



NORTHWEST TERRITORIES LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

3rd Session

Day 59

18th Assembly

HANSARD

Friday, February 22, 2019

Pages 4981 – 5018

The Honourable Jackson Lafferty, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

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

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YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**Friday, February 22, 2019****Members Present**

Hon. Glen Abernethy, Mr. Beaulieu, Mr. Blake, Hon. Caroline Cochrane, Ms. Julie Green, Hon. Jackson Lafferty, Hon. Bob McLeod, Hon. Robert McLeod, Mr. McNeely, Hon. Alfred Moses, Mr. Nadli, Mr. Nakimayak, Mr. O'Reilly, Hon. Wally Schumann, Hon. Louis Sebert, Mr. Simpson, Mr. Testart, Mr. Thompson, Mr. Vanthuyne

The House met at 10:00 p.m.

Prayer

---Prayer

SPEAKER (Hon. Jackson Lafferty): Good afternoon, Members. Item 2, Ministers' statements. Minister responsible for the NWT Housing Corporation.

Ministers' Statements

**MINISTER'S STATEMENT 152-18(3):
NEW FEDERAL INFRASTRUCTURE
AGREEMENT**

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, over the past 15 years the Government of the Northwest Territories has worked in partnership with the federal government to help meet the infrastructure needs of community governments. These efforts have helped community governments access federal funding, in accordance with our current mandate commitment in this area.

Mr. Speaker, federal investments in community government infrastructure have been significant. Since 2005, the federal government has provided over \$170 million in gas tax funding, supporting a total of 293 projects in our communities. As well, through the capacity building component of the gas tax funding, we have also been able to assist with the development of community capital plans and implement the current Asset Management Strategy.

Since 2014, under the Small Communities Fund of the New Building Canada Plan, a total of \$38.7 million in infrastructure projects have been approved, supporting a total of 33 projects. This includes investments in recreation facilities, road upgrades, and the construction of water treatment plants.

Since 2016, the Clean Water and Waste Water Fund of the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Plan has seen a total investment of \$51 million toward 29 water treatment and sewage system projects in communities across the Northwest Territories.

Most recently, in March 2018, the Government of the Northwest Territories entered into an integrated bilateral agreement with the Government of Canada for Phase II funding under the Investing in Canada Plan. Through this agreement, a total of \$119.2 million in federal funding over 10 years has been allocated to support community infrastructure projects.

The funding allocated to community and Indigenous governments under Phase II of the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Plan will be provided through five programs. These programs include \$37.5 million to assist communities in developing solid waste facilities, including fencing, cell development, and waste reduction initiatives such as composting and recycling infrastructure; \$37.5 million to support community road upgrade and development projects within community boundaries; \$15 million to support energy-efficient upgrades to community buildings and facilities; \$8.2 million to the City of Yellowknife to develop public transit infrastructure; and finally, \$20.5 million to develop or improve existing facilities to increase accessibility and create spaces for cultural activities and displays.

Mr. Speaker, in early January 2019, Municipal and Community Affairs released an initial call for applications for Phase II funding to community governments for the solid waste, road upgrades, and energy-efficient programs and to Indigenous governments for the cultural spaces program. Applications for the initial call must be submitted by March 1, 2019. Municipal and Community Affairs will review and process the applications received before submitting to Canada for final approval.

Municipal and Community Affairs will work with the NWT Association of Communities to ensure the application and selection processes are fair and consider the federal eligibility criteria along with territorial priorities.

Mr. Speaker, the Government of the Northwest Territories is helping to address the infrastructure needs of Northwest Territories communities. The Municipal Funding Policy Review completed by the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs in 2014 helped quantify the infrastructure needs of each NWT community government. We have increased the annual funding support provided to

community governments for community infrastructure by \$2 million, beginning in 2019-2020. We administer federal infrastructure programs, and we support community governments in asset management and capital planning so they can make the best possible use of the funding available. I look forward to working with Northwest Territories community and Indigenous governments to continue the administration of these critical federal infrastructure agreements, as well as moving forward on important initiatives such as the Asset Management Strategy. By working together, we will be able to meet more of our communities' needs for the benefit of all our citizens. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Ministers' statements. Item 3, Members' statements. Member for Tu Nedhe-Willideh.

Members' Statements

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON WINTER ROAD TO LUTSELK'E

MR. BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I want to do a Member's statement on a winter road to Lutselk'e. I had just been thinking about it and thought I would talk to the Minister briefly and advise him that I would like to talk about the benefits of a winter road to Lutselk'e.

I recognize that we are getting late into this season to be able to construct a winter road. I think most of the winter roads are already constructed. A little bit different here, if there was an opportunity to put a winter road in next month, the situation is a bit different than other winter roads in that the majority or all of the entire road into Lutselk'e would be on the ice, on the Great Slave Lake.

I also recognize that there is a shorter time frame because of the size of the lake. We had looked at this previously, Mr. Speaker, and there are pressure ridges that do become created. Once the ice freezes, and because of the size of the lake, there are pressure ridges. At that point, it becomes unsafe to continue. For a period, Mr. Speaker, for a short period, maybe two, three weeks, maybe even as long as a month, there is a possibility to open up a winter road.

I wanted to speak to that, about the benefits to tourism. In fact, I find that, if there was a winter road into Lutselk'e and there were people who wanted to use that winter road, like the local community or even tourism, to drive down that road. The other factor would be that at some point, if this becomes part of the process, part of the winter road construction by the Department of Infrastructure, Thaidene Nene Park, once approved, there would be a good opportunity for a gateway.

There are many economic factors. There is the cost of air freight and also the large infrastructure, like the health centre, trying to get the foundational materials for the health centre in this winter so that there would be less to haul in on the barge going into Lutselk'e. Mr. Speaker, thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Members' statements. Member for Nahendeh.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON RETIREMENT OF CARL LAFFERTY FROM PUBLIC SERVICE

MR. THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it is with great joy and sadness that I have learned of Carl Lafferty's retirement, the regional superintendent of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources. His dedication and service throughout the past 16 years as an employee with the Government of the Northwest Territories has been greatly appreciated by myself, along with all residents of the Deh Cho.

Prior to his work with the Department of ENR, Mr. Lafferty worked as a park warden with the federal government for 12 years. Mr. Lafferty felt the need for a change, as being a park warden involved a lot of travel. Once he received a call to accept a position with ENR, he accepted the opportunity.

From April 2002 to October 2009, Mr. Lafferty worked as a renewable officer, too, as well as the manager of wildlife and environment. In late October 2009, Mr. Lafferty was asked by the deputy minister to take on the role of regional superintendent. With Mr. Lafferty's operation and field experience, accompanied by his First Nations status, a direct appointment to regional superintendent was offered in November 2009.

Upon completion of the past 16 years, Mr. Lafferty stated that his best times were conducting highway and river patrols and interacting with and meeting new people. What he will miss most is working with the GNWT staff and public. What really drives the work? Dealing with complaints and resolving issues to provide satisfaction to community members. When I asked Mr. Lafferty what his greatest accomplishment was, "I'm still here," meaning you need to have tough skin, as it is a difficult position to be a leader.

With his retirement date fast approaching, Mr. Lafferty has begun the process of obtaining his heavy equipment operator's ticket. His goal is to have an opportunity to work on a few big projects around the community, such as the Mackenzie Valley Highway, while doing small jobs around the community.

I want to thank Carl for his years of experience in the Nahendeh communities, the Deh Cho region, and the NWT. Carl will be sadly missed. Carl has set an example for all of his colleagues and staff throughout, with the exemplary work ethics, dedication, and commitment that he has shown in his career. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Members' statements. Member for Sahtu.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON REGIONAL WELLNESS COUNCIL

MR. MCNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Health and Social Services spoke yesterday on the Regional Wellness Council and their continued efforts in shaping and improving our healthcare system. Mr. Speaker, I totally agree with this administrative structure. Who better to include, as community, parents, and public members, to improve healthcare but the people who reside in small, remote, urban communities?

Mr. Speaker, it is not expected of RWC members to possess medical qualifications, but as mentioned by the Minister and the roles and responsibilities as identified within the members' handbook, it is preferred. However, Mr. Speaker, there is always continuous room for education on the various systems and services available for healthcare. One suggestion is allowing routine Regional Wellness Council sessions in the surrounding communities that they represent.

Mr. Speaker, a campaign and positive initiative taken by the Sahtu Dene Necha Ko Long Term Care Facility in Norman Wells is sponsoring ASIST, or Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training, an excellent suicide first aid development course advertised for March 12th and 13th of next month.

Mr. Speaker, later I will have questions for the Minister of Health and Social Services on future operational campaign strategies. Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Members' statements. Member for Yellowknife Centre.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON 2019 NORTHWEST TERRITORIES COMMUNITY SURVEY

MS. GREEN: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the 2019 NWT Community Survey is now under way, and many residents around the NWT will either be getting a survey request in the mail or a knock on the door. The household survey covers topics such as housing, employment, education, and language, and I want to encourage everyone who is asked to participate in this valuable data collection event to do so.

The survey is being carried out by the NWT Bureau of Statistics. It will include a sample of households from the six largest communities, Yellowknife, Hay River, Fort Smith, Fort Simpson, Inuvik, and Behchoko, and a census of all households in the other communities.

In Yellowknife, Hay River, Fort Smith, and Inuvik, letters were dropped at selected households, requesting them to complete the survey online or to arrange an in-person interview or a phone interview. Outside these four communities, interviewers are conducting the survey in person.

The survey intends to collect data from 8,000 of the 17,500 households in the NWT, a formidable slice, and the Bureau of Statistics hopes to have preliminary results at the beginning of November.

Why is this survey important, Mr. Speaker? It will yield valuable information that can be used for planning programs, identifying emerging issues, and monitoring progress on issues at the community level. In other words, this is the evidence for evidence-based decision-making.

This data is available for use by anyone; NGOs designing or evaluating programming and businesses doing market analysis for business planning. All levels of government, that is, federal, territorial, municipal, and Indigenous, can use the information to design and improve services for their constituents and clients, and this kind of high-quality detailed community data is vital for our access to federal funding.

Data collection is on now and continues into March, and I want to encourage all NWT residents who are asked to take part. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Members' statements. Member for Frame Lake.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON INCOME SECURITY REVIEW

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. Education, Culture and Employment offers a number of programs to support our residents in several ways. These programs include income support for post-secondary students and seniors and income assistance for low-income families and children, with additional amounts for people with disabilities. Many recipients of support programs say that accessing them can be difficult, discouraging, and demoralizing. The processes for income assistance, in particular, are very rigid and prescribed in regulations providing very little flexibility in response to client needs.

The Minister of ECE has committed to an administrative review of income security programs.

Discussions with non-governmental organizations have begun. My understanding is that the review is to be completed and changes implemented before the end of this Assembly. To be clear, I support this approach.

One of the most significant issues with income support and income assistance programs is that the amounts offered to recipients do not keep up with the cost of living. Regular reviews of the amounts linked to the Consumer Price Index or some other method of automatic adjustments for the cost of living would be a far better approach.

A major issue that surfaces for me in my constituent work is the treadmill of debt that traps some recipients. In some instances, income assistance recipients work, then lose their jobs and are penalized with reductions in their rent, food, and other allowances. Recipients are left between benefit periods with nothing to live on and often fall behind in their rent. Structurally, the system fails these people and builds desperation and worse.

Some jurisdictions have tried a basic income guarantee approach. There are various ways to structure basic income guarantee and different ideas on who should receive these sorts of payments. One of the major benefits pointed out in these initiatives is the elimination of the clients' endless application and reporting requirements and a reduction in the bureaucratic superstructure required to administer all of this monitoring.

We need to look at a pilot project on basic income guarantee in the context of our overall efforts to reduce and eliminate poverty consistent with the Anti-Poverty Strategy. I will have questions for the Minister responsible for Income Security later today. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Members' statements. Member for Hay River North.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES IN HAY RIVER

MR. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in Hay River, there is an eight-month wait list to see a mental health counsellor. That is completely unacceptable. During my time as MLA, I have raised concerns about the availability and accessibility of mental health services in Hay River at every opportunity, but those concerns seem to be falling on deaf ears.

An eight-month-long wait list is ridiculous. It shouldn't be allowed to happen. The wait time to see a counsellor in Hay River is more than two-and-a-half times longer than in Yellowknife; it is eight times longer than in Behchoko; and it is 20 to 30 times longer than in Fort Smith, which is just down

the highway. How is that even possible, Mr. Speaker? It boggles the mind.

I understand that, for very urgent situations, there are at least some same-day appointments available, and those experiencing mental health emergencies are supposed to receive appointments within four weeks. However, Mr. Speaker, it can be hard to ask for help, and many people resist seeking help until their situations become emergencies to them. Making them wait another eight months is inhumane. Who knows what could happen in those eight months? People's mental health issues could cause them to lose their job, damage relationships, develop addictions, and worse.

From what I have heard, the staff at Community Counselling in Hay River are good at what they do. They strive to deliver the best service possible, and they have even undertaken some new initiatives to help the community, like offering an eight-week, mindfulness-based, cognitive therapy workshop to help adults prevent recurrent episodes of depression. They are providing services that I would argue pay for themselves. I cannot imagine being a counsellor is easy, and I am sure the lack of resources makes it even more difficult. We need to support these people, or else we will lose them and we will foster a revolving-door environment, which is a terrible thing when it comes to client care. We need to address this situation now, before it gets worse.

Mr. Speaker, I hear lots of talk from the government about the importance of good mental health, so I want to know why this situation was allowed to get this bad and what is going to be done to fix it. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Members' statements. Member for Yellowknife North.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON PROTECTING NORTHWEST TERRITORIES TOURISM BRAND

MR. VANTHUYNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have all been glad to see how tourism has grown in the Northwest Territories in recent years. Being a world-class tourist destination is not only great for the economy, it's also a point of pride for us Northerners, who love the splendour and beauty of the people, cultures, lands, and waters of this place we call home.

This came about from strong initiative and vision from some of the original tourism operators, people who struck out on their own when the idea of tourism marketing was in its infancy. Government shared in that vision and offered significant support for marketing the NWT as a spectacular tourist

destination. Now, it's a reality, and you can't go anywhere in this town without tripping over herds of royal blue and bright red parkas.

