well be able to more quickly move to set up an office there. That does not necessarily make it an administrative region. ITI may have a superintendent. That does not necessarily make it an administrative region. There are some government services -- TCSA already -- where does that fit into an administrative region? Which departments need to establish new positions? Which departments could move positions? It is not as simple as simply saying there is a new region, and everything is sorted. It is more complicated than that. I do want to work with the Member. I want to say that this is a large region, a large population, and we want to do this in a way that is respectful of the Tlicho government as well. So the first step was to meet with them to figure out what services are being provided, what could be provided better, and where can we streamline those services. That work was underway. I understood it was paused, and I am committed to seeing it get back going. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 1000-20(1):
ACCESS TO ADDICTIONS TREATMENT,
RECOVERY AND AFTERCARE

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the health Minister.

What is the Minister's rationale for denying funding to Northerners who have completed treatment and are transitioning into essential aftercare and sober living programs outside the territory when existing programs are extremely limited and at capacity here in the North? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the facility-based addiction program was created to be able to provide that out of territory initial treatment program; however, every person that has to leave the territory works with a caseworker, whether the caseworker is within -- some of them are embedded with Indigenous governments, some of them are embedded into Indigenous organizations, and some of them are our own GNWT staff. Those case managers work with the client on their treatment journey, and the journey on the return is part of that work that they do before they leave. And so a lot of times when people attend these out of territory programs, there are -- and every program in the south, there's all types of different programs that -- you know, and what we're trying to do right now is we're creating the program in the territory, which is the THARP, the transitional housing and aftercare recovery program, and that is an investment this government has put in to that. However, I know when I speak to residents and my own constituents on the aftercare piece, it does -- a lot of it does -- it's kind of like a whole of government. Many of our residents leave the territory when they're in active addiction and when they -- you know, when they're in an active addiction, they may be homeless. And so the big piece is working together with my counterparts on the plan on that goal of when they're coming back because that's what we've heard many times is that is the issue. The payment piece around that, we are in a -- with the health sustainability is reviewing this part, so we're waiting on that because we overspend every year about \$5 million just on this program alone as it is. Thank you.

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the spirit of upholding treaties, Article 24 of UNDRIP on the rights of Indigenous people which affirms the rights to the highest standards without discrimination, also in line with Canada Health Act, my question -- yeah, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Will the Minister commit today to funding out of territory aftercare services for our people who need help? Thank you.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Mr. Speaker, at this time, as I mentioned, the facility-based addiction treatment, that policy, that funding pot, is under current review, and recommendations will be back soon from the health sustainability unit. When they get those back, we will work with my colleagues and, you know, we'll have conversations with Members on the other side of the House with what those recommendations are. However, we do have aftercare, mental health counselling. There's virtual aspects when people are coming back into the territory. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Minister of Health and Social Services. Final supplementary. Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

MR. EDJERICON: Yeah, thank you, Mr. Speaker; I am trying to speak slow.

What concrete steps is the Minister taking to ensure that by the end of her term a growing network of Indigenous-led, trauma-informed addiction treatment, healing aftercare, and sober living services is established across the North, not only in Yellowknife but in small communities? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this topic is at the core of why we created the working group through the Council of Leaders as all of the leaders throughout the territory want all of us to work together to find a solution. And so through that work, you know, there's partnerships with housing that we need to be -- as health is only one piece of that aftercare, it's -- you know, it's coming back into a system. And so what we are doing is -- right now is we've invested, just this government, into the transitional housing that is for people coming back and having supportive housing living. Once that -- the pilot and has been assessed, then we can come back to this government to continue to look at opening other areas in other parts of the territory. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Before we go any further I'd like to recognize Sheila Bassett-Kellett, former deputy minister,

city manager, now our equal pay Commissioner. Welcome to your Assembly.

Oral questions. Member from Range Lake.

QUESTION 1001-20(1):
EXPANSION OF SUPPORTED LIVING
MODEL

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this government must recognize the caregiver burden for families for adults who are experiencing disabilities is a systemic issue. Will the Minister of Health and Social Services expand the supported living model to private homes, opening access to supports, respite, and paid caregiver resources that are currently limited to designated providers only? Thank you.

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

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, and I appreciate, you know, the advocacy that -- not just this MLA but there are other MLAs that have come, and it makes the work that we're doing move. And I think that's the thing, is under the health sustainability unit once we have those recommendations, those will be able to -- that working -- their unit is working in partnership with the health authority, the department, so that we have proper -- we'll know what it's going to cost us and those recommendations to be able to bring forward to, you know, provide that level of -- like, the care to the residents in the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. TESTART: We got to get rid of these lakes, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I mean, the people who deserve the credit are the people who are advocating to us, right. They're the ones who are going through this, and they're the ones who are identifying the gaps.

Mr. Speaker, she's got 33 recommendations to look at. Now we're waiting for more recommendations. It just seems like we're getting into endless amounts of waiting and waiting and waiting. When will we see some real timelines and real results that people can look at so they can have some certainty that this problem is going to be resolved? Thank you.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Before -- in case, you know, the public doesn't understand how we have to approve money to spend on programs and services, so we have the recommendations, we will have to bring those, you know, through a process, through our business planning process, to be able to allocate funds to the recommendations.

And, however, we do also know that within our health system, we've been having deficits for year after year after year, so we have to look. And what we're doing right now is looking at where our money is being spent and how our money is being spent, especially in this area, and what can we do to make improvements. And so as that unit doesn't sit under me, I am -- you know, I am -- I am obligated to be waiting for those recommendations so then I can move forward with the business planning process. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the final report was issued four years ago, so this is not like this came out yesterday and I am asking the Minister to hurry up. Will the Minister either implement these recommendations within the next -- within the next business plan or admit to the public that they're just not going to get done? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I became the Minister, there was no -- what was able to be implemented which was -- could be funded from within. There was no new money that came with the recommendations, the recommendations, the report that came forward. So that's -- a lot of times, you know, within many of our departments, they come back with all the things that we need to fix, but it comes with huge amounts of money. We only have through our business processes small amounts of money, and as you see in this budget, we were able to allocate new things or improve things to certain areas that are high pressure, and that's the -- that's what will happen when we get these -- the health sustainability unit recommendations as well. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 1002-20(1):
SPEECH AND LANGUAGE PATHOLOGY
SERVICES

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Minister of health only because they're great questions, and I look forward to her answer.

Mr. Speaker, many parents will tell me that they're concerned that they need the speech and language pathology services, and they're worried about positions not filled and their loved

ones, their children, not being seen. And, of course, Mr. Speaker, the last point is they're worried this government is more interested in servicing the other regions in Canada, Nunavut, over our children and our loved ones, Mr. Speaker. So let's get it on the record. How many positions do we have that are specifically designated for speech-language and pathology and how many of them are actually filled currently? Thank you.

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

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I do not know the actuals, but I do -- I don't have them at my desk here. But I do know that we do have vacancies, and we've had chronic vacancies throughout the territory in these positions. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Many parents will say they're worried other regions are more important than their children in this region, Mr. Speaker. I hope that isn't the case.

Mr. Speaker, my next question is built around service response time.

Mr. Speaker, when someone puts in an application and gets the support measures in place saying this child needs help, is there a service standard that we are tied to in some type of legal or regulatory framework that says in other words this child must be seen within 30 days, 60 days, 90 days, etcetera? Thank you.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, within the health and social services, because of the chronic shortages, what's happening is that there -- just like in an emergency room, every referral that comes in is triaged and those that have -- like, within the speech, you know, if there's swallowing issues, if there's -- you know, type of issues that are higher triage than those ones will be seen sooner. But I would like to say that this is something that the Minister of ECE and myself are working on because it's been raised, and we -- we're currently working on a solution how to utilize, you know, both of the funding that we get and both of our -- and our budgets for supporting children, especially children in -- school-aged children. So that information, we're still waiting on that from our department so that we can have a plan to move forward with it. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. HAWKINS: Mr. Speaker, the formative years of a young person are so critical to get positive response. It may not cure them fully, but yet it changes the dignity and the life that they may be able to fulfill in a positive way.

Mr. Speaker, does the department in any way assess looking back on overall a continuum over the last, say, 5 to 10 years on their types of response and assessment times? In other words, have they been able to say they've serviced 90 percent of the young people within six months, that type of assessment. Have they or are they able to do that type of assessment to show they're responding to the needs of Northerners?

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Mr. Speaker, I don't have that level of detail here today. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 1003-20(1):
INTERNATIONAL HIRING FOR
HEALTHCARE

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there is a new grassroots volunteered-based community called Canadian Health Care Infusion looking to -- seeking to help US healthcare workers relocate to Canada and work here. Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Minister of Finance, since she's responsible for health care recruitment.

Has the Minister's staff had any outreach from NWT healthcare workers or volunteers seeking to do a similar chapter here in the NWT, one from -- it just opened in the Yukon today, I believe. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Not to my knowledge, Mr. Speaker. But I would be more than happy to put that on the radar of the health recruitment unit. They have been very busy, have seen a lot of success, have met their targets of recruitment, and if this is an opportunity to see more recruitment then we will certainly work with perhaps a non-profit or a non-government entity to see if there's a chapter that could be opened here. Thank you.

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That's nice to hear. And I realize the Minister's not responsible for our nomination program and, indeed, the GNWT is not responsible for immigration. Can the Minister explain to me what barriers might exist for international hires and what work we're doing to reduce any hoops

and barriers that may exist. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the registration of nurses is managed by CAN, not by the GNWT. So I don't know if I'd describe it as a barrier, Mr. Speaker, but certainly would want to ensure that we work closely with them. They do have a process for internationally educated nurses, and it would be that process that anyone obviously internationally trained would have to go through. Again, we certainly have looked at some opportunities that the GNWT could find ways to support folks who are foreign trained to make their way through that system, and I am happy to take that back and to see where we are at on some of those initiatives. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 1004-20(1):
TRANSITIONAL HOUSING FOR TU NEDHE-
WILLIDEH RESIDENTS

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of health. I just want to briefly talk about the youth in my community that really need help. Early in her statement, she was talking about transitional housing. I am hoping that we are able to get this off the ground before her term ends and so that we have a place -- when people come back from treatment from the south, they have a place to go to. So maybe if we -- if I could maybe -- give me an update on where we could get that done in the next 18 months. Thank you.

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

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the first one opened here in Yellowknife and through their case workers as they come back, you know, if that is -- that is an option. It is a territorial initiative so it's not just for -- so if there's people coming back from treatment and they need to stabilize with a place to stay and some support, their caseworker could work with the transitional housing in Yellowknife that's currently open while they're trying to make arrangements to return back to their home community. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Also, as people come back from their treatment program and not just able to come here, to Yellowknife for the program, they go back home, is there additional funding we could find to help with Indigenous governments to do

on-the-land program, maybe a top off or whatever you could do to help. Thank you.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would encourage the Member's communities to look at the mental wellness and recovery fund right now. That is open for applications to start April 1st, and it can be -- you know, the community can allocate up to \$209,000 a year, and they can use that to develop or support aftercare program within their community. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. EDJERICON: Okay, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I guess my final question would be is that now that we have case workers, do we have one in the three -- or sorry, my four communities in Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh riding? Thank you.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I don't have that information. I can -- what I can provide is I can commit to finding out -- I believe it's the counsellor that goes in. But working with Indigenous governments over these last couple of years, there has been established positions within Indigenous governments so I would have to get back to the Member as to the actual communities and who to contact in those communities for case management. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 1005-20(1):
VIRTUAL HEALTHCARE

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to ask next questions to the Minister of Health and Social Services around virtual care. So I understand that for several years, small community health centres and hospitals have had technology to conduct virtual appointments, essentially Zoom for health care and big screens for video conferences, and there's also work happening here and there to test out specific new virtual tools. So my first question is around the recent purchase of virtual stethoscopes and otoscopes for use by community health workers in the health cabins.