Mr. Speaker, this boom has a result. The number of tourism operators is growing rapidly, and our government is appropriately supporting this new sector. For example, we have opened up Loop C at Prelude Lake to provide operators with a new place where their clients can take in the aurora. That is great for new operators, but it does raise some concerns, Mr. Speaker. When does support for industry become an unfair subsidy? Operators who years ago made huge investments and built this industry from scratch may be legitimately upset that up-and-coming competitors are being subsidized by public money. Then there is the question: with all of this new interest, so many operators here, how do we spread the wealth outside the capital? How could we take advantage of the increased interest in this industry to encourage new opportunities in other spectacular parts of the NWT?

Mr. Speaker, this new successful sector capitalizes on the wonderful qualities of our unique location in the world. We need to take steps to protect our world-class Northwest Territories brand. The industry must be managed to make sure that the people selling and marketing the NWT as a destination are doing so with respect for our land, our cultures, and our people. That way, we can assure that success continues for future generations. Mr. Speaker, at the appropriate time, I will have questions for the Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Members' statements. Member for Nunakput.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES FUNDING

MR. NAKIMAYAK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, 2019 is the International Year of Indigenous Languages. I would like to continue the discussion of how government can support our Indigenous languages across the territory.

Mr. Speaker, recently I looked at the analysis of federal funding for languages in Nunavut that broke it down to dollars per person. Based on their first language, the funding for a French student was around \$420 per student, and for Inuktitut it was, ballpark, around \$4.30. Mr. Speaker, this gap demonstrates that our government must do more to invest in Inuktitut.

Mr. Speaker, I wondered what that would look like here in the Northwest Territories, so I pulled out the current four-year federal funding agreement between the Government of Canada and the Government of the Northwest Territories and did

the math. Mr. Speaker, the good news: this particular agreement will bring us almost \$20 million in federal funding for Indigenous language services over four years. The not-so-good news: a resident who speaks French as a first language is funded more than four times as much per year than a resident who speaks an Indigenous language. Mr. Speaker, that is four times more.

Mr. Speaker, I know that there are reasons funding typically shakes out this way. I know that only English and French are recognized nationally as official languages, but we have nine official NWT Indigenous languages. I know that this is just one funding agreement and that the GNWT itself funds languages in a variety of other ways. I know that we have junior kindergarten-to-grade 12 French first-language and French immersion schools, while we do not have the same for Indigenous languages, but just because that is the way things are, Mr. Speaker, it does not mean that it's adequate or equitable.

Mr. Speaker, we need to close this gap, not only to fulfill our commitment as a government to language revitalization but to meaningfully pursue reconciliation.

Mr. Speaker, when the next federal funding agreement is negotiated, that is what we need to push for. We also need to walk the talk on our own budgets, and, above all, we need to keep working with Indigenous governments and community groups when we do it. Quyanainni, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Members' statements. Member for Kam Lake.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Frame Lake, that Minister's Statement 151-18(3) be moved into Committee of the Whole for consideration. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. The motion is in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? Motion carried.

---Carried

The Minister's statement will now be before Committee of the Whole. Members' statements. Item 4, returns to oral questions. Item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery

MR. BEAULIEU: Marsi cho, Mr. Speaker. Today, I would like to recognize our interpreters, Mr. Tom Unka, interpreting in Denesuline Chipewyan language, and Maro Sundberg, in Wiilideh Tlicho language. I would also like to recognize two Pages from Wiilideh, Joshua Drygeese and Ben Colas. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Item 6, acknowledgements. Member for Sahtu.

Acknowledgements

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT 19-18(3):
THOMAS AND DENISE MANUEL

MR. MCNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to announce my in-laws, Thomas and Denise Manuel, celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary this past February 20, 2019. The celebrations were held in Fort Good Hope and enjoyed by the family, community of Fort Good Hope, and the guests from the surrounding communities. Here's wishing you many more years of happiness together. Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Acknowledgements. Item 7, oral questions. Member for Hay River North.

Oral Questions

QUESTION 594-18(3):
MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES IN HAY RIVER

MR. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Further to my Member's statement, I have questions for the Minister of Health and Social Services about the eight-month-long wait list in Hay River to receive mental health counselling services. How many staff are allocated to the Hay River Health and Social Services Authority community counselling office, and how many of the staff are actually in the office? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Minister of Health and Social Services.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to thank the Member for his statement. I agreed with pretty much everything that he said, that this is a problem, this is something we need to be fixing, and it's unacceptable to have these kinds of wait times. I do take a little bit of a disagreement with his comments that these issues have fallen on deaf ears. I do not believe that to be the case, and I think the staff in the authority and in the territorial authority are working hard to resolve some of these challenges and to improve services to the residents of Hay River, so I do take offence

at indicating that these issues have fallen on deaf ears.

In Hay River, Health and Social Services has three vacant community counsellor positions, and full staffing complement is six, so we are down a number of positions in Hay River. There are three mental health and addictions counsellors, two community counsellors, community wellness workers, and one clinical supervisor. As the Member indicated in his statement, the clinical supervisor position is currently vacant. The mental health and addictions counsellor and community wellness worker positions are also currently vacant. We are actively recruiting for a clinical supervisor as we speak. We are actually intending to do interviews for the position next week. We just completed hiring the one vacant mental health and addictions counsellor position, and we expect that that person will be starting in March.

MR. SIMPSON: I did not mean any offence, but when I bring these issues up, I know the Minister listens, I know the department listens, I know the authority listens, but I need to see some results. Otherwise, I have to make those kinds of statements. It's good to hear that some staffing is occurring. What are the challenges to staffing? Why did we get down to this skeleton crew? I know it's been going on a long time, so what are the challenges with staffing this office?

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: When somebody says the issues are falling on the deaf ears, usually to me that means that he is suggesting or somebody is suggesting nobody is listening. I am happy to hear that the Member does acknowledge that we are listening and that work is happening in this area.

When it comes to staffing, the Hay River Health and Social Services is currently reviewing the job descriptions for the mental health and addictions counsellor positions to make sure that the required qualifications that are identified do not create any unintended barriers to staffing those positions. They are also exploring the possibility of a mentorship model with applicants who are either recent graduates or have experience but don't necessarily have the academic criteria.

They have also been actively recruiting for these positions, both territorially and nationally. They have posted positions on the website for the Canadian Counselling and Psychotherapy Association, national organizations, Longwoods, Indeed.com, Facebook pages, websites. They have gone to university job boards that offer the programs. Staff are also reaching out to colleagues for who might possibly be interested. I know that they are also reviewing the current program

delivery model in order to improve wait times, service delivery, and staff retention.

Just to be clear, and I think I said this in response to another Member's question, these are what would be considered non-emergent cases. I do acknowledge that cases evolve over time, but emergency cases are triaged and they get supports right away.

MR. SIMPSON: Yes, as I mentioned, emergency cases are heard. They receive appointments within a month. That is a pretty fast and loose definition of "emergency."

I know that the health authority is a separate legal entity, but they receive their money through an allocation through the Department of Health and Social Services. We are ultimately responsible for them. Can the Minister reallocate some resources from the public service, from his department, to help with this backlog in Hay River?

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Although Hay River Health and Social Services is technically outside the public service at this time, we would still like to bring them in, which I believe may actually help with some of our recruitment challenges in that area. We do consider them part of the team, and we do work closely with them.

The territorial authority has reached out to other NWT regions for assistance in Hay River. Fort Smith has agreed to accept some of the referrals to help with the wait times. Fort Simpson has agreed to offer some level of clinical supervision until such time as we can hire somebody. Unfortunately, the rest of the NWT, when it comes to community counselling programs, are facing significant shortages as far as staff, as well, so this is a territorial issue. Hay River certainly has the longest wait times and they are certainly feeling the brunt of this, but we are working hard to address that, and the territorial health authority is working closely and offering expertise and support from other regions.

MR. SPEAKER: Oral questions. Member for Hay River North.

MR. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister has mentioned a lot of the things that are happening. I have spoken with the CEO about this and the public administrator, and I know some of the things they are doing. I know there is work going on behind the scenes, but when can we expect this situation to be solved and put it behind us, and when can we know that we are going to go forward and people are going to be able to receive the services they need in a timely manner? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: When it comes to providing services through staff in positions that

have high turnover, we can never say with certainty that this problem will be gone. We may be able to resolve it with a full-stocked complement of staff, but if turnover occurs again, we could have some blips. That is why working with the other regions is so important.

Community counselling services in Hay River, as the Member said, at 35 weeks is inappropriate, and we need to work together with our partners to bring that down. There are apparently about 55 clients on the wait list. The authority is managing the wait list based on a priority or a risk assessment process and offering programming from group programs, which keeps clients connected with the community counselling services and provides them with the tools that they need to manage some of their situation.

There has been lunchtime and evening mindfulness group sessions, as one example of the types of things that are happening. Hay River has entered into a contract with a licensed psychologist until March 31st to assist with the clinical supervision to support staff, assist with the wait list, assist with the recruitment and review of current programs and delivery models. They have also been referring eligible clients to take advantage of the employee assistance program available through the GNWT. There are also Health Canada programs that referrals are being made to, and the health authority is recommending that anyone who needs mental health support and is not able to be seen through the existing counselling program to come to the health centre or go to emergency if it is an urgent situation.

There are a number of things that are happening. We are working hard to close this gap, and we will continue to do so.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Oral questions. Member for Kam Lake.

QUESTION 595-18(3):
YELLOWKNIFE AIRPORT CATSA SECURITY

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, earlier in the sitting, my honourable friend from Yellowknife North asked the Minister responsible for Infrastructure some questions surrounding security delays of the YZF Airport. At that time, the Minister identified that the Canadian Air Transportation Security Authority staffing was the biggest problem and the cause of these delays. A recent CBC article, on February 20th, had a response from CATSA on these delays, and they said that an additional security line was never part of the airport renovation plan that they submitted to the agency, and if the government wants additional screening lines, it needs to present a business case that would include staffing and those extra levels of

resourcing. I would like to ask the Minister: has CATSA been engaged and been asked for the things that they are saying they were never asked for? Is their information correct? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Minister of Infrastructure.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The CATSA system, they set their own levels of service, Mr. Speaker. As I said in the House the other day, we are tracking the number of people who are going through the line-ups. I have said that the reduced wait time is down by 30 percent. We engage CATSA regularly, because we have to engage them on when we did the expansion for the space for them and put in the new CATSA Plus system, so those discussions are ongoing.

I am sure the Member is going to have a number of questions, but when we talk about CATSA Plus setting their own service levels, our understanding, based on the information that we have right now, the rating that we have is 1.2 lines for the CATSA Plus system. For us to get to two lines, there is going to have to be a significant more amount of traffic that has to take place for us to work with them to make a decision to install an extra line. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. TESTART: That is a bit more clear, that there is some policy behind it. Is that what CATSA is saying? Has the proposal been brought forward to the Crown corporation for an additional line? Because that is what the people want, and I don't know if the Minister has done it.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: I am not sure if the Member is listening to what I am saying. I am saying CATSA Plus sets their own service levels. Right now, there is a 1.2 rating for the lines. To go to two lines, there is going to have to be a significant increase of traffic. As I said in the House the other day, we are monitoring the amount of traffic that is going there, the wait times. We are doing it manually. We are going to put in an automated system to be able to collect this data to be able to say, you know, CATSA, it clearly states that we need to have two lines in the Yellowknife Airport. Until we get that documentation, how can I just say I am going to put in an extra line and request for this information? It is no different than us answering questions on that side of the House. We have to have data, and I have to have data for CATSA Plus.

MR. TESTART: If the Minister doesn't have the data, then how does he know that security lines have been reduced by 30 percent? His officials are telling the City of Yellowknife it is going to be 60 percent. He is telling this House it is 30 percent, and now he is telling this House he doesn't have

the numbers to justify additional expansions of security time. How is the Minister getting his information?

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: As I said, clearly the Member is not listening to what I am saying. We are collecting data out there. Our data has clearly told us that the reduction of wait times is down by 30 percent. We are doing it manually. We have a person sitting there collecting that data. We will get this information more clearly when we put in an automated system. We are at 1.2 lines right now. There have to be two lines to have more significant more traffic at the Yellowknife Airport for them to make a decision to install two lines.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Oral questions. Member for Kam Lake.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am listening to the Minister. I don't know if he is listening to my questions. He is providing some answers, but I'd like to know if he can produce this information. Will he table the numbers he has so far so the public can clearly understand exactly what the issues are and why we can't get this enhanced system that, again, people are asking for? Thank you.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: I don't have a problem tabling any of this information. Clearly the Member is playing on words, here. We are doing our due diligence to try to improve the system. We are working with CATSA Plus. I want to get even more information out there for the general public, and I want them to know this. When we work with CATSA's system, we have to supply the space for free. We have to supply the electricity for free. We have to supply the heat for free. It's not like this is just some ad hoc thing we're doing. We are trying to improve times at the airport for the general public.

As I said, there is a lot of pressure on the system. I said yesterday in the House that we are working with CATSA Plus. There is definitely a deficiency around the number of people who are employed out there. We work with them closely. I mentioned the type of signage and stuff, and that we have worked with CATSA Plus to improve wait times and try to get people through the line-ups faster. Some of these people who are travelling through our airport are definitely not savvy travellers. They're not on an airplane every week, like some people are, and we are working with them closely to improve these things. It's not just something where I can snap my fingers and ask the federal government and put another line in. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Oral questions. Member for Nahendeh.

QUESTION 596-18(3):
SENIOR PLANNING STUDY

MR. THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday, the Standing Committee on Social Development received a presentation from the NWT Housing Corporation about the senior planning study. I have to say I am very impressed with the quality of the work done by the corporation. My questions today are for the Minister responsible for the NWT Housing Corporation. Mr. Speaker, can the Minister explain why the corporation's primary focus is on the communities of Hay River and Yellowknife when, if you look at the projected seniors population of 2028, we have four communities that will see seniors' populations increase over 90 percent? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Minister responsible for the NWT Housing Corporation.

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank and welcome the Member's comments about the public presentation that we had with committee yesterday. As Members know, seniors are one of the fastest-growing populations not only in the Northwest Territories, but right across Canada. In terms of the question that was asked, in terms of Yellowknife and Hay River, they are the two largest seniors' populations in the Northwest Territories, and we do know that there is existing seniors' infrastructure that will require replacement. I have said that in the House before. I just want to remind all Members that we have also invested over the last few years in building seniors' complexes in the communities of Aklavik, Fort Liard, Whati, Fort Good Hope, and Fort McPherson. As I mentioned in a statement that I addressed last week and in answering questions this week, we are going to be developing community housing plans, and looking at the priorities of the communities and getting their input into where we need to invest our dollars. I'm looking forward to that, meeting with our leadership and community members, and I do appreciate that the Member is concerned with the results of the study. We look forward to using that study to look at how we are going to invest dollars going forward. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. THOMPSON: I understand that we are going out and doing community housing plans, and that's really good, but there are 33 communities, and some of the communities are seeing elders' populations grow, increase drastically, here. I spoke in this House about elders in the Nahendeh riding who want to stay in their home communities and prefer their own homes. However, O and M costs may be difficult for them, and they would like to maybe stay in a housing unit. Will the Minister be willing to look at adding fourplex units for communities in the NWT Housing Corporation's plan, should communities show a demand for this

type of infrastructure before the housing plans are done?

HON. ALFRED MOSES: During yesterday's public presentation, we did get some discussions back and forth about the respect for our elders. I think all 19 of us, and anybody in this House, do respect our elders and want to promote and work with them to live as long as they can in their units. Yes, obviously, we would be looking at fourplexes in the communities, should the communities want to pursue that. It would be energy efficient over the existing designs that we have had in the past, and also it would reduce the cost of construction. So as we work with communities and leaders developing these community plans, I would be more than open to looking at these fourplexes. As I mentioned, we want to keep our elders living in their units as long as we can, and also providing those units in the five communities that I mentioned previously, and having respect for our elders, their knowledge and what they can continue to provide to our youth and our communities.

MR. THOMPSON: I couldn't agree more with the Minister. Elders are very important, and they are our foundation. I am greatly happy to hear that the Minister and the corporation are looking at that, and they will look into it maybe even before community plans are done, if the communities come forward. My next question is: in some of the smaller communities, we do not have contractors or tradespeople. In other regional centres, contractors do not find the projects big enough that are happening in these small communities to bid on, so we can see projects delayed or not done at all. Can the Minister advise if the corporation has looked at this challenge and thought about a possible solution, such as using the local housing authorities' staff to help deal with these types of concerns?

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Yes, we have looked at that. We know that there is a concern in some of our smaller communities that don't have contractors or anyone who can do a housing maintainer program or do repairs for some of our homeowners, and even our elders. We do provide support through our care prevention maintenance programs, as well as seniors' aging in place programs, as well as other resources that we can bring to the table. As we discussed yesterday and as I have said in the House, we are going to be looking at a northern housing summit, and in the public meeting yesterday I did say, once that is all settled and confirmed, we will be putting out an invitation to committee to come and listen to that, but it's something that we are looking at and will be addressing and providing those services to the communities. I thank the Member for bringing that up, because that is something that we have seen and we are going to be looking at addressing.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Oral questions. Member for Nahendeh.

MR. THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to thank the Minister for all his answers to this point, and I think it's great to see that the corporation is looking at this and trying to help our elders in the smaller communities, so that's a very positive step. During the presentation, and now on the Floor, the Minister spoke about a northern housing summit. I found this to be very exciting when we were at the presentation and here on the Floor. Can the Minister please tell the House where the summit will be held, when will it be happening, and who will be invited to the summit besides the Standing Committee on Social Development? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. ALFRED MOSES: Once the dates are finalized; we're just going through a draft agenda right now. All of our staff and our stakeholders are pretty excited about the summit. It's going to be the first one that has ever been held in the Northwest Territories. We have been providing that information to Indigenous governments. We also have met with the Seniors' Society and the NWT Disabilities Council to have them come and do a presentation. Right now, we are looking at having the summit up in Inuvik, mainly because, as I have said in this House, we have had a very strong partnership with the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation. They have worked on partnering with us in our capital planning and the work that we've done, and we want to showcase the work that they've done for the NWT Housing Corporation. So we are looking at Inuvik. Once the dates are finalized, I will share them with committee. Once again, we did do an open invitation to committee, and we can actually open it up to all Members, but we are working with the stakeholders that have an interest in our housing needs across the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Oral questions. Member of Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

QUESTION 597-18(3):
WINTER ROAD TO LUTSELK'E

MR. BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In my Member's statement, I talk about the possibility of a winter road to Lutselk'e on Great Slave Lake. I would like to ask the Minister if the Minister would do an internal look at the possibility of constructing a winter road on the Great Slave Lake to Lutselk'e. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Minister of Infrastructure.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The answer would be no. The reason it would be no is because the Member has already

asked a couple times about us having a look at putting an ice crossing in to Lutselk'e, and there are significant challenges around that, around safety and construction and maintenance. We believe that this will outweigh the possible benefits of putting something like that in. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. BEAULIEU: I believe that they have constructed a winter road in to Lutselk'e in the past. It could be an opportunity to look at it again. I would like to ask the Minister if he would at least take a look at it and maybe have some of the officials who do their ice profiling and whatnot to look at something and have a discussion with the opportunities with such a road with the community.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: I can certainly get my staff to give me a quick update on it. From what I know about ice roads being in this portfolio now for the last three-and-a-half years is: we have significant challenges, even with the Great Bear Lake Deline crossing. It has given us a lot of grief over the last couple of years. Even on that one, with the very short ice crossing that is there, it has very similar challenges that we have on Great Slave Lake, with pressure ridges and stuff, as the Member has clearly stated in his Member's statement. We are planning to look at rerouting the overland route for that in the future.

With that said, you know, these challenges that we have on Great Slave Lake are probably even bigger than what we are having on Great Bear Lake. We have an ice platform that is especially large and easily shifts. There are great concerns about safety around that, and safety is our number one priority.

MR. BEAULIEU: The reason I am asking the Minister if he will discuss with the local people is that what I am told by the people in Lutselk'e is there is a short window, a small window, maybe, or a short time frame in which the road would be okay. It could be as short as two weeks, like I indicated, and it could be as long as a month before the pressure ridges start to come.

Again, I am asking the Minister: he said he could get the staff to look at it again. I am asking if there is at all a possibility that maybe it would not be an ice road that would be constructed for regular traffic, but maybe something that would be done to haul in, say, the health centre, should that be ready to receive materials for the community. I would like to ask the Minister if he would look at the possibility of looking at this from a special type of situation where there would be a short time frame versus a regular, full ice road that is usually constructed to the other communities that need ice roads?

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: As I said, I can have a quick conversation with our staff. Everything that I have talked about previously on this particular type

of project, and particularly on Great Slave Lake, as I said, the safety standards and pressure ridges and unpredictable situations that could happen on Great Slave Lake, the department clearly told me that they do not think that it would meet our current safety standards. I can have that conversation internally with our department and get back to the Member on what the possibility would be. At this point, it clearly shows that this would not be possible.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Oral questions. Member for Tu Nedhe-Willideh.

MR. BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I can understand the liability insurance and everything that the government has to do, realize, or have in place when they are building ice roads. Would the Minister consider supporting maybe a local group out of Lutselk'e to be able to construct an ice road that could be used for the community as a test to see how long the ice road would last? I mean, it changes season to season. I realize that. Would the Minister be willing to, again, maybe have his department discuss a possibility of supporting a group in Lutselk'e to construct an ice road from here to Lutselk'e? Thank you.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: As I said, there are some serious concerns of safety around this, as I said. As a Minister, I am not quite prepared to look at it. If we were to even discuss having someone in Lutselk'e have a look at this thing, it is going to cost some money. That would have to go through the budgetary process. That is a discussion that I can have with the Member going forward. That is going to be up to the 19th Legislative Assembly, if we were to look at budgeting for something like that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Oral questions. Member for Frame Lake.

QUESTION 598-18(3):
INCOME SECURITY REVIEW

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. My questions are for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. I spoke in my statement earlier today about the ongoing administrative review of the income security programs. My understanding is that the review is to be completed and changes implemented for the end of the Assembly. Can the Minister give us an update on the work? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Minister of Education, Culture and Employment.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What we have done so far with the Income Support Program: I know that our

department regularly reviews the Income Support Programs to make sure that they are updated regularly, but I have taken it a step further. I have actually met with all of the NGOs, as many as possible that I could, recognizing that time was not on my side in this endeavour. I met with the NGOs. Every NGO was invited to bring one person who is accessing income support at this time so that we can have a voice from them. "Nothing about us without us" is my philosophy.

Since we compiled that information, we have provided a "what we heard" report. We have sent out a request to MLAs and to Indigenous governments to ask them for feedback on our Income Support Program. As soon as we get that feedback and as soon as this session is finished, it is one of my major priorities to get tackling. Again, we don't have a lot of time left in this Assembly. We will be looking at short-term, mid-term, and long-term goals. I am going to start knocking off those short-term goals. People know me for doing that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks to the Minister. It is all good news. I do sincerely appreciate her work on this area. I have repeatedly mentioned the need to index our Income Security Programs. Of course, those include income assistance, student financial assistance, seniors, and benefits to people with disabilities. We need to index those to the cost of living. Is the indexing of income security payments an element of the current review, and will recommendations be made to introduce indexing?

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: At the current time, right now, we don't do the indexing, but we have made a number of enhancements to the programs just in the last few years. We have increased our senior citizen supplementary benefit. We have increased the NWT child benefit. We have improved our senior home heating subsidy. We have extended our rental allowances for single applicants. Then, of course, in our proposed mains for 2019-2020, we proposed an increase for disabled and age allowance for people. I am looking forward to the results of all of the MLAs and Indigenous governments. If that is a concern, then I am looking forward to seeing it in the surveys from the MLAs.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks to the Minister for that. I will certainly be recommending indexing, and the Minister knows this. I have also mentioned problems where income assistance recipients find themselves where they don't actually have any money to live on because of windfalls or wages from previous benefit periods, recalculations, and so on. Is there any consideration being given to repayment plans, much like rental arrears plans, to reduce the hardship of drastic benefit reductions?

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: I am actually quite disappointed to actually hear that question, because it is a major concern for me. People cannot afford to just get penalized if they are on income support. They are some of our most marginalized populations. We need to work with them. It is not okay to just cut them off. I inquired with the department, and my understanding is that we try to work with them so that there is not a financial hardship. The minimum repayment is \$25 a month. One of the critiques that I did hear from the NGOs, and I am thinking that is part of our problem, is that we are not good at communicating, and I think that goes across a lot of departments. Right now, we are looking at our communication.

I want people in the public to know that, if you have to pay income support back, come to us. We want to support you and make a repayment plan. We will try to make it within your financial means. The lowest amount will be \$25 a month. I am hoping that that is affordable for people. We should not be penalizing the most marginalized in our population.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Oral questions. Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. Thanks to the Minister for that. I have discussed with her constituent issues and raised this issue with her. We have clear cases that we have discussed together. I have constituents who get cut off, and they have nothing to live with. We have to fix this, and I hear the commitment from the Minister to work on this. I expect all of my colleagues to give her suggestions on how to improve the system, because we shouldn't be cutting people off.

I have supported the Minister in this administrative review, and I hope it includes indexing, but we need a more systematic approach, Mr. Speaker, one that is around a basic income guarantee. I am wondering: can the Minister tell us whether she has considered a basic income guarantee pilot project here in the Northwest Territories, and when is she prepared to see that happen? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: I think yesterday I talked a little bit about things I've been called, and not being called easy and not being called lazy. One thing I have been called is, and I don't even know where it comes from, but I have been called a little bit of a socialist, and within that system, the guaranteed basic income would fit very well.

I do adhere to it. I had asked the department about it, and my understanding from the department was that there wasn't a lot of research on it that showed it work. I am not accepting that answer, Mr. Speaker, so I have asked the department to go

back and look at that research again and show it to me.

My worry is that I believe in it. I think it may be the right way to go, but I am also concerned about the time that we have left in this Assembly. I am doing the research now. If my findings prove that it is viable, then it will be in my recommendations for the next Assembly. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Oral questions. Member for Yellowknife Centre.

QUESTION 599-18(3):
WISE WOMEN AWARDS

MS. GREEN: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Minister responsible for the Status of Women. International Women's Day will soon be upon us, and traditionally, it has been the time that the Status of Women Council announces the annual winners of the Wise Women Awards. There weren't any awards last year, and I haven't seen a call for nominations this year. I am wondering if the Minister could tell us what's up with the Wise Women Awards. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Minister responsible for the Status of Women.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Wise Women Awards is a very important event. It recognizes the contributions that women have made in society. We did talk about it. I met with Violet Camsell-Blondin, actually, on January 15th to talk about many things. That was one of them.

We had talked about different things. They were talking about maybe changing the time to coincide with October, with Women's History Month. That is probably why you haven't seen anything in the paper now. My women's special advisor has been working with them to look at alternative fundings. We have applied to a few of the mines. We have got a commitment from one of the mines. One of the other mines has asked for more clarification on it, so we are in the process of doing that for them. They can also access some of the money through the Women's Initiatives Grant.

The other thing that I should say that they are talking about is not doing it in the capital, because it limits us. It is more expensive, and it limits the amount of people. One thing that I have learned in the last three years is how community-focused people are. You have an event. It doesn't matter what it is; they come out in hordes. They come. There are big meals. There are gatherings. When we only do it in Yellowknife, those people are limited. Status of Women was looking at actually changing format a bit and having those women

recognized in their home communities. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. GREEN: I have some follow-up questions. I just want to be clear that it is up to the Status of Women Council to have independent fundraising for these awards. Do I understand that correctly?

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: I take it I wasn't clear enough. The Status of Women Council will be able to access funds through the Women's Initiatives Grant, which is from the GNWT, Government of the Northwest Territories. The special advisor who works with my position, with me, is working with the Status of Women to assist them to write proposals to the mines to access additional funding for that.

MS. GREEN: Could the Minister tell us, of the awards that she is familiar with through her ministries in the last three years, which other awards the organizations are fundraising for?