What was the rationale for deciding that those particular pieces of equipment were the top priority for expanding virtual care? For example, are they proven to improve diagnoses or reduce the need of medical travel, etcetera. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, our community health workers that work in our smallest communities, they aren't medically trained; therefore, the digital stethoscopes and otoscopes were chosen because they are simple to use, and these tools are a standard for basic primary care assessment and so the nurse that they're -- that will be hearing and seeing from the other end virtually is what they would need to be able to -- like, you know, to be able to diagnose what's going on with the patient or to help better virtually diagnose. And as I said that they're also working with -- yes, so those are the first kind of tools that we -- they're implemented now, just to get those community health workers used to it and used to working virtually right now. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So the Minister spoke about primary care, but what virtual tools are available for community health workers if they have someone with an acute care issue, so if they have a patient in their trauma room with some sort of emergency issue. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the community health workers are also trained in first aid. They have been trained now in administering oxygen. They are trained in the use of the AED. Further emergency care, health care in cabins is -- required is coordinated with the community health nurse or the nurse practitioner that's either in the community or in another community at the time. The decisions for emergency care are made by the regional health centres and may include parent movement, so -- but this -- these virtual tools actually help a nurse that can visualize and then using those virtual other tools will be able to -- you know, to be able to give recommendations for that health care worker when there's oxygen needed or whether, you know, other measures that they're trained now to do to implement while they're awaiting for maybe emergency evacuation. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to know, finally, overall what is the plan for developing a virtual care strategy to ensure that instead of sort of just here and there, we're introducing virtual tools in a methodical way

based on what the highest priority needs are. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As of right now, I believe because we are doing the pilot in the smallest of our communities, there isn't a standalone virtual care strategy. There's multiple different pilots that are going on in regards to virtual care, but they -- the virtual care projects all go through an information system intake process to keep technology changes coordinated and intentional. Work is already underway to improving existing virtual tools like the Zoom and the health care as we -- when we did tour, we know that there are changes needed in some of our regions. And the Alscribe pilot is another example of trying new tools to improve patient experience and reduce burnout, and this is something that we heard from our physicians. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 1006-20(1):
HEALTHCARE SUSTAINABILITY UNIT
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SUPPORTED
LIVING SERVICES

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So earlier I asked about implementing the final report of the supported living review. The Minister says there's no money, the Minister's waiting for the health care sustainability unit. So let's ask the Minister responsible for the health care sustainability unit. Can the Premier tell me when will the health care sustainability unit release its recommendations to implement the outstanding recommendations in the supported living review final report. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Range Lake. Mr. Premier.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So I think the question is when will the healthcare system sustainability unit release a report on supported living -- oh okay, I see what the Member's getting at.

So that's not something that's a -- you know, going to be a GNWT document that we table in the House and release. What that is, it's advice for Cabinet. It's looking at the system and looking at the functions, the costs, all those types of things, and it's going to come to Cabinet with recommendations as we look at how we're going to adjust our healthcare system, what we're going to do going forward, and I expect that I will have that bit of

information in the near future. It's one of the first ones that is being completed. So thank you.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, I am glad the Premier's up to speed but near future isn't precise enough for the constituents who are raising these concerns. Can we get more clarity on when we can expect the resources to flow to implement these outstanding recommendations. It's the government's own report, Mr. Speaker, and I am not asking for a wish list here. This is what they committed to set out to do. So when is the near future under the Premier's assessment? Thank you.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think there's some confusion here. There's a health and social services report. I am the Minister of the -- that was responsible for the health care systems sustainability unit. It is not responsible for that report. It does look at all of the different reports that the government has generated and all of the different information that it can gather to put together its recommendations, but I am not going to be responsible for implementing recommendations in a report by the department of health. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Premier. Final supplementary. Member from Range Lake.

MR. TESTART: Thank you. Well, I am not going to wind back Hansard, Mr. Speaker, but essentially the problem we find ourselves in is the Minister of health is saying we can't implement those recommendations until we get the advice of the sustainability unit on how we're going to fund it. So what I am asking is when is the advice -- it's not specific to this report, but I guess it's general to the entire system. But when is that advice coming? The Premier said near future. When is near future? Is it tomorrow? Is it next week? Is it the month after? When is near future? Thank you.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. All of those things that the Member mentioned are -- would be considered near future. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 1007-20(1):
ACCESS TO FOR SPEECH AND
LANGUAGE PATHOLOGY SERVICES

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I certainly hope the Minister of health will provide something to my last answer -- to the question I provided -- sorry, in her last answer because I wish to come back on the same general topic

and with respect to speech and language pathology.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister was very clear that we don't have enough staff, the staff shortage. I understand that; I am a realist. But that said, when you have family members who are in trouble and need supports, can the Minister allow or support families who choose to get services in speech and language pathology locally or through Alberta and bill back to the government because we're clearly short of staff to meet that need. Thank you.

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

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, at this time what we are doing is we are taking -- anybody who needs those services, they'll go through the referral process. And I know that there are some wait times. I believe that I can share those wait times with the Members on the different areas. But like I mentioned, that right now what we are focused on is ensuring that the money that we have allocated in the budget where there's positions and they are not being filled, myself and the Minister Cleveland are working on a plan, you know, that is going to be able to fill that need. And I believe that we're hoping to have something in front of us to be able to look at, you know, before -- I believe before June this year. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. HAWKINS: Mr. Speaker, I will take whatever the Minister can provide, including that analysis I was asking about. Mr. Speaker, that said, Mr. Speaker, what is the department's strategy if there are no people to provide this particular service? Can the Minister broaden the particular support mechanism by allowing parents to access services privately, either locally or through Alberta? Thank you.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I said, that we do have those providers. They are triaged. They are in the territory. They are still providing services to families. The school also has services that they do provide to school-aged children and continue to do so. I know that -- and as I said that we are looking at ways to improve that through the work that we're doing together. But if there are families out there that -- you know, that need services, they just -- you know, they need to go through their practitioner. They can be referred, they can self-referral, and they can be triaged within our system. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the health system has young people timing out and not getting services and supports. Mr. Speaker, parents can only wait so long, and that's part of the issue, Mr. Speaker, the formative years of being lost.

So, Mr. Speaker, can the Minister address the time waiting -- time system by making sure that there's clear guidelines that young people are supported within a certain amount of time and if not, they can seek them in Alberta or privately. Thank you.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I will take that back to my department. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 1008-20(1):
FORT SIMPSON CLEAN DESIGN PILOT
PROJECT

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question will be to the Minister of strategic infrastructure, including the long name that comes after that. No one seems to be able to remember it.

Mr. Speaker, knowing that we're moving forward on the Clean Design initiative in Fort Simpson, which I think is a fantastic problem being involved and confronted with real tangible guaranteeable solutions, Mr. Speaker, does the Minister intend to expand this potential solution to other areas, such as Yellowknife and other large communities and regions, such as maybe Inuvik and Hay River. Thank you.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the big reason that there is a pilot running in the community of Fort Simpson is, in fact, to confirm whether or not the fairly significant infrastructure costs associated with this particular battery optimization system will be offset by savings in diesel fuel. If that is the case and if that can therefore offset those costs, then we may well see that this is an opportunity for us in other communities. Thank you.

MR. HAWKINS: That's quite a title, hey. Mr. Speaker, the question is, next is what is this

pilot initiative going to cost this government. Thank you.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we've structured the pilot process such that it won't bring costs on the ratepayers right now and that we're going to be -- that's exactly is, again, back to why it's a pilot. It's being run as a pilot in a way that if there's not enough savings to pay for it, then we would not be on the hook for anything extra, meaning that it's not going to be on the backs of ratepayers. Thank you.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my last question is really built around the cost. Is the Minister able to give us a sense of how much it's costing and where the money's coming from because it's -- if it's -- it's not free and it's not costing the ratepayers, it must be costing somewhere -- coming from somewhere, and as such we must have a general idea how much this is going to cost. Thank you.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, that is exactly some of the details that are still being worked out. I don't want to misspeak in that this is still a private company and they have a number of contracts elsewhere, so I don't want to speak out of turn. But, again, the point here was one where we would pilot this in a way that if there are sufficient cost savings and that can help offset those costs, and if there's not then this may be a pilot that doesn't go much farther. Again, the company's very confident in their technology, and that gives us the confidence to be able to move forward and hopefully then to see positive results. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister responsible for Strategic Infrastructure, Energy, and Supply Chains. Colleagues, our time for oral questions is up. Oral questions. Written questions. Member from Frame Lake.

Written Questions

WRITTEN QUESTION 31-20(1):
PRENATAL, PREGNANCY AND
POSTPARTUM COSTS

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, prenatal, birthing, and postpartum care represent essential health services, yet the costs associated with delivering these services in the Northwest Territories are not clearly understood.

My questions are for the Minister of Health and Social Services:

1. What is the average cost per appointment for prenatal care in the Northwest Territories?
2. What is the average total cost of prenatal care per person throughout a pregnancy, and what specific services or line items are included in this calculation?
3. What is the cost per day for a patient's admission to the hospital for birthing and postpartum care?
4. What is the average length of stay in hospital for birthing and postpartum care?
5. What is the average cost of postpartum visits per person following discharge from the hospital?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Tabling of Documents

TABLED DOCUMENT 462-20(1):
PLAIN LANGUAGE SUMMARY FOR BILL 40:
AN ACT TO AMEND THE VITAL STATISTICS
ACT

TABLED DOCUMENT 463-20(1):
STATEMENT OF CONSISTENCY FOR BILL
40: AN ACT TO AMEND THE VITAL
STATISTICS ACT

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following two documents: Plain Language Summary for Bill 40, An Act to Amend the Vital Statistics Act; and, the Statement of Consistency for Bill 40, An Act to Amend the Vital Statistics Act. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Health and Social Services. Tabling of documents. Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs and Minister responsible for WSCC.

TABLED DOCUMENT 464-20(1):
PLAIN LANGUAGE SUMMARY FOR BILL 41:
AN ACT TO AMEND THE REAL ESTATE
AGENTS' LICENSING ACT

TABLED DOCUMENT 465-20(1):
STATEMENT OF CONSISTENCY FOR BILL
41: AN ACT TO AMEND THE REAL ESTATE
AGENTS' LICENSING ACT

TABLED DOCUMENT 466-20(1):
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES AND
NUNAVUT WORKERS' COMPENSATION
APPEALS TRIBUNAL 2024 ANNUAL
REPORT

HON. VINCE MCKAY: Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following three documents: The Plain Language Summary for Bill 41, An Act to Amend the Real Estate Agents' Licensing Act; Statement of Consistency for Bill 41, An Act to Amend the Real Estate Agents' Licensing Act; and, the Northwest Territories and Nunavut Workers' Compensation Appeals Tribunal 2024 Annual Report. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs and Minister responsible for WSCC. Tabling of documents. Notices of motion. Motions. Notices of motion for the first reading of bills. First reading of bills. Second reading of bills. Minister of Health and Social Services.

Second Reading of Bills

BILL 40:
AN ACT TO AMEND THE VITAL STATISTICS
ACT,
CARRIED

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Mr. Speaker, I move, second by the honourable Member for Nunakput, that Bill 40, An Act to Amend the Vital Statistics Act, be read for the second time.

The proposed amendments to the Vital Statistics Act will improve servicing relating to birth registrations and certificates. The amended Act will reflect notions about gender and family structure that have changed since the Vital Statistics Act was last significantly amended in 2017. Amendments would allow 16 to 18-year-olds to change their gender on their birth certificate or allow for individuals to request removing the sex designation on their birth certificate and provide that up to four parents can be named on a birth registration.

The bill also establishes a new certificate for change of gender for persons not born in the Northwest Territories who are unable to change their gender in the jurisdictions where their birth was registered.

Amendments would also clarify the requirements for registration of home births and update the requirements relating to the completion of medical certificates of death.

The bill makes other changes to the Act that are procedural in nature.

The bill also amends the Change of Name Act to allow 16 to 18-year-olds to change their name and provide discretion to the registrar general and vital statistics to decline to publish a notice of change of name if the reason of the name relates to being transgender, nonbinary, gender diverse, 2-spirit Indigenous. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Health and Social Services. The motion is in order. To the principle of the bill.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. The question is shall Bill 40 be read for a second time. All those in favour? Opposed? All those abstaining? The motion is carried. Bill 40 has been read for a second time and is referred to standing committee of the Assembly for further consideration.

---Carried

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

BILL 41:
AN ACT TO AMEND THE REAL ESTATE
AGENTS' LICENSING ACT,
CARRIED

HON. VINCE MCKAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move, second by the honourable Member for Twin Lakes, that Bill 41, An Act to Amend the Real Estate Agents' Licensing Act, be read for the second time.

This bill modernizes licensing rules and introduces new professional categories to expand customer protection. This bill expands licensing to home inspectors, introducing a code of conduct, and requiring standardized forms.

The Real Estate Agents' Licensing Act will be renamed the Real Estate Professional Licensing Act to reflect the expanded scope. Modernizing this Act will strengthen consumer protection and improve regulations of the real estate industry.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. The motion is in order. To the principle of the bill.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? All those abstaining? The motion is carried. Bill 41 has

been read for a second time and is referred to the standing committee of the Assembly for further consideration.

---Carried

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

Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters

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

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, committee wishes to consider Tabled Document 448-20(1), 2026-2027 Main Estimates, the Department of Infrastructure. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

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

---SHORT RECESS

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

HON. VINCE MCKAY: Yes, I do, 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 his witnesses.

HON. VINCE MCKAY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. With me here to my left, your right, is deputy minister Cathy Maniego. And to my right, your left, Miranda Bass, director of corporate service.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Committee, we'll defer the department summary and review the estimates by activity summary, beginning with asset management starting on page 265, with information items on page 267 and 268. Are there any questions? No further questions, please -- oh, okay. Please turn to page 266.

I will go to the Member from Yellowknife North.

MS. MORGAN: Okay, thank you, Mr. Chair. It always takes us a moment to get our binders organized here. I just wanted to ask about fleet management. So that's the area that we see the largest increase here in the estimates. And I understand that we have a relatively new initiative around consolidating our fleet management, so I wonder if the Minister can explain what that's all about and what is causing such a large jump in our budget for that item this year. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. VINCE MCKAY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So this is a new initiative put forward to consolidate our fleet management which essentially entitles three new positions. We got fleet coordinators as part of that and all the other operating systems behind it, I guess, to operate the new fleet management for us. Thank you.

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

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So with these three new positions, can the Minister confirm whether they are indeterminate or are they for a set term, or is it for a period of time to accomplish something sort of discrete over a few years? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. VINCE MCKAY: Yeah, thank you, Mr. Chair. Like anything else that's new, I am sure there'll be a little bit of a rough start but they are indeterminate positions to start the program, get it running, and then we'll, you know, get the employees operational with the fleet management. Thank you.

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

MS. MORGAN: Okay, thank you, Mr. Chair. So my assumption would be that the hope is to

save money with this initiative by consolidating our fleet. So what cost savings do we expect to see and when might we expect to see them? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. VINCE McKAY: Yeah, thank you, Mr. Chair. So the goal is to save money and, you know, at the end of the day what we're trying to do is have a better management of our fleet and our operations and, you know, basically know where our fleet is, the age of the fleet, the maintenance of it, the required maintenance, the locations, and everything else. But it's also, you know, being able to check the lifecycles, making sure that we're utilizing our fleet in its proper means, and basically the type of equipment and everything like that. 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. So can the Minister commit to get back to us, then, with more information about any specifics on how much we might expect to save and timelines for those cost savings? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. VINCE McKAY: Yeah, thank you, Mr. Chair. We don't have the full details on obviously cost savings at the moment, but I will commit to coming back and reporting back to committee as we're going along. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MS. MORGAN: Okay. And, finally, can the Minister just confirm is part of the job of these three new positions to keep data and sort of issue reports on the kinds of cost savings and what difference it's making? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. VINCE McKAY: Yeah, thank you, Mr. Chair. So part of this is the whole picture of operating the fleet management. You know, so part of this is also installing programs to monitor our fleet, you know, usage of vehicles, wear and tear, location of vehicles. So this all relates to the whole big picture of fleet management. These positions will help coordinate all this and help operate the whole fleet management

program throughout the Northwest Territories. Thank you.

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

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

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

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Sorry, one second, I am just also getting myself together. There's a lot of things to scroll.

Under asset management, and more specifically the project management line item, there is between the 2025-2026 Mains and the 2025-2026 Revised Estimates, there was an exceedance in the budget by nearly \$2 million. Can the Minister speak to the increase in the spending and what specific projects required additional funds. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. VINCE McKAY: Yeah, thank you, Mr. Chair. I am just going to ask the deputy minister to answer that question. Thank you.

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

MS. CATHY MANIEGO: Thank you, Mr. Chair. We consolidated project management in the centralized unit. So it's moving those positions from the regional positions to a more centralized body to provide a consistent project management oversight. Thank you.

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

MS. REID: Okay, thank you. So I am not sure I understand that answer considering that the projection for these main estimates then goes back down \$2 million. Can the Minister or his staff explain what's going on. Thank you.

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

HON. VINCE McKAY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The Hay River harbour restoration sunsetted, and that's why we have that. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MS. REID: Yeah, thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Sorry, I am jumping between business plan and mains; I apologize.

I believe this is the section that deals with building standards considering design and technical services, is that correct?

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

HON. VINCE McKAY: Sure. I am just bouncing back and forth with you; sorry.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Did you want to repeat your question again?

MS. REID: I can. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just wanted to ask if asset management would be the appropriate activity to ask questions about building standards. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. VINCE McKAY: Sorry, I should have said yes, not sure.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Oh sorry, I am going to go to the deputy -- sorry, director.

Oh okay. I will go back to the Member from Great Slave, then.

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate it. Sorry to make the confusion.

Can the Minister please tell me whether the work that's being anticipated around the Building Standards Act if there are going to be additional cost pressures on smaller communities or if there would be -- if there's contemplation of exemption requests for increases to building standards in the legislative initiative. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. VINCE McKAY: Yeah, thank you, Mr. Chair. That's part of the planning that's going to be happening, is to make sure that there isn't added costs or pressures to communities and working with community governments and builders and stuff just to make sure that this is not going to add more costs out there. Thank you.

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

MS. REID: Thanks. Yeah, no. And I am just very interested in that because I see in Standing Committee on Government Operations an ongoing pressure and tension

around making sure that we are making building standards better, making buildings more accessible, but also considering the financial needs of smaller communities. So it's good to hear that particular answer. If the Minister wants to extrapolate any more, that's great. If not, I have another question. I will just go on to that question. It's more of a comment, Mr. Chair.

Under asset management under the facilities and properties line, there is quite a decrease of almost a million dollar reduction. Can the Minister explain what's behind the savings. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. VINCE McKAY: Thank you. I believe that's the decrease for amortization on GNWT assets.

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

MS. REID: Nothing more. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Is there any further questions from Members? Member from Monfwi.

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Okay. We are on page 266? Okay, project management. I want to know -- okay, what project are we talking about? So what does this represent? Because I know the project management for previous was revised so there was more money spent, and now we're back to the original budget. So what does this 2025 revised estimate represent? Thank you.

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

HON. VINCE McKAY: So the whole scale of project management, I guess, is the responsibility for projects identified in the GNWT capital plan on behalf of client departments, coordinates the deferred maintenance and capital asset, a retrofit fund in coordination with the asset management activity. Thank you.

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

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Okay, so thank you. Thank you. Thank you for that information. So what -- so I just want to ask the Minister how are these -- like, I represent Tlicho region so how much of this was allocated in Tlicho region. Thank you.

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

HON. VINCE McKAY: That, I don't have handy right now and would have to get you back that detail.

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

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Okay, thank you. Thank you for that information. I would like to get that info because, you know, I've said it many times that, you know, Tlicho region is growing and I see here with the compensation and benefits, there's a bit of slight increase. So if the Minister can tell me why there is a slight increase and which region is it benefiting from this, the compensation and benefits. Because it -- there is an increase from -- it's not loss but I mean, that's still, you know, from 2025-2026 to 2026-2027 fiscal year. Thank you.

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

HON. VINCE McKAY: Yeah, thank you, Mr. Chair. So this is due to the increase in the positions for fleet management, the compensation and benefits that relate to positions. And because of the three positions, that's what this increase entails. Thank you.

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

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Okay, thank you. Thank you for the information. Yes, well that's good to know because, you know, I've been asking too and I am not going to stop with that DMV. Like I said, you know, Tlicho region is growing and I know I did talk and ask the Minister regarding transferring, well, you know, some of the positions. Transferring and/or you create because you -- you know, like, I am sure the Minister, they have the authority to create employment. And with the mine closure, with the Diavik and with the Gahcho Kue, we do need more -- we're going to need more jobs to sustain our region. And I did ask that DMV before, you know, like at least transfer. Well, I did say two before, but I think I need more than two positions because we will need -- you know, the Tlicho region is growing. We do need a safety officer -- or what do you call -- highway patrol. We do need examiner. And we do need somebody to maintain to do administrative work. I know the Minister did not commit, but I would like to -- for the Minister to -- if the Minister can commit to creating -- to create -- you said we can create. That's what -- you know, as per my conversations with you before. So if the Minister can create -- we do have the facility to accommodate DMV. It's

on the main highway. People can access the service. The surrounding communities can access service from the DMV positions or transferring those positions to Tlicho region.

Creating three positions for Tlicho region, can the Minister commit -- can I ask for his commitment to work on it. But I know what he's going to say, you know, that they can't. But at this time we are, you know -- I am sure Tlicho is not going to stop, too, of -- we do -- eventually we will get our Tlicho region, administrative region. So can the Minister commit and/or work with the Tlicho government about these three positions. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Okay, I will go back to the Minister. And we're just a little bit further ahead of us on this page. But if the Minister could go ahead and respond. Thank you.