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: I am a little bit confused about the question, but I will try my best to answer. Many organizations apply for the Women's Initiatives Grant. We only have \$50,000. We try to allocate them, usually, around \$5,000 each, sometimes more, depending on the number of proposals and the needed requests. Many of those organizations, Mr. Speaker, access additional funding for their projects. It is not unusual for many people to look for lots of opportunities for funding, and I encourage that. People need to look for funding as many ways as they can.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Oral questions. Member for Yellowknife Centre.

MS. GREEN: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. This government gives out a tremendous number of awards. We recognize people who speak Indigenous languages. We recognize volunteers. We recognize firefighters. We recognize people with the Premier's Awards. As far as I know, no one is responsible for fundraising money for those awards. They are part of the department's budget. I am wondering why the Status of Women is being treated differently in being told that they need to write proposals to corporate funders in order to host the Wise Women Awards. Thank you.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: When I first assumed this position a few years ago, actually, I had made the wrong assumption, I guess, that the Status of Women actually worked in closer partnership with myself as the Minister responsible for the Status of Women. It was very clear from standing committee that they wanted us to have a hands-off approach and let the Status of Women be their own entity.

I heard that loud and clear, so I have been walking on very thin ice with them in trying to be supportive versus directive. They are not a government department. They are an independent agency, so, therefore, there would be differences. There are other agencies that I am sure provide other events that aren't 100 percent sponsored by the GNWT, as well. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Oral questions. Member for Sahtu.

QUESTION 600-18(3):
REGIONAL WELLNESS COUNCILS

MR. MCNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Following up on my statement, can the Minister of Health and Social Services confirm if the Regional Wellness Councils plan to engage joint meetings with community-based chief-and-council groups? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Minister of Health and Social Services.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I said a week or two ago, I had some responses around the Regional Wellness Councils. They do have the ability to set their agendas, and if they wanted to have some meetings with other groups, they would certainly be able to do that. It is my understanding right now that that has not been done. None of the Regional Wellness Councils have established or set up meetings with other bodies to share information or to talk. It's not a horrible idea. I will certainly raise it with the territorial authority and the board chair as a potential opportunity. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. MCNEELY: Thanks to the Minister for that response. Awareness of services is a really essential and concerning discussion when we go back to our communities. My next question, Mr. Speaker: can the Minister confirm if there is a human resource career and training strategy in six of the regional centres?

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: I am not 100 percent sure what the Member is asking. I do know that the territorial authority does have some human resource functions to help them do some strategic planning to ensure that they are supporting their staff. They work closely with the human resource department of Finance to do recruitment and retention, to do staffing. I am not sure exactly what the Member is asking. Within the strategic plan, there is talk about the recruitment or retention of hard-to-recruit allied health professionals, nurses, social workers, and others, but as far as an individual plan by community or region, I am not 100 percent sure if that is what the Member is asking.

MR. MCNEELY: I will ask the question again. There is a regional training plan here, or a sessional plan, for each of the six RWCs that are looking at employment opportunities, training opportunities on their respective area for that particular Regional Wellness Council.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: The Regional Wellness Council across the Northwest Territories are there to provide us insight, wisdom, and make recommendations on ways to improve the delivery of programs and services in their regions and the communities.

Recruiting and retaining professionals is certainly an issue that affects everybody in the Health and Social Services system. I have reached out to Indigenous governments and, for the Regional Wellness Councils that I have met with, we have talked about trying to find ways to encourage local people to pursue health and social services careers.

The Regional Wellness Council members themselves, we do provide training to them on their roles and responsibilities on the Regional Wellness Council. We don't work to help them get employed, and I am not sure if that is what the Member is saying. I am not 100 percent sure I understand exactly what the Member is asking me, but as far as getting advice and direction on how to encourage young people to pursue those careers, we are certainly open to them for advice and their wisdom.

MR. SPEAKER: Oral questions. Member for Sahtu.

MR. MCNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Then I will work with the Minister on training plan opportunities within the department for the Sahtu area, for example. My last question here: can the Minister confirm if there is a plan in place for traditional medicine awareness campaigns in the Sahtu, for example, or in any of the other regions, how traditional medicine and being researched and engaged into some of the systems that they would apply for? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: This is an area that traditionally over the years hasn't been followed up on or addressed. I made a commitment within this government to work with Indigenous leaders and interested stakeholders to bring traditional healing and wellness into our health and social services system. We work closely with the Indigenous governments here. We put together a working group who actually helped us develop some terms of reference for the creation and establishment of a traditional wellness or a traditional healing advisory group, and we have put that working group in place.

Their role is to provide us advice and recommendations on how to incorporate more traditional healing wellness medicines into our system of health and social services here. They are in early days. We haven't received information or a report back from them, but we look forward to what they are going to be able to produce, and the advice and guidance they can provide us around traditional healing, wellness, medicines, those types of things. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Oral questions. Member for Yellowknife North.

QUESTION 601-18(3):
SUPPORTING THE TOURISM SECTOR

MR. VANTHUYNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions today are for the Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment. I spoke a little earlier today in my statement about the growing tourism sector and how well it is doing in terms of diversifying our economy. I would like to just start by asking the Minister: what is the department doing, or has the department reviewed the growing tourism sector with reference to how fast the sector is growing? How are they measuring it? What metrics are they using? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Based on, you know, a lot of comments that we have had from Members when we were in committee around data collection and stuff, the Department of ITI has definitely stepped up our progress around trying to get more data and build them into our business plans and stuff going forward, so there is more information for everybody.

For the tourism industry, we track how many people are coming to the Northwest Territories. You have clearly heard me saying in the House how much money has been spent and how much is spent by individuals from different demographic markets in the Northwest Territories. This is the type of information that is going to help feed into our 2025 tourism plan going forward. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. VANTHUYNE: I appreciate the Minister sharing some of that information. Maybe I will take that a little bit further and just ask: the Minister referred to good information and good data being collected. Can he share a little bit more with, you know, where would a budding entrepreneur find this information? Where and how is it being collected? If I was a new start-up business and I wanted to find this data so I could feed it into my business plan, how and where do I find this kind of information?

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: You know, depending on what industry or part of tourism that this operator would want to go into, be it fishing or big game hunting or aurora viewing, we have all this type of data within the department from the number of people who come to the Northwest Territories from different regions, as I have said, different demographics, the money that they spend, the number of viewing days that are possible with aurora viewing, these sorts of things. We continue to grow that database. I suspect that, if an entrepreneur wanted to get that information, which would be good advice -- and I think the Member is asking the right question, if you are going to go into this industry, you need to do your homework -- they can certainly just come directly to the Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment to get that information.

MR. VANTHUYNE: Thank you to the Minister for providing that reply. Mr. Speaker, we know that there is a major increase of new operators, especially within the Yellowknife region. With that influx of new operators comes some questions and concerns about safety, and in particular, public safety, so I would like to ask the Minister: with regards to road safety, cold climate, conditions on ice, and even going out on trails, what kind of qualifications and training and licensing does a new operator require?

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: As I have said in the House before, we are one of the only jurisdictions, and few jurisdictions in Canada, that need to have a tourism operator licence in the Northwest Territories. We have had some concerns, I guess, is the way to put it around how some of these operators have been operating, particularly around the Ingraham Trail, so we have attached a safety plan that has to be presented to the department to be able to access your licence. So anyone who is operating, and particularly in the North Slave region, where the Member's riding represents, they have to have these two permits in place to be able to operate in the Northwest Territories in a safe manner.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Oral questions. Member for Yellowknife North.

MR. VANTHUYNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I appreciate the reply from the Minister. The Minister indicated that he is aware that some of these concerns have been raised. He indicates that there is training required in order to get these permits. Let's say we have the permits now. What is the department doing to monitor the tourism operators to make sure that they are actually, in fact, doing what they should in terms of protecting public's interest? Does the department go and do random checks, or is there some kind of form of inspection that they undertake? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: As I have said in the House before, we have implemented where the licence owner has to have identification on their vehicle, a licence plate of sorts, to say that they are a certified operator in the Northwest Territories. We have upped our patrol, particularly around the Ingraham Trail. The safety issue there is something that we have been dealing with ever since I have been the Minister. There are different things. We are doing our pilot project this year around getting to operators into some of our parks during the winter season to get them off the road.

The Member clearly heard concerns from his constituents out on the Ingraham Trail about people just stopping their buses along the Ingraham Trail, turning their lights off for aurora viewing. This is a big concern of ours, along with a multitude of extra traffic that we have there with resupply of the mines. So this is a great concern of all of ours, and we are working on these things to try to improve customer safety, but also to provide a better experience for the visitors to the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Oral questions. Member for Nunakput.

QUESTION 602-18(3):
INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES FUNDING

MR. NAKIMAYAK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, earlier I spoke about the lack of funding for Indigenous languages in the Northwest Territories, and I have questions for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. Mr. Speaker, my question is: does the Minister believe that there is an imbalance in the way Indigenous languages are funded compared to French language in the Northwest Territories? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Minister of Education, Culture and Employment.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am going to be careful how I state this one, because I don't want to start a war between French people and Indigenous people.

There is a difference. There is a difference based on constitutional standing of French in Canada and the rights right across all of the territories and provinces within that. It is one of the two official languages for Canada, so that is recognized. All of the work that we are doing with Indigenous languages is exactly around revitalization because we are losing them. It's a concern of mine. It should be a concern for every Indigenous person in the Northwest Territories and across Canada, and I know it is. It's also my understanding that it's a concern for the federal government, and they are trying to work closely to try to support Indigenous

communities, so I am hopeful. I know we are coming up to a new election, but I am really hopeful that the next government will also carry that torch and will promote more to support not only Indigenous people but Indigenous language, because language is culture.

MR. NAKIMAYAK: I am not trying to play favourites, or anything like that, but knowing that the new bill that is coming out from the federal government does not really give the federal government obligations to work with Indigenous peoples on a closer basis. Mr. Speaker, last year, the federal government under the current agreement for French-language service and Indigenous languages will be 2019-2020. Mr. Speaker, my question is: has the department started to plan for what it wants to achieve for future generations?

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Yes, we are actually planning at this point, now. Right now, we are looking at the money that we got, its impact, how it's used, and the outcomes, and we are using that information as well as working with our community partners to look at the new negotiations that will be coming. We are conscious that there will be an election, though, so we are hopeful that whatever government comes in will support this initiative, as well. We are working closely. We are looking at outcomes, and we are looking for as much support as we can get.

MR. NAKIMAYAK: I appreciate the outlook from the Minister. Mr. Speaker, we have a lot of Indigenous languages in the territory. I know that sometimes it can be difficult working with many Indigenous governments. We all need to take ownership when it comes to language and culture. Mr. Speaker, another question about negotiations for federal languages funding: how does the department work with Indigenous language stakeholders when it's working with Canada to develop agreements like this?

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: This was before my time. It's a great initiative, and I am going to support it right through, as we have regional Indigenous language coordinators in every region, and their responsibility is to work closely with Indigenous governments and to lead and manage their regional Indigenous plans, their language plans. As well, we have the Aboriginal language revitalization boards that we work closely with. Those groups are used to consult with, to give us advice, and to provide their opinions as we go into any kind of negotiations or any kind of programming around Indigenous languages or Indigenous services.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Oral questions. Member for Mackenzie Delta.

QUESTION 603-18(3):
RESIDENT NURSE IN TSIIGEHTCHIC

MR. BLAKE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have follow-up questions from my statement yesterday. As I mentioned yesterday, the community of Tsiigehtchic in our ministerial tour echoed the need for a full-time nurse in the community, so I would like to ask the Minister of Health and Social Services: as I mentioned, the community wants to know when we will have a full-time nurse in Tsiigehtchic. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Minister of Health and Social Services.

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, at this time, there are no plans to put a full-time nurse into the community of Tsiigehtchic. We do get the public health nurse into the community for one day a week. We have physicians travelling to the community every four or five months. The community has access to services provided in other communities in cases of emergencies, including Fort McPherson and Inuvik. They have supports through the Med-Response team that can support the community health worker in the community in times of crisis. Most importantly, we are working on that pilot that we have referenced several times, to provide emergency response and emergency care in the community of Tsiigehtchic. We have been working very closely with the community. I understand that we are just finalizing phase 2 and that there will be training in the community on the 25th of February, to train local people to provide some of that emergency response in the times of crisis.

MR. BLAKE: I recall as I lived in the community in the mid-90s we did have a full-time nurse in the community, so what has changed since that time? Why do we not have a nurse now?

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: I was not living in the community, and I certainly was not in this position back then, so I cannot speak for the decisions of the day, but I know that we have a certain criteria for putting nurses in communities, which include size of community, access to services, co-location with RCMP, those types of things. However, as technology changes, Mr. Speaker, the provision of our services can evolve, and we are certainly learning more as we go. The community is continuing to evolve. There may be a situation where it is appropriate to put a full-time nurse in that community, but, with the supports we have today and with the enhancement of this pilot project, I think we should assess that pilot, see how it works out, and then continue to question whether or not it's appropriate to move a position in there on a full-time basis. As a note, Mr. Speaker, we do put a full-time nurse in that community for freeze-up

and break-up, so I think there are two periods of about a couple of weeks where there are full-time nurses in that community.

MR. BLAKE: We look forward to those times when we do have that full-time nurse, so why doesn't the department just can expand it a bit? Even six months out of the year, it would be great. You know, emergency response training is needed, but so is a nurse, Mr. Speaker. My constituents want to know: when can we get a full-time nurse?

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: In the Tsiigehtchic Health Centre, there is a full-time community health worker who has access to Med-Response and to professional services of nurses and doctors through Med-Response. There is a part-time home support worker, and there is a half-time community health representative. The public health nurse goes in for one day per week. The public health nurse, as I indicated, remains in the community when Highway No. 8 is inaccessible. We have a physician from Inuvik who provides services for one day every four to five weeks. In urgent emergency situations, the community wellness worker can access Med-Response. I understand the community's desire to have a full-time nurse. It's not currently in the plans. It's not in the plans for the life of this Assembly, but it will obviously continually be reviewed, continually be monitored, and, should the community grow or be in such a position that a full-time nurse is warranted, it will be done, but we are not there right now.

MR. SPEAKER: Oral questions. Member for Mackenzie Delta.

MR. BLAKE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am glad the department is looking at it, as the Minister stated, that, if emergency response is not working, then they will look at a full-time nurse. I look forward to that, and I will be sure to keep on top of this, as well. I thank the Minister for that commitment. Will the Minister live up to that commitment?