HON. VINCE McKAY: Yeah, thank you, Mr. Chair. Even though it's the wrong section, I will -- you know, the Member has been advocating for positions in the region and I appreciate that; however, these are skilled positions. They're not positions that are easily filled. So I know there's an interest of having those positions there, and like I said earlier to the Member, I am willing to work with the Member on, you know, trying to find a way to put positions in the community that can work there. And if this is one that can, then we can -- that's something we can look at but, you know, I can't commit to moving positions there. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Okay. Well, it's not a wrong position -- it's not -- I am not on the wrong section because here, program detail and expenditure category, compensations and benefits, there's transportation, and I am -- and this -- the position that I am asking about, it's part of the transportation. So I don't think I am in the wrong category or -- yeah, so. But, yeah, it would be nice. It would be -- you know, like, we do need more jobs in small communities, especially now with mine closing. I do feel for a lot of our community members with the mine closure because there's a lot of people that have mortgages. People have to live and eat. That's what I am trying to say. That's why I am telling the government that we need more jobs in small communities. We need a lot of jobs to be -- well, it would be nice to decentralize. I know my colleague agree with me over there. So, you know, we need more jobs going out to small communities, to the regions outside of capital. And especially there's going to be a lot of

people that's going to be impacted by the mine closure. And somehow we have to sustain our regions, and a lot of these jobs will benefit our regions. And as I've said, the Tlicho region is growing. We know there's going to be people moving back, especially with the mine closure. People are going to leave Yellowknife because they cannot afford to live in Yellowknife with the rent increase. Rent is increasing this year too. You know, for a two-bedroom apartment, it's going to be \$2,700. And there's no way anybody can survive on that, you know, with the high cost of living. And so that's why I am asking that we do need, you know -- I know we can benefit from the DMV's jobs situated in Tlicho region, so -- because compensation and benefits, that's -- what does that represent? That represents people year or human resources and program detail, transportation. And that's where majority of our people are employed. And there's nine positions in Tlicho region already and if we can add more to it, that'd be great, so -- and I am looking forward to working with the Minister on having -- create some of those positions, 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. I guess just more of a comment and, you know, I will take that as a comment. So the section that she's referring to is page 274 under programs and services, licensing and compliance, where it has the driver's motor vehicle section under and the positions for driver -- sorry, driver examiners. So that was what I was referring to, so. But comment's noted. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Okay, thank you. Is there any further questions? Okay, seeing none, I am going to continue.

Please turn to page 266, Infrastructure, asset management, \$21,839,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Moving on to corporate management, beginning on page 269, with information items on page 271 to 272. Are there any questions?

Okay, I see the Member from Yellowknife North.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So I wanted to ask about some of the items in the business plan that set some targets for apprenticeships. Let me just pull up my notes.

So my understanding is that overall for the department, there's a goal of 10 -- hiring 2 -- sorry, hiring 10 new apprentices, but it looks like there's only one new apprentice that's been hired. What has the Department of Infrastructure done to try to meet its goal of hiring 10 new apprentices? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. VINCE McKAY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So some of the issues that we also have just attracting apprenticeship programs is -- apprenticeship students, sorry -- are the interest for apprenticeships and then also people to host the apprentice in order to run under the program. But, you know, there's also the competition of having apprenticeships with the government. They might be working with somebody else. But there is competitions being advertised for apprenticeship programs now also for different areas. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MS. MORGAN: Okay, thanks, Mr. Chair. Is infrastructure, like in conversation with either other Ministers, like ECE Minister or community leadership, to try to sort of communicate and make sure people know that you have openings for apprentices and you're having trouble finding people to sort of brainstorm if there are people out there who, you know, want to find apprenticeships? I know we talk about this a lot as an overall goal for the Assembly, that it could be an important step to strengthening our workforce, and I know that we sometimes have trouble putting the actual pieces in place to make progress on this. But are infrastructure officials in active discussions with ECE, Aurora College, community leaders, to sort of troubleshoot and find ways to move forward with these goals? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. VINCE McKAY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So those discussions are always happening and the department's also met with ECE to identify potential students from the SNAP program. So there is ongoing meetings and opportunities out there. Like I said, some of the issues that you tend to run into with apprenticeship programs is having a trade person, a red seal ticketed person to work with that apprentice. 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. And I do note that there's also a goal in the business plan of hiring five SNAP students and so far, at least when this was printed, zero SNAP students have been hired by infrastructure. So that's also discouraging. But you say one of the challenges is finding a red seal to work under. But does Infrastructure, in fact, have those people that apprentices could be working under, or are you also challenged to find the red seal tradespeople to work for you as well? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. VINCE McKAY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. We have lots of those tradespeople; however, they also have a right whether to accept an apprenticeship student underneath them. So, you know, if there's interested employees out there that are watching and are interested in getting an apprentice, please let your manager know. But there's always that appetite to train new people in departments. Thank you.

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

MS. MORGAN: Okay. I will leave it there for now, Mr. Chair. But just wanted to keep highlighting this as something that we need to keep troubleshooting and trying to move forward on. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Okay, thank you for the comments there. I am going to go to the Member from Great Slave.

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Sort of pulling on the thread that my colleague from Monfwi was speaking about just earlier, in corporate management only two of the corporate management positions in infrastructure are outside of Yellowknife, and given that 73 percent of infrastructure staff are in regional offices, how does the Minister and his department ensure that regional needs and priorities are reflected in corporate decision-making given the concentration in Yellowknife? 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 start, and then I will just ask the deputy minister to elaborate a little more. But our goal, obviously, is to try to get these positions out to the communities or out to the regions. You know, we do have -- in Hay River, we have a couple positions that are -- as part of like MTS and stuff like that. So, you know, we're definitely trying. It's sometimes not always easy to attract

these positions, and it's not always easy just to move them. So maybe I will just get the deputy minister to elaborate a little more. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MS. CATHY MANIEGO: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So we have five regional superintendents that help us make those connections on a daily basis. We try to have those constant communication between anyone located in Yellowknife and the regional staff to make sure that we are sharing those ideas, having those conversations, and making sure that it is inclusive of everyone and all of the regional staff. There is positions in corporate management that are -- you know, skilled positions or they're ones where this is where we were able to find the right candidate. We do try to have as much support as we can in the regions to support delivery as we can. Thank you.

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

MS. REID: Yeah, thank you, Mr. Chair. And thank you to the Minister and staff for that. I do recognize that regional operations are run by superintendents, and those folks are very in touch with Yellowknife on a regular basis; however, I mean, I am curious, though, that, like, you know, if -- there was a very strong push in the 19th Assembly, I recognize, but I would hope that this work continues to move more regionally-based decision-making into the regions. And so is that something that the department continues to contemplate in its HR planning as it moves forward? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. VINCE McKAY: Yeah, thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes.

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

MS. REID: Okay, thank you. Nothing further. Thank you, Mr. Chair; I am good.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Okay, thank you. Okay. Is there any further questions? Okay, seeing none. I am going to continue on now to page 270.

Infrastructure, corporate management, \$13,498,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Moving on to programs and services, beginning on page 273 with information items on page 275. Are there any questions? No further questions. Please turn to page 274. Did I miss -- seeing none. Okay, page 274.

Infrastructure, programs and services, \$12,018,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Moving on to regional operations, beginning on page 276 with information items on page 278. Are there any questions?

Member from Yellowknife North.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I wanted to ask first, there is a significant jump in the cost of operating winter roads from \$7.765 million last year to \$12.5 million this year. So what is causing such a dramatic increase in maintenance of winter roads? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. VINCE McKAY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The majority of that is the -- I guess the result of contracted agreement for our winter road operations.

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

MS. MORGAN: Okay. Okay, so it sounds like a similar reason that we discussed during the supplementary estimates yesterday that this is going to be the increase going forward. So just to be clear, is this just an increase in the Tlicho winter road contract that's causing this entire increase? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. VINCE McKAY: Yeah, thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes, that's pretty much it. It's the cost of the Tlicho winter road cost increase, so. Thank you.

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

MS. MORGAN: Okay, thank you, Mr. Chair. I also just wanted to ask about the relatively significant increase in leases from \$32.8 million to \$36.6 million this year. Other than that, everything looks relatively stable. Well, utilities goes up, but. Okay. So with leases, what is

causing this jump in lease costs? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. VINCE McKAY: Yeah, thank you, Mr. Chair. So we have a lease increase to the -- I don't know if I can say it, but the name of it, I am having difficulty going to say -- but the medical clinic lease in Hay River. We also have the specialized court security and client system -- sorry, SCSCS concerns here in Yellowknife and also the various forced growth in regards to those leases, 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. So just to be clear, the specific leases that the minister mentioned, are those leases that have been transferred to infrastructure from other departments, or simply that infrastructure held those leases all along but the costs are going up. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. VINCE McKAY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. We hold those leases. The vast majority of the increase is all essentially forced growth and operations of these leases. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

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

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

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, my questions are kind of a follow-up on my colleague from Yellowknife North around road maintenance, winter roads. Obviously this summer we had some significant issues with the Dempster Highway, particularly the section around Rengling River, as well as the last couple of years the increase in the snow removal required for the Inuvik-Tuk Highway. Some of that, again, due to maintenance that was required to be done on that highway to bring it up so we wouldn't be dealing with as much snow there. So I guess my question is, is the Minister confident in the numbers that he has here to ensure that, A, we can get some of that preventative maintenance -- I will call it -- on both those highways and that we're

confident going forward that we're going to have the resources required to keep the Inuvik-Tuk Highway open. 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, yeah, some of the work for the ITH raising is through the capital. So, I mean, I could say I am confident, but then we're going to have the biggest snowstorm we've ever seen before, and, of course, the prices go up. But at the end of the day, I think what we're trying to do here is have a little bit for each of the roads to get some of the work done. And, unfortunately, as everybody's aware, we have lots of road systems, and we're all struggling in different regions to maintain roads and keep them open. So to be honest, obviously, there's never enough money for the roads, but we're doing the best we can with what we've got. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Chair. And, yeah, listen, I can imagine, and I appreciate that. And I know -- the Minister knows we've had many conversations around issues around winter roads and around all-season roads as well in my region.

Can the Minister speak a little to the section of the Dempster Highway -- and I realize some of that may be in capital, but I thought some of that was in operations as well -- around some work to be done on that section around Rengling River on the Dempster Highway. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. VINCE MCKAY: Yeah, thank you, Mr. Chair. I know some of the section that the Member's speaking of is part of our regular O and M maintenance on the sections to upgrade it, obviously on the NWT side only. But, yeah, I can't really get into details on that right now unless you get that -- so yeah, just -- it's part of our regular O and M for part of that section of the Dempster Highway. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

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

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

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am hopeful I can ask about the airport revolving fund considering airport operations are under this activity. The YK airport revolving fund is projected to have a surplus of just under \$52 million at the end of the year. What are the plans for this surplus? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. VINCE MCKAY: Sorry, Mr. Chair. I am just jumping to the section for the airport revolving fund. So the surplus is assets -- sorry, I will just get the deputy minister to.

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

MS. CATHY MANIEGO: So that surplus includes the assets that are included within the airport. Thank you.

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

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Can the Minister or staff explain that a little bit more in detail. I am not sure I follow. Thank you.

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

HON. VINCE MCKAY: Thank you. If she can just re-ask her question there. We're into the section of -- like, further back in the budget there. I am just -- or the -- just trying to get to the pages here to answer her question, so if she can just clarify.

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

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Chair. And I will speak slowly and let the Minister and his staff flip pages because I also get into that administrative snafu myself sometimes. The question is this: The Yellowknife airport revolving fund is projected to have a surplus of just under \$52 million at the end of year, and what are the plans for that surplus? And I understand the surplus is based on assets so how do you measure a surplus by physical assets, I guess is my question. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. VINCE MCKAY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So I guess part of the confusion was I had to flip to page 289 in your book there. So with the

surplus of assets or surplus of the revolving fund, it's used on assets, also used on the runways, the terminal itself, on equipment, all that is included in operating the airport and using the surplus amount. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MS. REID: Okay. So can the Minister please explain to me, then, why -- I believe it was yesterday -- we provided supplementary funding for the revolving fund. Thank you.

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

HON. VINCE MCKAY: Yeah. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am going to ask the director to explain this, if you don't mind. Thank you.