HON. GLEN ABERNETHY: The Department of Health and Social Services committed to providing high-quality services to the residents across this territory, and there is only six months left in this Assembly. Nobody knows what the next Assembly is going to look forward to, but, as a system, we will continue to monitor the provision of services. As technologies and other things evolve, we may be in a position where it's appropriate to put a nurse in some of our smaller communities; it may be practical to do so. We can't say that that's not going to happen. We do not know how things are going to roll out, but this system is a system that will continually learn and continually evolve. I don't know where I will be sitting in six months' time, so I am certainly not prepared to make a commitment for future governments. Thank you, Mr. Speaker

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Time for oral questions has expired. Item 8, written questions. Item 9, returns to written questions. Item 10, replies to the Commissioner's opening address. Item 11, petitions. Item 12, reports of standing and special committees. Item 13, reports of committees on the review of bills. Member for Kam Lake.

Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills

BILL 31:

NORTHWEST TERRITORIES 9-1-1 ACT

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I wish to report to the Assembly that the Standing Committee on Government Operations has reviewed Bill 31, Northwest Territories 9-1-1 Act, and that Bill 31 is now ready for consideration in Committee of the Whole. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Reports of committees on the review of bills. Item 14, tabling of documents. Minister of Infrastructure.

Tabling of Documents

TABLED DOCUMENT 353-18(3):
FOLLOW-UP LETTER FOR ORAL QUESTION
526-18(3): DEMPSTER HIGHWAY WINDBREAK
AT KM 4

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following document entitled "Follow-up Letter for Oral Question 526-18(3): Dempster Highway Windbreak at KM 4." Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Tabling of documents. Item 15, notices of motion. Item 16, notices of motion for first reading of bills. Item 17, motions. Item 18, first reading of bills. Item 19, second reading of bills. Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment.

Second Reading of Bills

BILL 36:

AN ACT TO AMEND THE PETROLEUM
RESOURCES ACT

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Thebacha, that Bill 36, An Act to Amend the Petroleum Resources Act, be read for the second time.

This bill amends the Petroleum Resources Act to:

- clarify the authority of the Minister to delegate to a person the powers, duties, and functions

assigned to the Minister;

- require the publication of additional notices respecting activities under the act;
- require that specified licences be made publicly available;
- amend the criteria for an interest-holder to be eligible for Significant Discovery Licence and restrict the term of the Significant Discovery Licence;
- add consideration of Indigenous traditional knowledge and input from Indigenous organizations when appointing board members;
- increase public representation on Environmental Studies Management Board;
- clarify the requirements respecting conflicts of interest and remuneration of board members;
- require the disclosure of greater amounts of information with respect to activities in Environmental Studies Research Fund;
- require the disclosure of greater amounts of information and clarify the obligations of the Minister and regulator with respect to the confidentiality of information received by either of them; and
- correct inconsistencies and errors identified in the act.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. The motion is in order. To the principle of the bill. Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. Members may speak to the object, expediency, principles, and merits of a bill at second reading, and I will exercise that right with the proposed changes to the Petroleum Resources Act.

I will speak to the process that got us here. I will also provide some comments on the bill and concerns with what is there and what is missing.

The Petroleum Resources Act set the rules on the rights to explore and produce oil and gas in those lands where the GNWT owns the resources. It sets out how the GNWT will act as the owner of onshore oil and gas resources and those subsurface lands owned by Indigenous governments.

The Process

This bill will amend the Petroleum Resources Act, which mirrors the Canada Petroleum Resources Act that the federal government had used to

administer oil and gas rights in the Northwest Territories prior to devolution. The federal legislation still applies in the offshore areas of the NWT. Oil and gas rights are administered much differently than mineral rights, where free entry has prevailed for hundreds of years. Oil and gas rights are only acquired through an initial expression of interest, which is decided by a bidding system. This is not a first-come, first-served approach. Benefits plans may also be required, followed by Exploration Licences, Significant Discovery Licences, and Production Licences. This is a far more rational approach to resource management than exists for mining.

With devolution effective April 1, 2014, our government has had the opportunity to develop our own legislation on oil and gas rights disposition regime. The public part of that process began in March 2018 with the release of a discussion paper, "Updates to the NWT's Petroleum Legislation." Community drop-in sessions were held March to May 2018. The scope of the discussion paper and proposed changes to the Petroleum Resources Act was limited to the following general areas:

- delegation authority of the Minister;
- confidentiality;
- Environmental Studies Management Board composition;
- Environmental Studies Research Fund accountability and reporting;
- transparency of licences;
- modernizing public notices; and
- Significant Discovery Licence options.

The department made it clear that this was the first phase of two-step process of changing this legislation. Broader changes are still to come in some key areas, including royalties. I think that a two-step process makes sense, but I would have preferred that the royalty regime be included to make sure that our government gets a fair share of our petroleum resources that are extracted.

In contrast to the approach taken by the Minister and his department in terms of developing the mining legislation, changes to the oil and gas legislation have been better managed, and more public information was made available, including cross-jurisdictional research and analysis and best practices. The Minister also provided clearer information and responses to committee requests, and I commend them for that work.

The "what we heard" report from the consultation was released on July 25, 2018. It was a thorough

review of the comments submitted and rationale for preferred direction moving forward. All of the written submissions made to ITI are still available on its website, which is an improvement over the approach to the mining legislation, where such submissions are not public.

As I understand it, there was some Indigenous government involvement in the development of the bill, as is legally required. As I said last week, we are still trying to figure out how to mesh this new way of developing legislation with the public government approach of the Executive holding the pen and the Legislature conducting a review.

Clearly, a lessons-learned review is required for the development process on post-devolution legislation, as the processes across departments and even within departments has varied wildly, with different outcomes and satisfaction levels. Mr. Speaker, I want to move on to the principles and merit of the bill.

Principles and Merit of the Bill

This bill is about petroleum resource rights management. It is not about promoting oil and gas development. The department certainly does a very good job at promoting oil and gas development, even if there is virtually no production from lands that we own and little to no interest from the hydrocarbon industry, despite Cabinet's heavy promotion.

In my view, it is an inherent conflict of interest for a department to promote something and attempt to impartially regulate it at the same time. This is not good governance. Unlike mining in the NWT, there is an impartial oil and gas regulator for many aspects of exploration and development, and in my opinion, they are doing a good job. That being said, I am still of the view that oil and gas rights should not be regulated by the Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment but by the Department of Lands that already has systems and expertise in place for surface lands management. This would remove the apprehension of bias.

There are definitely some improvements in this bill to how this government attempts to manage oil and gas. The Minister will have the ability to delegate authority to departmental staff to carry out duties under the Petroleum Resources Act, including to the Office of the Regulator of Oil and Gas Operations. There is no requirement for a notice to be issued of such delegation, which is contained in the other oil and gas bill for delegations by the regulator. A public notice of delegations under the Petroleum Resources Act by the Minister would be a good idea and should be included as we move forward.

There is the potential for improved public notice of licences issued for oil and gas exploration and production, including changes to the terms and conditions. While the discussion paper had suggested online publication, the bill, unfortunately, leaves the Minister with total discretion as to how public notice might be given. This seems to be part of a very troubling trend that we are beginning to see with this post-devolution legislation, where Ministers are increasingly being given discretion and authority, rather than setting standards of performance in the statutes themselves.

The other issue with the notice requirements in the bill is that notice is not required to be given to relevant Indigenous governments, as is the case with the proposed new mining legislation. Notice alone is also not sufficient for this government to comply with the concept of free, prior, and informed consent as found in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. I understand that oil and gas rights are managed differently and that the agreement of communities is usually sought before expressions of interest are sought, but notice requirements will still need to be reviewed carefully in this bill, Mr. Speaker.

We have a very antiquated system of registration of oil and gas rights, where fees are required for examination and reproduction of records. The Oil and Gas Rights Management section of the ITI website is a model of non-disclosure, where almost no specific information can be found. There appears to be errors in the dates for the very few postings that have been made. This definitely needs a lot of work and improvement if it is to be relied upon as the major source of public notification. The bill could help with that, but reporting and notice should become mandatory and online, with provision for interested parties to register to receive notices as they are filed.

The bill will require the Minister to make all of the licences public, which is an important first step and a definite improvement over current practice. Further steps towards more responsible resource development would see opportunities for the public to review and comment on licence applications, something that the discussion paper briefly mentioned but is not reflected in the bill. There should also be a requirement for the Minister to table an annual report on oil and gas rights administration and management.

One of the most contentious issues over the years with oil and gas management has been around confidentiality of information. The current legislation is a model of government secrecy. There is a mandatory requirement to keep almost everything secret. That is not how public governments should manage public resources, and I was pleased to see that the department even mentioned the Extractive

Industries Transparency Initiative that I highlighted in the House yesterday in attempting to get the Minister of Finance to provide minimal details on resource royalties. The bill may allow for the disclosure of more information. The problem is that there are some very broad categories of information that can be held back, including financial, commercial, scientific, and technical data. This definitely needs to be clarified, with the onus placed on the parties submitting the information to prove that it should be kept secret.

There is finally a definition for hydraulic fracturing in this bill, and it will require the disclosure of chemicals that are to be used, at least to the regulators. Hopefully we can find a way to ensure that the public is informed of these operations, if they ever happen here, and despite Cabinet's efforts to avoid dealing with the issue of fracking, even though it is part of our mandate.

Changes are proposed to the Environmental Studies Research Fund in this bill. This fund is an interesting and innovative way to improve our understanding of the impacts of oil and gas exploration and production on the environment. It is also a good example of polluter pays. The holders of oil and gas rights pay relatively small levies to enable research on impacts to be funded and published. I think that this approach should also be applied to the mining sector.

The fund is managed by a board appointed by the Minister and made up of individuals nominated by industry and government. There is currently a space for someone from the public. Under this bill, Indigenous governments will be able to nominate individuals to serve on the board, which is good step and one that I urged the Minister to ensure is in the legislation. This is certainly in keeping with the co-management approach in the land rights agreements.

This part of the bill would be even stronger if half of the board membership came from Indigenous government nominees. I believe there is a strong case for improving the credibility of the board by removing the requirement for industry and government employee representatives. All of the board members can and should be there for the public interest.

The accountability and reporting of the board will also be improved under the bill, and I support and, indeed, have suggested that this needs to happen. The Conflict of Interest Act will apply to the board members under this bill, which is an interesting move, one that I will be looking to better understand. Annual reporting by the board will become more prescriptive, with information required on projects funded. I note for the record that the board does such reporting now.

I have saved the best for last, Mr. Speaker: Significant Discovery Licences. This concept arose in the federal legislation that we inherited. It allows companies to have exclusive ownership of oil and gas rights without having to do any work or pay any fees, forever. Companies can get these licences without doing anything except being near another Significant Discovery Licence. A Minister could require drilling to take place, but this has never been done. Such licences amount to a resource giveaway that does nothing for our economy or for future generations.

Unfortunately, this has happened under our watch already, where the Minister has issued ten Significant Discovery Licences since 2016. The area covered by these licences is almost 2,200 square kilometres, an area about 39 percent of the size of Prince Edward Island. This government will get no revenues, generate no taxes, and ensure no employment and no benefits from these areas that are now tied up virtually forever. The Minister had and still has options to change this bad move. This should have been fixed right after devolution rather than waiting for five years. There was no reason to wait this long, and other options may have been open to the Minister.

The bill does try to fix this problem in some small ways. Drilling requirements will have to be completed on Exploration Licences before they can be converted to Significant Discovery Licences. This is helpful, but drilling on Exploration Licences appears to be at the complete discretion of the Minister. If the objective is to generate activity and benefits, exploration should be a mandatory requirement to maintain the rights, as is the case with mining.

Personally, I would prefer to see a cash bid system rather than the current work bid system with benefits plans. That is what the Inuvialuit did with their subsurface rights. The biggest change with regard to Significant Discovery Licences under the bill would be a term of 15 years. I am not sure why that length of term was picked, and I look forward to exploring it, but extensions to these licences may be possible, with the Minister, again, having total discretion.

In summary, I commend the department and Minister for a more open and transparent approach to amending the Petroleum Resources Act. I wish that we were also dealing with the royalty regime, but there is not as much urgency, given the lack of production and interest, so this can wait.

There are improvements in the bill, and the Significant Discovery Licence issues problem may get resolved soon. I hope for reduced confidentiality requirements, better public notice, and actual opportunities for the public to comment on and

review licence applications, as is the case with our co-management regime for virtually all our other resources. There are also changes to the Environmental Studies Research Fund, and I will push for further improvements.

This bill is a good start, and I look forward to working with my colleagues on the Standing Committee on Economic Development and Environment to hear what Indigenous governments, non-governmental organizations, industry, and the public have to say. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. To the principle of the bill.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed?

---Carried

Bill 36 has had its second reading and is now referred to standing committee. Second reading of bills. Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment.

BILL 37:
AN ACT TO AMEND THE OIL AND GAS
OPERATIONS ACT

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Thebacha, that Bill 37, An Act to Amend the Oil and Gas Operations Act, be read for the second time.

This bill amends the Oil and Gas Operations Act to:

- clarify the authority of the Minister and the regulator to delegate to a person the powers, duties, and functions assigned to them;
- expand the authority of the regulator to issue guidelines and interpretation notes;
- allows the regulator to conduct public hearings and specify the powers that the regulator may exercise in the conduct of the hearings;
- require the Minister to table an annual report on the activities of the regulator;
- require the disclosure of greater amounts of information and clarify the obligations of the Minister and the regulator with respect to the confidentiality of information received by either of them; and
- clarify the requirements surrounding proof of financial responsibilities for holders of authorizations.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. The motion is in order. To the principle of the bill. Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. Members may be relieved to know that I will not repeat my comments on the process for this bill, as this was covered in my remarks on Bill 36.

The Oil and Gas Operations Act regulates activities that take place when companies explore for and produce onshore oil and gas, even on Indigenous subsurface lands. It deals with safety, environmental protection, and resident benefits from exploration and production activities.

The Minister's main role under the act is to approve benefits plans related to exploration. A regulator approves plans for safely and sustainably drilling wells and building production facilities; monitors operations to make sure that everything is going according to filed plans; and oversees the process of decommissioning and abandoning oil and gas facilities. OROGO, or the Office of the Regulator of Oil and Gas Operations, is the regulator for most onshore areas, and in an odd twist, the National Energy Board is the regulator for the Settlement Region and the offshore.