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

MS. MIRANDA BASS: Yes, thank you for the question. In regards to the reason why we requested a supplementary appropriation for this fiscal year is that due to an accounting change in how we recognize the asset improvement fund revenue. The revenue is -- so due to that change, we are unable to recognize as much revenue in the current fiscal year as we initially estimated. So what it is is that the revenue can only be recognized once those asset additions are pushed into service rather than when they were -- when they received -- when we receive the cash. So that is just an accounting book change.

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

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I think I am lost. So can the Minister or staff provide like a tangible example of we bought this asset, etcetera, and the accounting book error meant that in fact we were in the red instead of the black; I am kind of lost here. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. VINCE MCKAY: Sorry, can we just clarify the question?

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

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Is there any way that the Minister or staff can explain that in

more simple plain English because I am not sure I understand the explanation. Thank you.

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

HON. VINCE MCKAY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I will ask the director to explain this.

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

MS. MIRANDA BASS: Yeah, for sure. So thank you for the question. The accounting change in this situation, what it resulted in is that let's -- for an example, we are doing improvements to the airport washrooms. Before it was realized that this accounting change needed to occur, when we received the -- when we receive the payments from our clients for the airport improvement fund, we would recognize that immediately as revenue; however, following the accounting change, what we now have to do is if those airport washrooms are not completed by the end of the fiscal year -- so if the opening April -- the project is done in April instead of in -- by March 31st, we cannot recognize that revenue until the project is completed. At that point, if the project costs us \$200,000, then we can now recognize \$200,000 worth of revenue. So it is an accounting process to match based on the matching principle of when we are allowed to recognize revenue.

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

MS. REID: Thank you, that does help. I am just going to move on, and maybe one of my colleagues with more of a bookkeeping background might like to dig into that. But I will ask a different question for right now.

As the 2024-2028 business plan identified the centrality of Yellowknife as a logistical hub for NWT supply chains -- and I am not -- I think this is a question for this Minister, not the other Minister, so just -- just so you know. It's about emergency preparedness and recognizing that the Yellowknife airport is an essential hub in terms of an emergency, a large-scale emergency in the territory, as we've all experienced.

Beyond a listing of essential businesses, suppliers, procurement, etcetera, how does Infrastructure and the Yellowknife airport want to address the concept of being a logistical hub and what work has been done to prepare for the next large-scale emergency? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. VINCE MCKAY: Yeah, thank you, Mr. Chair. And just going back to her previous question, you know, just so -- what we can also do is commit to getting some kind of clear documentation on that process just so she has a better understanding, and it also may help me. But also I guess just to go to her current question, you know, there's lots of working groups out there in regards to all this, you know, pre-planning for the strategic hub of the Yellowknife airport and operations and the clients that use it and being able to operate it, so there is the groups out there working to make sure that those are all in place. There's other departments working with businesses to make sure that there's supply chains available for the carriers to keep supplying communities. So there is -- we're part of a bigger group to make sure that those operations will remain in place during emergencies, so. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Chair. And as those bigger groups have plans and finalized items that would then provide for, like, standard operating procedures or approaches, would the Minister be willing to share that material with the committee? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. VINCE MCKAY: Yeah, thank you, Mr. Chair. Whatever the Department of Infrastructure is doing at the airport for that topic, I am more than willing to share it with committee. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Okay, thank you. I will go back -- I guess that's -- time's up. Did you have a follow-up? Okay. Okay, thank you. I am going to go to the Member from Inuvik Boot Lake.

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just had one question I forgot to ask in my first round. I noticed in the active positions, the Beaufort Delta has lost one. Just curious as to why we went from 48 down to 47.

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

HON. VINCE MCKAY: Yeah, thank you, Mr. Chair. There was a position that was there but really not filled, I guess, as a water treatment plant/utilidor corridor operator in Fort McPherson that -- I believe that's what you're talking about. That's the one we lost. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Was there a follow-up question, Inuvik Boot Lake Member? Inuvik Boot Lake.

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yeah, just quickly. So do you have the detail on how long that position had been vacant? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. VINCE MCKAY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So it was for a bit, but -- so a lot of this is related to the community operations. This was a position that had been there for a while. Communities are responsible for operating their own water treatment plants and utilidors, and this position was there. So this is part of our fiscal sustainability and our reductions, and this one was vacant. So they have somebody that does it, and this position was there, so we cut this position. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

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

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

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you. I think I am on the right page now. But not that asset, but there's interesting stuff regarding the asset management as well too. But I want to ask about this here, road licensing and safety. The current -- the upcoming fiscal year the budget went down a bit, and here I've been asking, you know, like -- I would like to see some of the -- I would like to see new jobs created in Tlicho region, and here I see a reduction. That's a bit disappointing. But I just want to ask the Minister that -- I know he said he will work with me to possibly create, you know -- create three positions or transfer. That's another one too I am going to be asking about, transferring some jobs to the -- to the region, like from North Slave region -- I don't -- I am going to the -- from the active positions, there's nine in Tlicho region, and North Slave region they add one more, and here I've been asking for more jobs to be transferred to Tlicho region. Why we would not consider -- why Tlicho region was not considered to have at least a position transferred to Tlicho region when it is so easy to create one for North Slave? Thank you.

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

HON. VINCE MCKAY: Yeah, thank you, Mr. Chair. So the reduction that she's speaking of

related to road licensing and safety is completely amortization of GNWT assets. So that's the first question.

The second part, for the positions, the positions that we have that are new are related to the vehicle asset, fleet management. It's not a transferred position. It's a new position that's -- will be hopefully developed and posted. So thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you.

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

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you. Okay, there's nine positions in Tlicho region. Are they all active and indeterminate position? Thank you.

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

HON. VINCE McKAY: Yeah, thank you, Mr. Chair. I don't have the full details on that right now. I'd have to get back to the Member with that. She just -- yeah, the full details, we can get back to her on that.

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

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you. Yeah, we're in advantaged positions to have more jobs transferred to our region because most of our young people are employed by the diamond mine. So with the closure, it's going to have a great impact so that's why I am just advocating I want more jobs going to Tlicho region where possible. Like, DMV is one of the positions, or that department that we can get -- you know, that we can benefit from in our region because a lot of our people go to Yellowknife to access some of the services, but -- so that's why I am advocating for that. I would like to see more positions, jobs transferred to Tlicho region.

Highway operations. Highway operation went up a bit from last -- from this previous fiscal year to upcoming fiscal year. So it did went up. So I know that -- I sent an email to the Minister regarding the maintenance of the highway, and I know that I got an email back, you know, so I don't know how some of my -- the workers feel about starting at five, but that's for safety reason. And I know that because they've been asking, too -- okay, if -- because of the safety reason and for the commuters and it's for the commuters that go both ways, you know, to work. If the department cannot accommodate having Tlicho workers from Tlicho region to maintain the road all the way to Yellowknife, they were asking about there's a boundary, you know, as you leave for -- within the Wek'eezhii, there's a sign. If they can go as far as that to

plow the road because that's within the Tlicho region or -- you know, Tlicho region. So they were asking about that, why -- I am just asking the Minister have they ever thought about that operations to accommodate our Tlicho workers -- thank you -- to maintain the road. Thank you.

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

HON. VINCE McKAY: Yeah, thank you, Mr. Chair. So, you know, in the email response earlier to her, I explained that it's a combined effort between staff in her region and staff in Yellowknife that do the road between Behchoko and Yellowknife, and the goal is to have a 5 a.m. and 5:30 start time if conditions are warranted. But, yeah, so that -- the employees in her region are already working on that road. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: They are working on the road because of the safety. Before, it wasn't, you know. But that new time, it's good. And you know that -- well, this is MACA issue too but there's an ambulance that goes on that road 24/7, constantly every day, so that's why, you know, like, our people are concerned about the highway, especially in winter when we have ten months of winter. So that's why a lot of people were a little bit, you know -- they were concerned about that. But with that in mind, so that's why I am advocating for more, you know -- like, if our workers can do more, the Tlicho employees in my region can do more to maintain the road. And if they can't go all the way but to go as far as that -- there that Tlicho land sign is.

But, anyways, the winter road, I know you mentioned Tlicho winter road. There's a really -- like, it's a big increase. I just want to ask the Minister, I am not too sure if it's you or if it's the other infrastructure Minister, if there was any study done on building all-season roads from Whati junction all the way to Gameti. Thank you.

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

HON. VINCE McKAY: Yeah, thank you, Mr. Chair. I am not aware of that. Maybe the Minister for strategic infrastructure and supply chains is, but I am not aware of that. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Okay. Yeah, no, no, that's why I asked. I am not too sure because we have two infrastructure departments, and one is high-level and this is a low-level one, according to the way that it's set out. That's why I asked if it, you know -- but I will ask the other Minister when she does her presentation as well, so -- so because the North Slave -- you know, North Slave is really confusing. It's -- and we are part of North Slave and -- but it -- in your budget, it's -- it identified Tlicho. So have the Minister ever consider -- I am going to say this again. Have the department -- is that department working with the Indigenous government to transfer some of the jobs to Tlicho region? Even today okay, I know TCSA was mentioned, but TCSA is part of the Tlicho agreement so that's different story. But it's just that have -- I know they're going to assume some jurisdictions through their agreement, so I just want to ask the Minister if the department work with or have consider or are they working with the Tlicho government to transfer some of the jobs to Tlicho region. Thank you.

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

HON. VINCE MCKAY: Yeah, thank you, Mr. Chair. Not that I am aware of, and it's not something that we're looking at. That would more fall in line with EIA and finance for positions and restructuring departments. 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. I just wanted to follow up on my colleague's questioning about the Yellowknife airport revolving fund because I similarly am puzzled by the numbers that we're seeing.

So what we've got under the revolving fund is a list of different types of revenues that the airport is getting that last year, anyway, added up to \$14 million in revenues. And then there's a list of the expenses. And then -- so I do see that there is -- there was a shortfall between -- sorry, wrong. The expenses add up to less than the revenues. So even sort of operating costs, revenues are more than expenses, and we see that the annual surplus is growing into this year. And so what I -- it sounded like the Minister's staff was explaining that it's a problem with the timing of the costs of things that, you know, maybe revenues or fees are coming in at a certain time and at other times they have to pay for certain costs or capital costs, so. But I believe in the past when we asked the Minister, okay, if there's a deficit that we have to pay for

in supplementary estimates, would we get that money back when the, you know, fees come in, if this is a revolving fund, there's money coming in, and the response was no, these are just -- these are operating costs that were spent that was more -- you know, it was a deficit. It was more than the revenues were able to bring in. So that's where I don't understand how on the one hand we're being asked to give \$1.8 million to the airport because of their deficit and yet we see that there is an ongoing significant surplus and we're not getting any money back to pay for these operating expenses, so -- and we just heard from the Minister's staff that, in fact, the revenues are assets? But in my mind, those are two different categories of things, and so if we've got a list of three different types of revenues, including fees.

I guess the -- the first question for the Minister is can you confirm that in -- on page 289, for the Yellowknife airport revolving fund, that under the list of revenues that, in fact you're saying those things include assets, not revenues? Is that -- is that -- just to clarify, is that what you're saying? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. VINCE MCKAY: (audio) Mr. Chair. And just to clarify -- I will also get the director to respond. But just to clarify, the question was asked what we do with the revenues. And what we do with the revenues is use it for assets. So runways, the terminal building, equipment, such things. So that's what the revenues are used for, and that's what the question was asked. So for the rest of her question, I will ask the director to respond. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MS. MIRANDA BASS: Thank you for the question. In regards to the revenues -- well, actually, I will start with the first question, is that these numbers that you're seeing here are not the actual results. They are only the original main estimates, so -- or revised main estimates, and we don't really revise revolving funds. So the actual results compared to what was originally budgeted are different. So that is one thing to keep in note.

And then in regards to the three -- three streams of revenue, all three of these are different types of revenues. So aeronautical fees, those are the fees that we collect when -- for landing fees. Non-aeronautical are fees that are related to various programs such as like the cafeteria, parking, etcetera. So that's a larger -- a large category.

It's the airport improvement fee specifically that it's not capital but it's tied to capital recognition. So in the same way that when we get money from the federal government for a capital project, we cannot recognize that revenue until the work is completed. It's the same way that -- for the airport improvement fee. It is part of the fee that is charged to the airline operators; however, it is a separate portion and it's separated out. So it just happens to be a timing issue between when the cash is received and when we can recognize it within the financial statements.

And then in regards to the continuing revolving fund, the reason why we have to do a supplementary appropriation, if we are projecting for revolving funds to be in a deficit position but at the end of the year is a FAM requirement. So revolving funds are not allowed to end the year in a deficit position. They have to at least break even. And as such, the department has to cover that.

In regards to the accumulated surplus, realistically it is already part of the consolidated revenue fund. So the surplus is coming back to GNWT as cash, just not as revenue. And I know that can be a confusing accounting situation.

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

MS. MORGAN: Okay. And I do appreciate the quick course in accounting. Can you explain, then, if the surplus is essentially cash why some of that -- so it was estimated at the end of 2025-2026, the surplus was almost \$12.5 million. Why can't some of that surplus be used to cushion, you know -- you talked about the airport improvement fee. That's about \$5 million. And you were saying the timing is tricky with when that money comes in and we saw and asked -- well, approved a \$1.8 million supp for operating deficit. Why couldn't either that \$5 million or \$1.8 million be covered by the \$12.5 million in surplus that's sitting there as cash? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. VINCE McKAY: Yeah, thank you, Mr. Chair. I guess just to try to get to the detail of this, if we can get back to the Member with the response so that we can cover off the question that she's asking in order to make sure that we're covering off the detail of her question. 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. That would be helpful. And if also we could get an indication in writing of the actual, you know, revenues and expenses list from 2025-2026 -- (audio) -- okay. It's been published already? (audio) -- okay. But if it's possible to get those numbers now, the Minister's staff was saying that -- I mean, essentially, in the revised estimates we're seeing here nothing has been revised, and so these are not the actual costs. So I'd love to see if we could get in writing what were the actual revised expenses and revenues for 2025-2026. That would be helpful. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. VINCE McKAY: Yeah, thank you, Mr. Chair. We will get that for her. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

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

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

MRS. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Chair. My question is for the Deh Cho operations. How many of these positions are in my riding? Fort Providence, Kakisa, Enterprise, and Hay River. Yeah, total number of employees. Thank you.

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

HON. VINCE McKAY: So, yeah, Deh Cho operations, we have -- full-time positions in the Deh Cho, we have 45. For her specific riding -- or for Fort Providence, we can get you the information for detail for specifically Fort Providence, if you like, or if you want it broken down for area. But, yeah, 45 is the number of positions in the Deh Cho.

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

MRS. YAKELEYA: I'd like it broken down, if I could get that, for the riding.

And my next question is, you said start times for -- when my colleague was asking questions, you said start times for highway startup is 5 a.m. Is that for every region, or is that just the communities along the highways? Thank you.

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

HON. VINCE McKAY: Yeah, thank you, Mr. Chair. Start times for areas depend on season, depend on operations, depend on conditions. So it may vary. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MRS. YAKELEYA: Do you have a record, or do you know if there's any retirees that are going to be retiring from highways soon in the riding? And how do you deal with that? Thank you.

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

HON. VINCE McKAY: Yeah, thank you, Mr. Chair. I am sure the department knows at the HR department level, but I wouldn't know who's close to retirement or, you know, what our succession planning is for replacing retiring employees other than advertising for a new position when a position is vacant. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MRS. YAKELEYA: How many apprentices do you have on -- do you know if you have on staff for highways department? Like, for mechanics, or do you have that information. Thank you.

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

HON. VINCE McKAY: Yeah, thank you, Mr. Chair. I don't have the details of the positions. I can get that for the Member, but like I don't have the detail of how many mechanics in the Deh Cho region or how many equipment operators in the Deh Cho region or how many shop laborers are in the Deh Cho region. I can get that information for her if she likes.

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

MRS. YAKELEYA: Okay, thank you. That's it. I don't have any further, Mr. Chair.

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

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just wanted to build upon some questions that a few colleagues were asking.

The Minister said in response to questions about the winter roads item increasing by about 40 percent increase year over year that it was just a contract. Can the Minister give us maybe a better understanding of the reasons or the things that changed year over year that caused the contract to go up by 40 percent in one year? It just seems like a large increase well beyond

inflation, so I am trying to understand why the increase is so drastic. Thanks.

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

HON. VINCE McKAY: Yeah, thank you, Mr. Chair. I guess without getting into the fine details, which I don't have offhand, a lot of it is related to contract negotiations with the contractor and then also the -- you know, the request of the maintenance of the road or other requests on the contract change and the changing of the contracts and also, you know, just the increase of inflation with the fuel prices and insurances and so on and so on. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MR. MORSE: Okay, thank you, Mr. Chair. I mean, that's -- the answer doesn't give us a lot of specifics. Would the Minister be able to come back with some more details so we can better understand it. I mean, so on and so on and so on, fuel prices, that doesn't give me specifics to look to in terms of what about the contract change. Because I -- I mean, it's the same activity going on. So it can be hard to, when you look at that, understand why we're spending so much more. And yeah, if the Minister -- I recognize they may not have the information on hand, but I'd appreciate follow up just to giving us more specifics as to what about delivering of the same service changed so significantly to cause such an increase year over year. Thanks.

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

HON. VINCE McKAY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I guess the so on, so on, and so on, is the operations with the contractor and the negotiations for the contractor to operate in an area that's not -- you know, it's an area of isolation, you know, geographically difficult to operate in the area, cold temperatures, the price of fuel is increased in a -- a bit, the price of working on equipment, the price of replacing equipment, the price of, you know, labourers and finding skilled workers, the price of just in general operating the whole operations of a negotiated contract with a contractor in the area. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Is the Minister saying he won't follow up with us, is that the answer?

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

HON. VINCE McKAY: Sorry, I should have added that in. Yes, and I will follow up. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MR. MORSE: Okay, thank you, Mr. Chair. No, I am just trying to understand the specifics. And I understand that things increase. I understand that labour costs increase. But if the Minister can give us details, even if it does have to be -- you know, some documents have to be kept confidential, and I understand that. But remember we do have mechanisms to allow for that just so Members can better understand.

I am just noting that, you know, this seems to be a trend which has been occurring. There was a lot of questions asked yesterday about our contract for medical travel where there was a significant increase, and it's hard to understand well, what about the service has changed that has caused such an increase. And I am seeing it happen again on a different contract, and it's -- for me, when I start to see a trend like that, particularly -- I mean, if the contract costs had gone up by, you know, let's say, somewhere between 2 and 5 percent, I mean that helps me understand inflation of wages, inflation of fuel costs, things like that. But when we're talking a 40 percent increase in one year, that's a lot more than inflation. And so the medical travel contracts, while I recognize it's not on this page, was a similar situation where the contract costs almost doubled between one contract and another. And so it leaves me wondering, you know, do we have an issue with how we're negotiating contracts. Why is it that this is happening. I mean, if we get more specifics, it can help me understand it. But, I mean, every -- if across the board we're having contract costs go up at this level, you know, the government doesn't have endless money. We've got lots of programs that we want to spend money on, I think programs that are probably better aligned with our priorities, like putting people into homes and -- you know, I could go on, Mr. Chair. But that's what I am trying to get at here, is just the issue of contracts increasing and not being able to get, at least at first try, very good explanations as to what's going on. Thank you.

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

HON. VINCE McKAY: Yeah, thank you, Mr. Chair. I guess the -- you know, not trying to avoid answering the question, I guess, just to be clear. It's -- sometimes it's different demands

on the contract, different demands on the winter road or ice road, different demands of the contractor, sometimes changes to the route because we have to haul, you know, 25-foot-wide trailers up to Colville Lake for a school. So there's different scenarios where we're having to build up the road because of certain conditions. So yeah, for the most part, I think, you know, I appreciate the comments made by the Member and looking -- you know, I will commit to getting more detail for the Member in regards to the contracts. But just so the Member's aware, it's, yeah, sometimes it's driven up by the demands for the contractor and what we're actually trying to achieve. 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 no, I appreciate that. And I am just looking for those details so I can better understand the issue and try and see if there is a trend happening here or if there's something going on that we should take a closer look at at committee and -- because, yeah, if our contracts are going to start doubling year over year -- I am not suggesting that this is going to happen every year, but certainly we've identified a couple cases where it's happened and, yeah, I think that if costs are going to be ballooning that badly -- I was going to say we're going to run out of money. I mean, we're already in debt so we kind of have run out of money. But, you know, it's just going to compound the issues that we're facing even more, so. That's why I am trying to dig into it here. So I appreciate the Minister committing to follow up. Thanks, Mr. Chair. That's it for this page.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Okay, thank you. I got Member from Deh Cho for one question.

MRS. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Chair. When we're talking -- speaking about contracts, has there been any contracts that were -- like, does the department do sole sourcing contracts? And if so, why and when? Thank you.

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

HON. VINCE McKAY: Yeah, thank you, Mr. Chair. There are times where we have to do sole sourcing contracts in regards to, you know, certain items, emergencies or whatever like that. But usually, for the most part, we fall under the standard offer agreement for contracts, the SOAs. So we more so utilize those and have

available contractors out there with pricing already established.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Okay, thank you. Was there a follow-up, Member from Deh Cho?

MRS. YAKELEYA: Has the government done -- I mean, has the department done any sole sourcing contracts with anybody this year in any of the regions? Thank you.

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

HON. VINCE McKAY: For sole sourcing, we have done a few sole source contracts. The amounts I don't know off the top of my head.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Back to the Member from the De Cho.

MRS. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Can the Minister provide that information to us?

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

HON. VINCE McKAY: Yeah, we can get that information to the Member. Thank you.

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

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

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

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Okay. With reference to winter road, because I know Tlicho name came up quite a few times, so I just wanted to ask that if the Minister can, you know, get back to us or, you know -- because I know he probably doesn't have that number over there, but how much is being spent to each regions, you know, building the winter roads. And I would like to know how much is being spent to Tlicho, Tlicho region for the winter road, so -- but, I mean, I know that's what you're going to say, you don't have the information so, you know, I will -- I will follow up with an email unless you have that number over there. Do you have that number?

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

HON. VINCE McKAY: Yeah, thank you, Mr. Chair. So I do have the numbers for the Tlicho -- yeah, the Tlicho winter road. I don't have the other details for all the other winter roads. But we can provide all the documents for the winter road areas so that she can see them

and compare them if she likes. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: This one is regarding the regional operation too. So road licensing and safety, and like I said, I would like to see some of the positions transferred to the region. But since it's a regional operation and this is a territorial issue, you know, with the driver's license restrictions, if the Minister can tell us how this thing works because we're close to Yellowknife, and all the Tlicho communities -- especially in Behchoko, we're close to Yellowknife, and we're on the main highway. Why do we still have this restriction status? How can we get the restriction status removed because -- for class 7, it's understandable. I am not talking about class 7. But I am talking about class 5, 1, 3, you know, 4. It is restricted when they take the classes in Behchoko or in any of the Tlicho regions. Even for the tests, it's class 5 restricted. And they can't travel. So when the restriction does happen or shows up on their -- they can -- they cannot drive 200 kilometers out of their communities. So what can we do to remove this driver's license restriction status? Thank you.