This Bill will amend the Oil and Gas Operations Act which mirrors the federal Canada Oil and Gas Operations Act.

The scope of the proposed changes to the Oil and Gas Operations Act are limited to the following general areas:

- Delegation authority of the Minister and the regulator;
- Guidelines and interpretation notes will be allowed by the regulator for all of its areas of responsibilities;
- The regulator will have the ability to hold public hearings and set its own rules for hearings;
- The regulator will be required to prepare an annual report;
- Confidentiality of information may be reduced; and
- Proof of financial responsibility will be required for the duration of an operation and after decommissioning.

It is not clear whether there will be any further changes to the act as part of the overall second phase of reviewing how GNWT manages oil and gas resources.

The Minister and regulator will have the ability to delegate authority to carry out duties under the act,

but only the regulator is required to provide public notice of such delegations. In my view, the Minister should also be required to give public notice of delegations.

The powers and authorities of the regulator are being clarified in the bill, and that is a good thing. The regulator will be able to provide greater guidance with regard to all of its duties and responsibilities. This will help create greater certainty for industry, Indigenous governments, other regulators, and the public. The regulator will also have the ability to hold public hearings and set its own rules for such proceedings. While I support this move, I believe the bill should also set out when such hearings should be mandatory. Annual reports will also be required of regulators. OROGO already does this and I commend them for doing that voluntarily.

The same provisions around confidentiality of information as found in Bill 36 appear to be repeated here in this bill. The current legislation is not as restrictive as the other oil and gas legislation. That is a better place to start from. The problem is that there are some very broad categories of information that can be held back including financial, commercial, scientific, and technical data. This definitely needs to be clarified with the onus placed on the parties submitting the information to prove that it should be kept secret, rather than use the assumption that things are secret unless an active decision is made to make them public.

There is also a definition for hydraulic fracturing in this bill that could improve the amount of information that may be made public about such operations.

There is a significant change to the requirements for proof of financial responsibility under this bill. The current legislation only requires proof of financial responsibility for the duration of the operation, which may not include abandonment or decommissioning. We want to make sure that an operator remains responsible for closure until the regulator signs off that it is acceptable. There may be some lessons that we can learn from the Redwater Supreme Court of Canada case that I spoke of earlier in this sitting. The changes in the bill will require that such proof of financial responsibility will need to remain in place for a period of one year after the regulator agrees that closure has been completed. This should help avoid unforeseen events or failures, but we may need to look at whether just one year is an appropriate end point.

There is a very disappointing omission in the bill when it comes to proof of financial responsibility, and I have raised this issue previously in this House. There is an arbitrarily low cap of a

maximum of \$40 million of absolute liability for spills set out in the Oil and Gas Spills and Debris Liability Regulations under the current act. The federal government has amended its mirror Oil and Gas Legislation to put in a \$1-billion cap to help prevent public liabilities. I have noted, for example, that the Deep Water Horizon blow out in the Gulf of Mexico resulted in clean up and compensation costs of over \$80 billion. The \$40-million amount in the regulations now is insignificant in face of the potential harm and cost of a major spill in the Northwest Territories. This is a very serious threat to our government's financial safety. We need to fix this in our bill.

I note for the record that OROGO is conducting a public review of the principles it should use in developing a methodology for calculating and managing proof of financial responsibility and I support their efforts.

I look forward to working with my colleagues on the Standing Committee on Economic Development and Environment to improve this bill. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. To the principle of the bill.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

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

---Carried

Bill 37 has had a second reading and is now referred to a standing committee. Second reading of bills. Item 20, consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters: Bill 32, Naturopathic Profession Statutes Amendment Act; Minister's Statement 131-18(3), Sessional Statement; Tabled Document 322-18(3), Main Estimates, 2019-2020; Minister's Statement 151-18(3), with Member for Hay River North in the chair.

Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters

MR. SIMPSON: I will now call Committee of the Whole to order. What is the wish of committee? Mr. Beaulieu.

MR. BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, committee would like to consider Tabled Document 322-18(3), Main Estimates, 2019-2020, considering the Department of Infrastructure and the Department of ITI, time permitting. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agree.

MR. SIMPSON: Thank you, committee. We will consider the document after a brief recess. Thank you.

---SHORT RECESS

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): I will now call Committee of the Whole to order. Committee, we have agreed to consider the Department of Infrastructure in the Main Estimates, which begins on page 227 of the document. I will turn to the Minister of Infrastructure for opening comments. Minister Schumann.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am pleased to present the 2019-2020 Main Estimates for the Department of Infrastructure. The proposed estimates of \$264 million reflect an increase of \$25.1 million, or 10.5 percent, over the 2018-2019 Main Estimates.

These estimates continue to support the priorities of the 18th Legislative Assembly. Highlights include forced-growth adjustments for utility and maintenance costs of new facilities, increased maintenance and dust control for the Dempster Highway, and increased funding to upgrade and maintain the ferries on the Mackenzie, Liard, and Peel Rivers. These estimates also include lease costs of \$600,000 transferred to Infrastructure from other departments.

Also identified in these estimates is the creation of the new Strategic Infrastructure Division. This new division will contribute to achieving the Northwest Territories' mandate commitment of securing funding for large transformative infrastructure projects. This new division will lead coordination and planning for new federal infrastructure funding while working closely with other Government of the Northwest Territories departments and stakeholders during the process.

In the coming year, this division will focus on advancing the Mackenzie Valley Highway projects through the shared investment of \$140 million under the National Trade Corridors Fund. These projects will include construction of the Great Bear River Bridge and the Wrigley to Mount Gaudet Access Road. Focus will also be directed towards seeking opportunities for funding and planning next steps to advance the development of the Slave Geological Province Corridor. Finally, the Strategic Infrastructure Division will continue work to advance the Government of the Northwest Territories' priority to improve public infrastructure in the Northwest Territories. This will be done through an integrated bilateral agreement signed with Infrastructure Canada worth \$761 million over 10 years.

The department's Energy Division will also be fully engaged with our federal partners and other stakeholders to secure funding to advance the Taltson Hydroelectricity Expansion. This division will focus on overseeing \$7.8 million in new funding under the Low Carbon Economy Leadership Fund and managing \$44.3 million in energy projects for 2019-2020 under the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Plan.

The 2019-2020 estimates continue to support Infrastructure's mandate commitments related to energy efficiency and sustainability. Specific initiatives include increasing the use of renewable and alternative energy in off-grid communities, continued engagement with the federal government to access funding for major renewable energy initiatives, and implementing the 2030 Energy Strategy to reduce our reliance on fossil fuels.

This includes providing continued financial support to the Arctic Energy Alliance and introducing larger-scale grants for communities, commercial buildings, and industry that target reduced greenhouse gas emissions. Towards this, Infrastructure will provide \$2.74 million in core funding to the Arctic Energy Alliance, as well as an additional \$550,000 for community energy grants and \$1.95 million for Northwest Territories-wide energy programs supplemented through the Low Carbon Economy Leadership Fund, bringing the total Arctic Energy Alliance contributions to \$5.24 million.

The 2019-2020 estimates also include continued investment in the Deferred Maintenance Program by upgrading and preserving government assets, such as offices, schools, and health centres. The Deferred Maintenance Program helps the Government of the Northwest Territories to better target its capital dollars in support of its priorities by maintaining and extending the useful life of our existing asset base.

That concludes my opening remarks. I would be happy to answer any questions from Members. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. It is my understanding that you have witnesses that you wish to bring into the Chamber, so I will ask you to take a seat at the witness table. Sergeant-at-Arms, please escort the witnesses into the House. Minister, please introduce your witnesses for the record.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: On my right, I have Deputy Minister of Infrastructure Paul Guy, and Assistant Deputy Minister Regional Operations of Infrastructure Jayleen Robertson, and on my left, I have Vince McCormick, director of Corporate Services of Infrastructure.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Committee, the department begins on page 228 and continues onto page 261. It contains four activities, with two information items at the end of the section. This is quite a large department, and I usually allow one set of comments and questions per activity, but I think we are going to have to go with at least two allowable comments per Member per activity. We will defer the departmental total until after consideration of the activity detail. The first activity is asset management on pages 234 to 237. Does committee have any comments on asset management? The \$75 million item. Mr. Vanthuyne.

MR. VANTHUYNE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I would like to start by asking the Minister if they can give us a bit of detail with regard to the Capital Asset Retrofit Fund. I have been a supporter of this fund, and I think that the work that is undertaken with regard to this fund is significant for this territory. It checks off a lot of boxes as it relates to goals and objectives of the Assembly and, of course, as it relates to the government and the department in managing assets. Most importantly, it is also a fund that can assist us greatly in achieving our energy goals, as well as mitigating impacts on climate change. I would like to ask: how much are we putting into the Capital Asset Retrofit Fund? Are we actually getting it out the door and improving our assets with it? More importantly, I guess, is: what kind of return on investment are we seeing with regard to this fund? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. In our proposed work plan for this in the Budget 2019-2020 fiscal year is \$3.8 million. Savings that result from these projects are estimated at an average of \$209,700 annually, which corresponds to the estimated reduction of 824 tonnes of GHG emissions. I will turn it over to the deputy for further comment. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Guy.

MR. GUY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. In addition to the Minister's comments, since we have put this program in place we have completed 77 energy retrofit projects across the territory in 23 communities. Overall, the cumulative greenhouse gas savings that we have calculated based on that work that we have done is about 73,030 tonnes.

When you look at the projects that we have proposed in the 2019-2020 plan, we estimate that the savings associated with the work that we will be doing in the 2019-2020 year will achieve about \$209,000 in operational energy cost savings and

will contribute another 824 tonnes to that greenhouse gas total that I mentioned earlier. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Vanthuyne.

MR. VANTHUYNE: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I am glad I asked about this because these are promising returns on investment. Clearly, these are well-spent dollars that are bringing a number of benefits to the territory, so I appreciate that we keep this fund well maintained. Recently, there has been some correspondence with regard to municipalities wanting to have this government consider potential development of NWT building standards. This is not the first time that it has come up. It has come up in the past where our government has been questioned about why do not we take responsibility for developing building standards. I am wondering, while this is not the Department of MACA, which is tied to communities, this is the Department of Infrastructure, which is very strongly tied to codes and standards, and so I would like to get some opinion or some thoughts from the Minister with regards to how they see the GNWT's role in developing and/or maintaining building standards. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Guy.

MR. GUY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Certainly, Mr. Chair, as the Member indicated, the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs is the lead department on this file. The Department of Infrastructure has a strong supporting role in helping the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs when it comes to any work they are doing around codes and standards, developing those. Our role falls in a number of areas. A number of our technical experts or technical staff, our architects, engineers, participate in code development committees at the national level, so they sit on code committees that help develop the National Building Code of Canada. They participate in code development under plumbing codes, mechanical codes, electrical codes, elevator codes. We have a role at a national table to help develop those for application across the NWT.

In our safety division, our inspectors there have a responsibility to enforce and oversee the codes around electrical protection, mechanical protection for large industrial boilers as well as elevators, so we have that role, as well, in the department. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Vanthuyne.

MR. VANTHUYNE: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I appreciate the insight. I guess I would ask another question and phrase it: given their experience with regard to infrastructure, in particular the technical side and the project management side, does the department feel that there is a need to develop an NWT-specific building standard, given our geography and our cold climates? Or do the current standards which are applied nationally seem to be the standard that would suffice, maybe because we do take part in helping develop them and improve them, at least what we have to offer gets considered in the amendments or changes to those standards? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you. Mr. Guy.

MR. GUY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The Member is correct. We do have a lot of experience with standards and particularly building and construction in the unique environment of the North, where we work with permafrost, extreme temperatures, demands on envelopes. Within the department, we have, for the large commercial buildings, developed our "good building practices," and these have been developed over probably 30 years of history, working with large infrastructure projects. We take lessons learned, document them, and develop those into what we call the "good building practices." Those are required to be adhered to for all of our infrastructure projects that we do construct for public infrastructure and for the Government of the Northwest Territories.

Those standards and good building practices are certainly available publicly. For anybody else doing building and infrastructure in the Northwest Territories, they can adopt those and use those in their own contracting practice if they choose. The more smaller scale, I think the Housing Corporation has done some similar work with standards for residential construction. They work with their own stock, to develop best practices and share that information widely. In terms of municipal approval process, my understanding is that tax-based communities have the ability to adopt and implement a building-inspection regime, so some larger municipalities in the Northwest Territories. I believe Yellowknife has their own code-enforcement division, and they have adopted things like EnerGuide 80 around energy efficiency, which are applicable to buildings in their jurisdiction. So there are some municipal governments that are doing this already. Certainly, the work that we do is publicly available and can be used or adopted or shared throughout the North and in other jurisdictions in the North, as well. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you. Mr. Vanthuyne.

MR. VANTHUYNE: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I appreciate the deputy minister's detailed response. With that, I have no further questions in this particular division. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you. Anything further from committee? Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. In the Minister's opening remarks, I was kind of dazzled with all the millions of dollars that he was talking about. I am wondering how many millions of dollars are going towards the Slave Geological Province road in 2019-2020? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you. Minister.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. As far as I know, we don't have any more than some staff time going towards this, and some small planning that we are doing, some announcements that we expect to be coming later in the year around this project. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. Can the Minister tell us whether there is any money in 2019-2020? I understand this is the O and M budget for the planning that needs to know done for the Frank Channel bridge. Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you. Minister. Sorry. Who am I directing this to? Mr. Guy.