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

HON. VINCE McKAY: Yeah, thank you, Mr. Chair. So I am obviously not the pro on the technicalities of this. But from my understanding, you know, she's correct, in some of the communities you can take that restricted license, but you can also take a non-restricted license and the driver examiner goes into the community of Behchoko, I think, once a week to go do driving exams and driving tests. So there's opportunities there for people to have unrestricted licenses. And you have to do the full unrestricted licensing test and examination. So it all depends on the area and what communities you're in. If you're in a community that's fully restricted, then obviously you're going to have the restricted license.

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

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Well, right now the driving training is happening in Behchoko, class 3 -- class 1 and 3. They were told -- the participants were told that your driver's license is restricted. It's for Tlicho region unless you go to Yellowknife and then do your driving test there, and then it's -- the restriction is going to be removed. But that's not what we want, so -- you know, I mean, this is like -- I can't believe we still are doing this. We're so close to

Yellowknife, and we drive on the road almost every day daily, and we have experienced drivers. It's just that having the restriction on their driver's license when we're so close to Yellowknife, it's unbelievable. That's not, you know -- I mean, we shouldn't even have that. We shouldn't even be discussing this. It should be restricted -- I mean, unrestricted. You know, the restriction should be lifted because, I mean, that's not right. So I just want to ask the Minister if he can -- you know, he's got high-level technicians or high-level people working with him, if they can have that restriction removed for Tlicho region. Thank you.

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

HON. VINCE McKAY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So part of the restriction, I guess, is the fact that some communities you're not able to perform some of the skills or tasks that are part of the driving exam, so that's why we have the restriction. So maybe what I can do is -- I don't think it's as simple as just saying Behchoko, you can no longer do restricted licenses. So I think what I will take back here is if I can get the department maybe just to come back to the Member and have a detailed maybe one-pager just to say these things cannot be performed in Behchoko and that's why there's restricted licenses, that's why you have to go to Yellowknife to do the licensing. You know, the simplest thing could be you can't perform a lane change or a parallel park or something like that. So those are only speculation, but I can get the department to come forward with a report on why we cannot do that in Behchoko so there's a better understanding. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you, Mr. Chair. You know, I meant to say expertise. So Yellowknife is North Slave. We're part of North Slave right now. So we shouldn't even have the restriction because we're, like, next door to Yellowknife. We access all their program and services, so we -- I think when we look at it, okay, in Behchoko alone, we don't have a stop sign or street lights -- or not street lights -- stop signs, but that can be done. You know, it could be accommodated. And we -- and the Highway No. 3 is a territorial road, and it has a divided line. I think we have the capacity to do it, but it's just that the department are not willing to do it. Because, I mean, there shouldn't be any questions about it. It should be done. Thank you.

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

HON. VINCE McKAY: Yeah, thank you, Mr. Chair. Like I stated earlier, there's nothing stopping anybody from getting their unrestricted license if it's done in a location where you can actually perform all the skills required in the unrestricted license. So as I stated earlier, I will get a one-pager done up so that we can clarify what the actual issues are in Behchoko as to why we cannot do the unrestricted licenses there so that the Member's aware of the conditions there. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Yes, okay. Thank you. Thank you for that information, Minister. I want to ask the Minister, now that we've been talking about this driver's license restrictions and there's a community government in Behchoko, so can the Minister commit or work with the community government, chief and council, discuss this restriction driver's license? Because I am not too sure if they are aware of it, but if they are aware of it then I am sure they will do something about it as well. So I just wanted to ask the Minister if the Minister can commit to working with the current Tlicho leaders in Behchoko. Thank you.

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

HON. VINCE McKAY: Yeah, thank you, Mr. Chair. I have no issues with working with the leaders in the Tlicho region to clarify what might be the issues and why we can't have unrestricted licenses in Behchoko. And like I said earlier, we'll find a path forward and to clarify what the issues are for the Member. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Do I still have time? Oh, okay. Okay. Yeah, well, I think the driver's license is the most important one that we would like to see the restriction lifted. And the other one is that I would like to see the department of -- or the DMV office in -- you know, in Tlicho region. So I just want to ask the Minister if the Minister can commit to working for the next fiscal year to have at least three position transfer or created in Tlicho region. Thank you.

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

HON. VINCE McKAY: Yeah, thank you, Mr. Chair. Comments were noted, and I believe that question was already asked earlier, and I

agreed to working with the Member to, you know, looking at ways we could possibly do that. But I am not committing to relocating positions right away. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Okay. I am going to get ready to move on. Is there any further questions?

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: (audio) but maybe with the -- because you guys -- I mean the Cabinet meets with Indigenous governments, with the Council of Leaders, so maybe you can bring it up with -- with the Tlicho leaders there too as well, work with them on this. Thank you.

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

HON. VINCE McKAY: Comments noted, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Okay. Please turn to page 277.

Infrastructure, regional operation, \$268,855,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Committee, will now be moving to Strategic Infrastructure, Energy, and Supply Chains. We will excuse the Minister of Infrastructure and his witnesses, and I will thank him for appearing before us today. Sergeant-at-Arms, please escort the witnesses from the chambers.

Thank you. I am going to go to the Minister from strategic infrastructure, if she wishes to bring witnesses into the chambers.

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

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

Minister, please introduce your witnesses.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: I can, Mr. Chair, in about eight seconds, so that I get everyone's names and titles ready.

Might be slightly longer than that, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Okay. I will go back to the Minister of infrastructure -- strategic infrastructure.

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

was here already, director of corporate services.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): All right, Thank you. Does the Minister responsible -- sorry, Minister responsible for Strategic Infrastructure, Energy, and Supply Chains wish to -- okay, I did that, sorry about that.

Does the committee agree to continue on?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Ready? Great, thank you. Okay, thank you. Strategic Infrastructure, Energy and Supply Chains, beginning on page 279 with the information items on pages 281 and 283. Are there any questions?

I will go back to the Member from Range Lake. Oh sorry, I will go back to the Member from Great Slave.

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate that. Mr. Chair, the GNWT is receiving \$11 million, or a 55 percent increase, for the Taltson expansion pre-construction work. Can the Minister explain how that additional funding will be allocated and what specific activities the funding will support. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So, Mr. Chair, that would be coming under the capital budget. Still happy to generally talk about the work that's happening with the Taltson project. We are still working with MOU partners who are the Members -- Indigenous government -- sorry, surrounding the Taltson watershed, both north and south of the lake. And right now we're in a pre-construction planning phase, so we are funding staff within that work to move that forward to be at an EA. So there will be an environmental assessment that needs to be done at the south side and north side as to where the landing site of the line would go. It's certainly my hope that we will see that filed this calendar year. Beyond that, Mr. Chair, one of the more critical or equally critical thing is to get a commercial arrangement between the Indigenous governments so that they can be owners of the new generating facility. 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 I appreciate the Minister's patience with me as I

am sure she remembers answering these questions in a different committee earlier last week -- this week -- whatever day it was. But I would love for it to be in Hansard as well so thank you for her indulgence.

Can the Minister please speak to whether this project is currently on track, if any risks or delays have been identified that could affect the pre-construction phase. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So there's some work that's on track, some that's at risk, and some that I'd say is actually advancing well or sort of accelerating. Let me start with the good news. This project won't move forward if there's not ultimately a resolution of the legacy issues surrounding the original Taltson construction from the '70s when there was very little engagement or accommodation or mitigation actions taken. That had been stalled for some time and was probably one of the bigger risks. But I believe we're actually in a different state of affairs now. The Minister of CIRNAC met with all the parties earlier this -- or rather I guess it was late last year and is looking to advance a process bilaterally with each one. So myself and the other Members of the steering committee have sent a letter to get that process moving to start to set up those bilateral meetings so that we can, in fact, move forward with a reconciliation lens and have the federal government -- they certainly appear to be amenable to that conversation in a way that I have not seen to this point. So that's very positive.

We're a little behind in terms of establishing some sort of arrangements between the Indigenous governments. And that's not an area, really, where I would necessarily have a lot of a role. That said, Mr. Chair, I am aware that the Indigenous governments met at Roundup. They are meeting again later this month or next month to -- I think next month to finalize -- hopefully finalize those conversations and be in a position to establish an entity that will move the project forward as proponents, for the generation component. They met -- we all met with the major projects office in this regard and were given some pretty strong marching orders, if you were, of to say, look -- to get ourselves organized so that they can then step in and be of a stronger assistance to us.

And last but not least, Mr. Chair, would be the environmental assessment preparation. There's been some slippage on that time but not to the point that it necessarily delays the work entirely, provided that some work does get moving this spring and summer and if that can,

indeed, happen, led in both in different cases by Indigenous governments on whose areas or lands particular projects are happening, so instance, Yellowknives Dene First Nation on the north and South Slave groups on the south. If that does happen now this spring, we will be back on track. Thank you.

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

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Chair. And I think, you know, there is a healthy amount of skepticism around this project. It is a multi-billion dollar project. It's hard to see how it's a silver bullet. So I think a lot of people will have continual questions until there are those shovels in the ground, so. Has Canada given assurances that they will support this project to completion? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Okay, thank you. Before I go back to the Minister, just for the interpreters, maybe we can slow down a little bit. And I will go back to the Minister. Mahsi.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and my apologies. I am excited about the Taltson project. And, look, let me just say first, Mr. Chair, it's not a silver bullet, and I don't want there to be a mistake that this is a silver bullet. There's a lot of other work on energy that needs to happen in this territory for different communities, and that needs to continue to happen. The federal government hasn't come out and said we will 100 percent fund your projects, but what they have done is, by establishing the major projects office, create potentially a vehicle that can support getting the project from where it is now, which is where we get \$40 million, \$25 million, which is not insignificant amounts, but they wind up moving the project along only incrementally and not to the place of a final decision because the final decision will, of course, depend upon, from our view, who's funding it. That has long been the problem of major projects in the North, is that we get significant amounts -- you know, again, not to discount the value of \$40 million to get to an EA, but then if you get the EA through and then you sit on that and you don't know who's funding, the project stalls. Major projects office, their job, really, as I understand it having had now the opportunity to meet several times, is that they want to get out of that cycle, they want to break that cycle, and they want these projects to move forward. So they are taking this project under their wing. They want to see it advance, and they want to be part of it. And we want to do everything on our side to make sure that they are part of it. So do I -- is it a for sure? No. Would I suggest that we're in a better place than this project has probably ever been? Yes. 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. Mr. Chair, within that context -- and it's important context -- can the Minister explain, especially with regards to the relationship with the major projects office -- pardon me, can the Minister comment on capacity challenge to manage multiple major projects. Obviously there's more than just Taltson on our plate. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. To the -- this is the benefit of having carved off strategic infrastructure from infrastructure as a whole. I had, of course, the opportunity to have infrastructure as a whole and it was admittedly difficult, whether from my own office, or I would suggest within infrastructure broadly, to be focused on the massive department that that is and all the services it provides as well as these strategic projects which are functioning at a different level. So for ourselves, I would suggest this split within the department has proven to be very helpful in terms of focusing efforts and staff.

From the perspective now, then adding to that the capacity of the major projects office, the opportunity I've had to have those conversations is exactly this, that once a project is formally referred, they also can step in at -- in a different -- with a different type of lens and different kind of role to help provide capacity and to fill in the kind of gaps that we don't have. Their office has flat out acknowledged with me that we don't have necessarily the kind of expertise or the kind of capacity to manage multiple major projects. I mean, we're managing already constructions of schools and healthcare centres and roadworks and to add, for instance Taltson or one of the two road corridors, would be perhaps a bit taxing. But that's where having that capacity from the federal government, their support, will fill that gap. Thank you.

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

MS. REID: Thank you. And taking a slightly different tact, I want to focus on the upcoming energy strategy that is merging, I believe, with the climate strategy so it's a whole of government strategy that I think is supposed to be released in the parlance of the government soon. Is this work on track? Can you provide a timeline as to when committee will be engaged on the new energy and climate strategy? And,

really, when will the public start seeing some of that story to be told? I know I have a lot of anxious energy around seeing that and diving into that topic, and I know I have a lot of constituents who are interested too. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, so first, nothing would be finalized before going through committee process and having an opportunity for that feedback. It is targeted for this spring, for full release in the spring, which certainly does mean we need to be moving fairly quickly on getting it out to committee. I mean, it was, I think, slated for really right around now to be coming forward, but I -- as I say, I don't know that it's -- well, it has obviously not fully hit the committee yet. So, I mean, when I say any day, it kind of is any day at this point but, again, assuring committee that it certainly goes through that process of their review before going out publicly. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Next on my list I have is Yellowknife North.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So going to the page 260, so it lists a number of grants or revenues we're getting for some major projects. Looking at the Investing in Canada infrastructure program payments that we're getting, can you explain what major projects are going to be funded through that Investing in Canada infrastructure program and specifically -- I mean, there was a big jump last year between the original main estimates and the revised amount from \$54 million up to almost \$84 million, and then it's increasing even more this year. What projects can we attribute that jump to? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, let me send this first to assistant deputy minister Wickens, please.

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

MS. KIM WICKENS: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So under the Investing in Canada infrastructure fund, within strategic infrastructure there's none of our major projects that are allocated there; however, there's funding there for the Fort Liard access road, the Fort McPherson ventilation, Fort Simpson plant relocation, which is under strategic infrastructure that we're assisting with NTPC, as well as the highways reconstruction, Prince of Wales Centre, Prohibition Creek

access road, Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre accessibility upgrade, and the Sachs Harbour fuel storage dispenser, and then as Whati access road. Those all fall under the ICIP program.

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

MS. MORGAN: Okay, thank you, Mr. Chair. So I was under the mistaken impression that included in that fund or program was funding for the Fort Providence transmission line or possible -- like, transmission lines to Kakisa or Whati. Can you explain, do we currently have any funding or grants allocated for those projects? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So there is funding available at this point for Fort Providence -- or sorry, for the Fort Providence-Kakisa transmission line under ICIP and waiting final federal approval on being able to sort of announce it publicly. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MS. MORGAN: Okay. So we're not totally sure on that one yet.

I wanted to ask about -- sorry, let me flip back. So in the budget on page 281, the new \$80,000 for electric vehicle charging stations, is that something that, like, individuals can apply to, or are those charging stations being installed by the GNWT, or is that something that, say, community governments, for example, could apply for funding under that? Can the Minister explain. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So the electric vehicles charging station that is -- that work -- let me just see here. Actually, Mr. Chair, let me see if the deputy minister or assistant deputy minister might have the details on that, please.

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

MS. KIM WICKENS: Yeah, thank you, Mr. Chair. So this is -- the \$80,000 that the Member is speaking about is an adjustment for the NWT electric vehicle infrastructure program, and so what is ongoing target adjustments to support

our obligations under the zero emission vehicle infrastructure program with Enercan. So it's a rebate.

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

MS. MORGAN: Okay, thanks for that clarification. So my understanding would be that it's to pay for or reimburse us for charging stations the GNWT itself has installed and not, say, like a program people could apply to or community governments. Okay.

In terms of the energy action plan, it looks like all the elements of that funding has sunsetted around community energy planning, the charger corridor, the low-income program to address energy poverty. Is there going to be any new funding to help fund initiatives that are going to be coming out within the 2030 Energy Strategy, which is fairly new. But what money is going to be available to implement these, yeah, energy strategy initiatives going forward? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So some of the sunsets the Member is mentioning, we actually, earlier this week in dealing with the supp, were -- I was able to put forward that there's now a renewal of the low carbon economy fund -- I hope I've got that right. I think I might be missing an acronym, though -- and, which at the time of preparing the main estimates that had not been signed and approved at that point in time and so the sunsets were standing as sunsets. But those funds were -- are now being reinstated through that funding program with the federal government.

The second part of the question with respect to what elements under the energy strategy will be fully funded, Mr. Chair, I will need to see and put forward a final energy strategy before I can 100 percent speak to what parts of that might get funded under the low carbon energy fund. But it is a significant investment, and so it certainly would be my expectation that elements of that programming or elements of that strategy will receive some funding through those funds. Thank you.

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

MS. MORGAN: Okay, thank you, Mr. Chair. And thanks to the Minister for clarifying that that -- the low carbon economy fund will be able to cover some of the things specifically -- the

kinds of things that were being covered under this -- these previous headings.

Can the Minister just quickly remind us, if she has it available, the renewal of the federal program, the grant for low carbon economy, is the new amount that we've gotten comparable to the previous agreement with the Feds, or is it more or less? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, it is, I think, actually slightly more than what it was previously. So, yeah, \$17.8 million. Thank you.

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

MS. MORGAN: Okay, that's good news. That's all my questions for now. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you. You know, with the high cost of living, with electricity going up for many, and with the fuel price going up, especially for heating, it's a major concern in many of the small communities. It does have an impact on -- especially for those on fixed income. So I just wanted to ask the Minister, Whati transmission line, I know this is from CIRNAC from last fiscal year to current -- to upcoming fiscal year, there's a decrease from CIRNAC. If the Minister can explain why for the Whati transmission line there was a decrease in the funds coming from CIRNAC. Thank you.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, there was a decrease in the years just to give time for discussions that had been underway with the Tlicho government, and as a result of which the funding was moved to a different year to better align with the expected timeline of the project. The good news that I have this year is that those discussions are much further along. I am hopeful that there will be more formal announcements in fairly short order from now to allow the Tlicho government to be the lead on the project with support from the GNWT as appropriate but that this project now will be on track to start to move forward. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you. And then, well, you know, projects or any infrastructures or any major work that's, you know, being done in the region, it's not, you know, something that -- it's something that we welcome, especially with the Dehk'e Frank Channel Bridge it's, you know -- it's good, you know, and it's greatly needed. The repair, the replacement needed was needed ten years ago. So it's good that it's being -- you know, there's a plan in place now. So I just wanted to ask, there's a huge -- I know somebody asked me too in my region that why there's a big increase with the spending. I think the total cost went up to \$160 million and here -- even here it's 37 for the upcoming fiscal year. So if the Minister can explain why there's a big, huge increase within the spending. Thank you.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Is that -- I am not sure if that's specifically on the Dehk'e Frank Channel Bridge. Yeah, okay. So I mean, certainly Bridgeworks -- I don't have the bridge specifically in front of me right now, Mr. Chair. I will see what information we can find. But I can say there's been a number of significant increases in terms of -- the cost of steel has not really come down since the time of -- for instance, since really when COVID had resulted in some pretty significant increases, and there's also been ongoing supply chain issues, and this bridge did experience some not insignificant delays owing just to having to confirm that the bridge was able to move forward. So all of which is to say it does result in a much higher overall price point, Mr. Chair. But it is nonetheless moving forward now. So I mean, yeah, I certainly could look into providing a more detailed breakdown of the price changes if that would be of assistance to the Member. Thank you.

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

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Yeah, it would be nice -- it's a good information to share with constituents. You know, people they do ask.

Another one too is the biomass energy. I know that at one time -- I know Wekweeti were talking about the biomass energy. I just want to ask the Minister if the Minister is working with other Tlicho communities regarding the biomass energy. I did -- I do -- I heard a lot of good things about the biomass. So if there's -- if the Minister is working with other communities regarding that program. Thank you.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So, Mr. Chair, there are rebate programs within the Arctic Energy Alliance to support the expansion of biomass, but I suspect this may be with respect to a project that I think that Tlicho are the lead on, dealing with -- or trying to develop a biomass industry within the Tlicho region and using local biomass products. That's not being led by the GNWT, but there is certainly a lot happening, I understand, still at the Tlicho government level and some interest in that regard. So I can see to what extent there's been some engagement between the GNWT and Tlicho on that project. I know that I'd heard from some of their project delivery officials on this project but, again, it hasn't been led necessarily by the GNWT, although it is an exciting project that's underway. Thank you.

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

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Okay, thank you. Thank you for the information. And I just want to ask the Minister, regarding the energy action plan, low income program to address energy poverty, and -- and lately I know that -- I've been hearing from a lot of people regarding the energy program and it's too expensive, too costly. So why there's nothing allocated for the upcoming fiscal year within the budget? Thank you.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So, Mr. Chair, the good news is there is now going to be funding available. It just wasn't known at the time that the main estimates were being concluded and put -- they do go to the printers a little earlier than just in the days before session begins, and we hadn't yet had confirmation from the federal government that we'd get a renewal of this. We've been looking to get this program renewed. It's a significant amount of money, 17-some million dollars in a year. And when that was lost, it did curtail a lot of energy efficiency programming. The department tried to do some funding from within but that is a significant amount to have to make up. The good news is that it's been renewed. It's been renewed even at a slightly higher rate. I don't know whether it's been renewed for long under the current federal administration, but it will certainly move us forward to be able to get some work done in the next year.

So, again, it's not showing up in the main estimates because we didn't have time but it will

be rolling out in this year, and we will see it likely in a supplementary appropriation. Just as we saw the supp for the 2025-2026 year to get some money going, we'll see it come in the next supp that's going to be hitting the floor here in the spring. Thank you.

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

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Okay, thank you. Thank you. That's it for now for this section. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Okay, thank you. Colleagues, we're going to stop here. Tomorrow we will resume with Frame Lake -- the Member from Frame Lake, and the Member from Inuvik Boot Lake. I want to go to the Member of Inuvik Boot Lake.

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

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. 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? Thank you. The motion is carried.

---Carried

I will ask the Sergeant-at-Arms to please escort their witnesses from the chambers. I will rise to report progress. Thank you.

Report of Committee of the Whole

MR. EDJERICON: Mr. Speaker, committee has been considering Tabled Document 448-20(1), 2026-2027 Main Estimates, and would like to report progress. And, Mr. Speaker, I move that the report of the Committee of the Whole be concurred with. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh. Do I have a seconder? Member from Inuvik Boot Lake. All those in favour? Opposed? Abstentions? Motion passed.

Reports of Committee of the Whole. Third reading of the bills. Orders of the day, Mr. Clerk.

Orders of the Day

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Harjot Sidhu): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Orders of the day for Thursday, February 12th, 2026, at 1:30 p.m.

1. Prayer or Reflection
2. Ministers' Statements
3. Members' Statements

4. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery
5. Replies to the Budget Address (Day 6 of 7)
6. Notices of Motion
7. Motions
8. Returns to Oral Questions
 - Oral Question 974-20(1), Medical Travel Policy and Ministerial Exemptions
9. Acknowledgements
10. Oral Questions
11. Written Questions
12. 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
13. Replies to the Commissioner's Address
14. Petitions
15. Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills
16. Reports of Standing and Special Committees
17. Tabling of Documents
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 Thursday, February 12th, 2026, at 1:30 p.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 5:46 p.m.