MR. GUY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. For the Frank Channel bridge, we are doing some preliminary work using our own-source funds through the 2018-2019 fiscal year. We do have some applications in through a number of federal infrastructure programs, including the Northern Trade Corridors Fund, to seek funding. We also have applications in for smaller amounts, to do some planning work, through agencies like CanNor, and we are expecting at some point to hear back on those in the coming weeks and months. In terms of specific money in 2019-2020, there is some staff fund time allocated in the strategic infrastructure division to work on advancing those applications and those projects, but I would have to go back, and the Minister would have it commit to coming back with a more detailed number on how specifically we would prorate that to that project. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. Yes, I would like a commitment out of the Minister. If he could just sort of identify how much in terms of the O and

M budget is being devoted to these two projects, the Frank Channel bridge and the Slave Geological Province road, I would find that information helpful. Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you. Minister.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes, we can do that and provide the Member with that detailed information. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. Thanks to the Minister for that commitment. I am just wondering, I understood that there had been money in previous budgets for the Frank Channel bridge. I am just trying to understand why we are still planning for it and we are not actually doing the work. Can the Minister's officials explain what's happening? Why we continue to spend money on planning rather than doing the work? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you. Minister.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. As you know, there was an allocation towards the Frank Channel bridge originally through the old program, the federal program. When we went out and did consultation with the community of Behchoko and industry, it was clearly relied to us at that point that there was a need to have a look at the realignment and a possibility of a new bridge at that point with discussion with these people, one without a top on it because it's a chokehold for industry going north from there. It is the only choke point in the Northwest Territories for industry. With that, we have decided to go back and reallocate those funds and have another look at replacing the Frank Channel bridge. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. Thanks to the Minister for that. Well, not only is it a problem maybe for the supplies that are going to the diamond mines, but it is a public safety hazard. I have driven across that bridge. It is unsafe. There are not even stop lights at either end. It is an accident waiting to happen. Can the Minister tell me what kind of priority that project has within his department? Is it being given the same level of effort and so on as the Slave Geological Province Road? How much of a priority is this Frank Channel bridge with the department? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you. Minister.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. As I said in my comments there about the consultation with industry and looking at replacing it, we made the decision to have a look at that. We have spent some money on the Frank Channel bridge to try to get a little more life out of it while we look at trying to access funding from the federal government to replace this thing. It is roughly \$60, \$70 million, if I remember correctly the number for it. We presently have an application out of the National Trade Corridors Fund, which we would have shared with committee on our application around with that and the Slave Geological Province. We are waiting to hear back from the federal government. Hopefully, that will be before the federal election takes place. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. That is helpful from the Minister. If the Minister had to put a priority on the planning work that needs to be done on the Frank Channel bridge versus planning work that needs to be done for the Slave Geological Province road, which one is the highest priority? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you. Minister.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. As I have clearly stated, we have put in both of our applications for both these projects with the federal government. Both of these projects are of high priority for our department. Safety is number one. As I have said, we spent money on this Frank Channel bridge right now to get some life out of this thing, but the Slave Geological Province is also a clear mandate to the Government of the Northwest Territories, and one that I have been committed to trying to secure funding for. Based on our applications, the Slave Geological Province is my preferred priority over the Frank Channel bridge. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. I appreciate the Minister putting that on the record that is his priority and for the department, his work on the Slave Geological Province road over the Frank Channel bridge. I am glad that he put it on the record, because I don't think that should be the priority. The Minister even said public safety should be number one, so I really don't understand why the Minister is putting the Slave Geological Province Road as a priority over the Frank Channel bridge. That is what he said. You can check Hansard if we want, but I disagree with that priority and I don't think that is in the public interest. Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you. Would the Minister care to retort?

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Absolutely. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Let's make it quite clear on the record. That is why we are sitting here today, discussing these things. This was based on an application for the National Trade Corridors Fund, the amount of \$400 million that was carved out for the three northern territories. Based on that application, that is where my priority would be. It would be under the Slave Geological Province. It doesn't mean that the bridge is not a priority. This fund is just for the three northern territories with a carve-out, as I have said. There are only a certain amount of dollars left in there. The federal government has changed the rules around our application process and changed the cap on it, which we have done our two applications for this. If we are not successful to get the money for the Frank Channel bridge through that process, we will certainly be chasing other avenues through the federal government to replace this bridge. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you. Anything further from Mr. O'Reilly?

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. Yes, I am confused probably at the best of times, but now I am really confused with regard to what the priorities of the department and the Minister are. It seems like when it comes to applying for federal money, the Slave Geological Province road planning work is a priority over Frank Channel. Can the Minister tell us, with his own money, with the department's own money, what is the priority? Is it replacing the Frank Channel bridge or is it doing the planning work for Slave Geological Province Road? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Minister.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. If we are going to sit here and play on words, let's make it quite clear. I have been mandated to access funding for the Slave Geological Province road. That is a part of my mandate commitment. It is in the mandate agreed by all Members in this House. We are out there clearly trying to get funding for the Slave Geological Province, and Frank Channel bridge is clearly part of the application for the Slave Geological Province. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you. Final brief word, Mr. O'Reilly?

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. The Minister well knows my views on this, that the mandate is so broad you could drive trucks through it. Here is a clear example of the Minister driving some trucks

through the mandate. Look, if the priority is public safety, and I believe it should be, the Minister and his department should be working at replacing the Frank Channel bridge. The Slave Geological Province road should wait. Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you. Any further comments from the committee on the \$75-million activity? Nothing further from the committee. I will call this activity. Infrastructure, asset management, operations expenditure summary, activity total, \$75,890,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agree.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, committee. Please turn to the next activity found on page 238 to 241, corporate management. Mr. Vanthuyne.

MR. VANTHUYNE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chair, over the review of both our capital budget and our business plans that set up for the main estimates, we have shared concerns a number of times with regard to carryovers of projects. The committee has been concerned over the amount of carryovers. In one particular year, I think last year, about almost half of the capital projects, the amount of the capital projects, ended up being carried over. The committee has made the recommendation that the department develops a better tracking system to lower the carryover amounts and to ensure that the money gets spent when it is supposed to. We know that this has a fairly impactful or has a large impact, especially on small communities as it relates to employment opportunities, so it is critical that we find ways to make sure that we are getting these funds out the door year after year.

I just want to ask the Minister: is the department developing any kind of mechanism to track carryovers and then, let's say, even substantiate them a little bit better in the budget process so that Members can have a better understanding and grasp on the impacts that carryovers have on the territory, I guess. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you. Mr. Guy.

MR. GUY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. That certainly is an area that we have been working on in 2018-2019. We will continue to work on it in 2019-2020. Some of the things you will see in this budget will help us address that issue going forward in 2019-2020. One of those areas is the strategic infrastructure division that we have proposed here in the budget.

The intent there of that division is to off-load a lot of the work around these large federal Infrastructure investments like the recently announced investment for Mackenzie Valley highway from our line staff

who are focused on delivering the day-to-day infrastructure needs to support the other areas of government operation, for example, our client-managed capital and our own highway and airport and transportation-related infrastructure. That is one of the areas where we are making some changes to address the issue that has been raised by committee when we went through our business plan review but also, I think, previously during Committee of the Whole.

The second area is in regional operations. We put enhanced tracking and monitoring of the client-managed capital in place, doing regular tracking, working with our client departments to look for those areas that are adding delay or risk, and finding ways to mitigate them. Some of it is a result of processes within our department. Some of it is outside of our control and around programming decisions and decisions by third-party stakeholders who are involved in some of the projects. We are looking at ways where we can reduce those bottlenecks, as well.

The second thing we are doing is looking at adding additional capacity in the area of project delivery at the front line where our project officers are delivering those projects so that we can keep them moving along, as well. Also, we are enhancing front-end work we are doing around budgeting and planning in terms of having more detailed projects developed through the planning-study process before we seek the appropriation.

There are a number of ways we are working on this. In particular, this year, in 2019-2020, we have put a lot of effort on reducing the carry-overs on some of the ones that were a chronic issue for committee around the area of our culvert, bridge, and gypsum programs. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you. Mr. Vanthuyne.

MR. VANTHUYNE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you to the deputy minister for that detailed response. We noted during business plan reviews that there were a number of reasons for carry-overs. It seems as though the department has taken a lot of progressive and proactive steps in trying to overcome some of those challenges. There still are some challenges with regard to outside capacity outside of government, you know, in the form of contractors, et cetera. I am just wondering: although this, to some degree or a greater degree, is outside the department's abilities, have they been given any insight or do they have anything to offer as it relates to how we can work with communities and contractors to build capacity to help deliver on-the-ground projects for the territory? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you. Minister.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. You know, that is an ongoing challenge right across the board. Let's take example we are trying to move forward with the Bear River Bridge. The Hamlet of Tulita, which is right there at the doorstep, we are working closely with everyone in that community. They have formed a Bear River Working Group Committee amongst all the user groups within the municipality, be it Indigenous groups or the municipal government, to try to be able to figure out a way to capitalize on this. Our department and our ADM is working closely with them.

One of the other things I think that we looked at and it came up in the House a couple times is around some of these projects and have a serious look at some of the ones that we can break out to utilize a little bit more local capacity instead of having these projects that are too large for some of these, you know, smaller to mid-sized companies that can't capitalize on it. We are continuing to engage with the people across the Northwest Territories and the contractors and through the NWT Construction Association and such and the Chamber of Commerce to try to address some of these things. We will continue to work on that. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you. Mr. Vanthuyne.

MR. VANTHUYNE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you to the Minister for the reply. I appreciate that there is some effort being built around this. We have seen in other areas and from other departments, too, we have seen the success of certain training programs that have worked well, as well. You know, given that we are fairly good at knowing what projects that we are going to deliver over the next handful of years through our capital asset management plan, et cetera, and just knowing all of these big applications that we have to the federal government for shared funding, are there ways in which, knowing that we have all of these projects that we need certain skill sets built, we can start to use Aurora College or ECE and others to start developing training programs to build up skill capacity in these areas? Are there discussions that the department is having internally and externally to make this possible? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you. Minister.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes. You know, I believe education has worked on their document. Skills 4 Success is going to identify a number of these jobs. I think it was 36,000 or

38,000 jobs in the next number of years coming forward. We know that the population of the Northwest Territories is aging. We have already stepped up to the plate, I think, on some of these things as you take the ITH or the Canyon Creek-type projects where we have worked with the proponent who implemented their training programs.

We have given a lot of updates to committee on the number of people who have been trained on these projects. I think it is a number as high as 400-and-some individuals who worked on the ITH projects, with a great focus on trying to get more women into the workforce and these untraditional types of occupations. We are working closely with industry on these things around the training side of things.

You know, I think, hopefully, going forward, you see, even on the Tlicho Road going to Whati, you are going to see some of this stuff taking place, as well. We have really, you know, looked back on the history of these other two projects and how we can implement these things into other projects going forward because there will be some larger projects coming forward, as the Member stated. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you. Mr. Vanthuyne.

MR. VANTHUYNE: Yes. I appreciate that. I think that one of the things and one of the areas that we will really have to focus on, although it is not directly in this department but it certainly ties in to what the Minister has just indicated, is that we need to build strong capacity, especially as it relates to trades. The opportunity to promote and attract individuals to enter into the apprenticeship programs would be something that we should be promoting strongly and working interdepartmentally to achieve. I just wanted to note that for the record. I have no further questions in this activity. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you. Next, we have Mr. McNeely.

MR. MCNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I know in the past year, during our capital session here, we had talked about carry-overs, carry-overs. From past experience there, it has always been the wishes of the private sector to have multi- or carry-over contracts. Now, in this position, I see how we can share the wishes of the private sector and accommodate the carry-over budget to allow the project to go through. Now, it is a matter of the department to design and even give some thought to sectional approaches to the project.

Given that experience recently, I have shared that with the leadership in Tulita, for example, to say to

them to look at piecemealing the construction of the Bear River Bridge. This way, it is maximizing on employment training as well as commerce opportunities as well as seeing the project going through and providing multiple years of benefits to the remote community in this case. I am quite satisfied with the discussions we have had in the past and the whole idea that it is not being ruled out on carry-overs.

Carry-overs are actually a good thing. In some parts of our Territory, that is all you are allowed to do is seasonal access, which means carrying over to the next season. In our case, in the Sahtu, in some cases, in some projects there, you are only accessible for the winter months, and the spring thaw comes in. Normally, you know, it revolves around the winter oats season, which usually starts deteriorating to the latter part of March. Avenues to prolong that are looked at, nighttime travel. Those are all factors that I have come to learn in this line of work here that supports the project, as well as employment, as well as prolonging benefits. I share that with the colleagues here today. Thank you

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you. Does the Minister care to respond?

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. In my previous comments about the other ones to the other Member, as well, when you start talking about Canyon Creek as a good example of doing a small section instead of doing the entirety of the road, it will capitalize on local employment, local businesses, and training opportunities. We will continue to look at that. When you look at our plan going forward, around the Mackenzie Valley Highway, the Mount Gaudet section is clearly going to be another one of those sections that the people in the Deh Cho are going to be able to capitalize on as an opportunity, very similar to what happened in the Sahtu.

We continue to work with the community of Tulita, as I said, with the Bear River Bridge to look at whether there are any possibilities of breaking out some stuff out of that project, where some local people can capitalize on the opportunity that is there. We will continue to look at those things.

Contractors, obviously, have a role to play in carryovers, as well. They are challenged, as well, around capacity issues and staffing, and that is why we have the Department of Education working on what they do around skills training and the Skills 4 Success document moving forward. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you. Further, Mr. McNeely? Nothing further from Mr. McNeely. Next, Mr. Beaulieu.

MR. BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, in our review of the business plan in this section, we have identified the Infrastructure staff. It appears as though a lot of the Infrastructure staff are getting close to retirement.

I was wondering if I could ask the Minister what the plan is to try to retain the corporate knowledge as they move forward, if there is a large amount of senior people retiring in the next five years. What is the plan? What is the human resource plan to retain corporate knowledge in this department? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. Deputy Minister Guy.

MR. GUY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Certainly that is an issue that has been identified for us over the past few years. Prior to amalgamation of the departments, each department had their own HR plan and their own risk management plan, and in those risk management plans and HR plans, this was identified as one of those key issues that we needed to work on going forward.

As we went through the amalgamation process, a lot of that succession took place. We had a number of retirements of key people across the departments, both in headquarters and in other regions, and we were able to use the capacity of the amalgamated department to step in and fill many of those vacancies. We were able to retain a lot of that corporate knowledge and continue to have strong long-term people in those key positions.

As we move forward, we are doing a number of things now in the Department of Infrastructure, which are building on the tools that we had in place before, things like management training programs, developmental transfer assignments, and building that capacity from within. Also, I think the government widespread has this issue. There is lots of work that the Department of Human Resources is doing as well, in providing opportunities for employees to train, get broader experience by moving to other departments, and moving around within the public service as well to build that capacity for the greater public service.

It is one of our priorities. It is one of the things in our risk management framework that we have identified, and all of our senior managers are working on to build succession within their divisions and in their departments. That is no different than the one that we are speaking about here today. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Deputy Minister Guy. Mr. Beaulieu.

MR. BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thanks for that response. On page 240, Mr. Chair, I want to just ask some questions around the local community roads. Community access roads, generally, I think, are used for all seasons, to maybe create an all-season road to various traditional areas that individuals would wish to access. I have a question for the Minister: could this money be used for winter roads? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. Minister Schumann.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes, this money can be used for winter roads, as long as it is outside of their community. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Minister Schumann. Mr. Beaulieu.

MR. BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, just in relation to the same area, I want to ask the Minister if they have a capital budget access road, which is a larger amount and may have a different objective. I know that this is not the capital. I clearly understand that. I am wondering if there is a capital program, however.

Mr. Chairman, an example that I will go to is that, when they were building the Inuvik to Tuktoyaktuk Highway, they first built a 17-kilometre access road along the right-of-way. I am wondering, Mr. Chairman, where that type of money sits. Where does that access money sit, in which area? Is it here, or is it somewhere else? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. Minister Schumann.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. That would be a capital plan, so that would have to be a capital appropriation project. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Minister Schumann. Mr. Beaulieu.

MR. BEAULIEU: Thank you. I think the Minister said capital appropriation. I said that I understood that, but there something in the capital called access road. I am wondering if there is a set amount in that budget all of the time that is similar to this, but maybe has a different objective. I am wondering if there is money there that should essentially have no impact on this budget. I am not sure I am making myself very clear. Maybe the Minister can help me with this. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. Minister Schumann.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. There is no specific amount for capital for access roads. Those are set on priorities that the government sees as we move towards our transportation plan. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Minister Schumann. Time has expired. Mr. Simpson.

MR. SIMPSON: Thank you. Just to follow up on Mr. Beaulieu's comments here, the local community roads on page 240, there is \$1.48 million appropriated for it. Should that be in the capital budget? What is this doing here if that is a capital item? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. Simpson. Deputy Minister Guy.

MR. GUY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. This is an O and M budget line. This is an application-based program, where communities can apply for funding to develop trails, access roads, traditional hunting or trapping trails, or community access projects that they identify and bring forth. It is on a case-by-case application basis.

It is not capital, because they are not GNWT assets that the investments are being made in. These are community projects, community access projects that they identify and apply on. That is why it is here in O and M. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Deputy Minister Guy. Mr. Simpson.

MR. SIMPSON: Thank you. I am aware of that. I just wanted to clear it up in Hansard for anyone who is looking at the budget document and trying to follow that conversation. My questions are about, I guess, corporate management. There was talk in the questions from the Member for Yellowknife North about training opportunities and what the department is doing in terms of addressing this deficit, I guess, of skilled workers, such as a journeyman, that we have. I know there was talk about the Minister said we are looking at breaking up contracts, so that smaller organizations can perhaps get in on them. Talking about training locals when there are projects, but there doesn't seem to be anything concrete here. I know that Education has Skills 4 Success, and it is hard to really tell from those documents what exactly is happening on the ground. From the Minister's answers, it sounds like things are sort of happening ad hoc, but there doesn't seem to be a real training plan.

One of the things that is really holding the territory back is the lack of journeymen. It is the lack of skilled labourers. You know, we can build a road to the mines and we can open up new mines. The same people who aren't working today won't be working at that new mine, and that is really the problem. That is where the resources go. It is the people who, you know, need to live in housing or earn income assistance because they don't have those skills to take those jobs. I will always remember the Premier said in one of his first speeches: there are more than enough jobs in the Northwest Territories for everyone. The problem is that the people from the territories often aren't filling those.

I have to disagree a bit with my colleague from Yellowknife North, who said that this is a bit outside the department, training. I think the department should be very heavily involved with training. I think that we need to start breaking down some of these walls between education, between housing, between infrastructure, and come up with an actual plan to move this territory ahead in terms of training. Otherwise, we are just going to be spinning our wheels for years to come.

What does the department have in terms of a comprehensive, written plan that they can show the committee, so that they can prove that they are taking this seriously? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. Simpson. Minister Schumann.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I will start, and maybe the deputy will want to add something. You know, as I clearly said, we are working with industry players on all these things, especially these larger projects moving forward. ECE is the trainer of the Northwest Territories. That is their position. That is where those questions should go, but with saying that, we work very closely. We are not spinning our wheels. We work very closely with the Minister and her department on how we can implement training opportunities and all these projects.

It is at front of mind with all the communities when these projects come to their regions. It is no different than the Tuktoyaktuk to Inuvik Highway or the Canyon Creek project. Even, as I said, to lead a project with the Bear River Bridge, Mount Gaudet has already approached us even right, like, within a matter of a couple of days of the announcement of that money. So we are working closely with them to help figure out a way they can capitalize at a local level on these opportunities.

A big role of that is how ECE is involved in these projects with us. We work closely with them. I don't know if there has to be a comprehensive plan

altogether, as the Member says. ECE is mandated to implement training across the Northwest Territories, but we do recognize the fact that there are benefits that can be brought to these communities and the residents of the Northwest Territories through our projects. It is not something that we sleight of hand. It is something that we take very seriously and work closely with the Minister in her department. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Minister Schumann. Mr. Simpson.

MR. SIMPSON: Thank you. I guess my issue is that, if there is not a plan, all we have is what we hear. I can't really quantify the things that have been said. There are no goals that we are trying to reach. They are all one-offs. You know, I was at the mining symposium in Hay River a couple of months ago and KFN, the former chief of KFN was there, and he said that, for the Hay River Bridge, which is being reconstructed on KFN traditional territory, there were no training opportunities available for their members. Perhaps sometimes there are, but sometimes there aren't, and that is part of the problem.

Again, this is one of those things that I have been bringing up at every business plan and every budget debate since I have been here. I think that it is something that the department really needs to start looking into, otherwise we are going to be stuck in the same place forever. The cost of our social services is going up. Our revenues are down. You know, we are facing some real economic troubles ahead. Unless we take this seriously, the future isn't looking very bright. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Nothing further.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. Simpson. Minister Schumann, did you want to comment on that?

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: I don't want to get into a big debate about it, but I think the Member should save his questions for the Department of Education when they get to it. I know that, as I have said, we work closely with them. There is cross-departmental stuff around these things. We have our own apprenticeship program within our department. We have our settlement maintainer positions. There are a number of things that we do around training, but I think his specific question is around: what are we doing about training people around some of these larger projects? As I have said, we work closely with the Department of ECE on this matter. I think there have been some great success stories out there, and we will continue to do so and work with the Minister and her department. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Minister Schumann. Mr. Beaulieu.

MR. BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Going back to the local community roads. Further to that, I just got a little side tracked on the capital aspect of it. I have now seen the budget shown to me by one of our honourable colleagues here, so I am okay with the responses. The question on the winter road: I'm asking if this money can be used for a winter road. Could it be used, like, for example, today I spoke of a possible winter road from here to Lutselk'e. Could this type of money be used for a road that links a community to, say, Yellowknife? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. Minister Schumann.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes, we would entertain that application around that basis. One thing I want to point out: that is a very limited amount that we have in the community access program, \$1.508 million. I can tell you that goes awfully quickly. It is an application-based, first come, first served, but the Member is correct that that money could be accessed in that manner if a community wishes to apply for it. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Minister Schumann. Mr. Beaulieu.

MR. BEAULIEU: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. That is good news, but I do agree with the Minister that this would probably consume the entire budget with one project. I know that this is what is the mains and our opportunity to discuss the increase in this budget, would it be in that business planning time? I realize that. Still, going along the lines that my request to have a winter road constructed would be a part of capital, so I didn't make the link that it could be a part of O and M. I am wondering if the Minister sees, if that \$1.48 million was fully subscribed, if the Minister would be able to, working with the FMB, increase that budget for the coming year? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. Minister Schumann.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. As, you know, the Finance Minister is going to be the last person up in front of the committee, but with our limited resources that we have right now I suspect, if I took an application in FMB to increase this community access program funding, I would have a tough time doing it. I would support the Member if he would -- well, it is a little bit late now, I guess, but the next Assembly, if they need to see more money put on this, we are going to have to work through the business planning to try to

increase that. If I remember correctly, I think we have already topped it up \$500,000 since a previous year or two ago, but this money does go quickly. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Minister Schumann. Mr. Beaulieu.

MR. BEAULIEU: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Well, that is something to work on for me. It has increased quite a bit. I do appreciate that the department has been serious about looking at putting more money into this area because, maybe four or five years ago, it was \$300,000, so it has grown quite a bit. It has become something that the communities really find a good program for short-term employment, even training the equipment operators and so on, so it is a very good program. I think that, in the future, the Assembly or the department could look at increasing that amount, maybe even doubling that amount to allow for larger projects which are not real capital projects because they melt at some time during the year, so it's not real infrastructure. I would just close by saying that I look forward to maybe the Minister having discussion with FMB, even if it's something that could be put off to the next budget cycle but something that would be considered in the future. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. Beaulieu. Comment noted. Mr. Blake.

MR. BLAKE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just to add to the community access program, we know how successful it is. I am sure, as you can tell by the Member before me, it is underfunded. Like he mentioned, it creates a lot of employment in our small communities. Even before Christmas, I was told there is really not much funding left, which is a shame because there are a lot of good projects coming out. You know, most communities tend to wait until the actual season that they want to start the work, a lot of portage trails that people are cutting out, bypass roads. We really appreciate the increase, but it's pretty clear, even to \$2 million, increase it to \$2 million, that would make a big difference for the communities. As you can tell, if you look at the new year here, starting January 1st, you could probably tell the funds were already almost used up, so it's a clear indicator that we need to increase those funds. Will the Minister and the department look at the rough time of each year when this pot of money runs out? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. Blake. Minister Schumann.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. All I can say as a comment to that is we can have a look at it through the next business planning

process, but we don't know who the next government or the next Minister is. The one thing I do want to say about this fund, though, is it has been successful. We have been spending. There are a lot of good projects out there, helping these communities. I have always brought up, every time we talk with Members about this pot of money, that somehow let's find a way to marry it with the small employment fund that we have increased significantly for the small communities in the Northwest Territories. Between those two pots of money, I think we have done good things to help employment in the smaller communities across the Northwest Territories. There are always fiscal pressures on all governments, and, going forward, as I said, that will be up to the 19th Legislative Assembly, if we can increase the community access program again. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Minister Schumann. Mr. Blake.

MR. BLAKE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am glad the Minister mentioned that because that is one thing we are trying to do, is combine the small employment fund with the community access fund, which would have gone a lot further, I believe. Right now, the way this fund is being managed, I know it's outside his department, so I will not go there right now. I think it would have gone a lot further if we did combine those two pots of money for the community access. It would have brought the fund up to way more than double what it is now. I think that is something for the transition committee to possibly suggest, that they double this fund. Would the Minister agree? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. Blake. Minister Schumann.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. As the Member knows, I am on the transition committee. We will see how this transition committee makes out compared to the last one. We can probably put a lot of recommendations in there, but that is just a recommendation at that point. The Member has made some good points around the small employment fund. I think, in retrospect, if we would have redirected that increase to this CAP program, depending on the way the small community fund is going to be rolled out here, the success of it, we might have been a little bit better off spending some of that money in this pot, but that is up to Regular Members to decide and push for, where they want to see some of that money going. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Minister Schumann. Mr. Blake.

MR. BLAKE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, as I mentioned, I have a couple of outstanding

proposals for this fund here, so will the Minister ensure that those projects are taken care of? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. Blake. Minister Schumann.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I imagine there are other Members in this Legislative Assembly whose communities are waiting to hear back on their funding. We are close to the end of the year on this thing. This fund is almost tapped right out, but I can certainly look into which outstanding applications the Member has in his riding and get back to him where those applications are at. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Minister Schumann. Anything further, Mr. Blake? Mr. Testart.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Chair. In considering the exchange that just occurred between my honourable colleagues, I just wanted to remind everyone that this budget is not yet approved, so, if Members are asking for things that are not in here, that should be fair game and not be put off onto a future potential government. My question for the department is just clarification on the strategic infrastructure line. I too am concerned with carry-overs. That is a matter that has come up. I see a substantial increase from the revised estimates, in strategic infrastructure. If the Minister could just explain what that funding will be used for, that would be helpful. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. Testart. Minister Schumann.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Mr. Guy.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): [Microphone turned off]

MR. GUY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I guess there are two or maybe three key areas the strategic infrastructure division will be focused on. The first part will be advancing those strategic initiatives of the department, things like the Mackenzie Valley Highway, the Slave Geological Province Access Corridor. Currently, where we have that significant amount of funding, it was announced this fiscal year for the Mackenzie Valley Highway and the Great Bear River bridge. The focus of the strategic infrastructure division is to get that project and aspects of that project through the regulatory, environmental, and permitting stages and to complete all the community consultation work that needs to be done to advance those to a point where we can make a construction decision. So they will be focused on that work as well as the application for federal funding and the Slave Geological Province, completing those. Those are

very onerous, large applications. There is a lot of work to do to get those done, so they will be working on that, as well, and other strategic initiatives like that.

Finally, there is a significant amount of reporting and monitoring associated with all aspects of the federal infrastructure funding, whether it's the Low Carbon Economy Fund or whether it's the Oceans Protection Plan or whether it's the Investing in Canada plan. There is a significant amount of detailed regular reporting and work that needs to be done to be compliant with the funding agreements we get from the federal government to access that funding, so their role will be to make sure all that work gets done and provided to the federal government in a timely manner. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Deputy Minister Guy. Mr. Testart.

MR. TESTART: Will this also include the Taltson expansion project? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. Testart. Minister Schumann.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: This will remain to be seen. It depends on the O and M on this project and federal funding going forward. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Minister Schumann. Mr. Testart.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, so we are really talking about the strategic infrastructure applications that we have in place? That is the primary focus of this division? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. Testart. Minister Schumann.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Yes, that is correct, Mr. Chair. Thank you very much.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Minister Schumann. Mr. Testart.

MR. TESTART: How many positions are in this division and does this money support? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. Testart. Minister Schumann. Deputy Minister Guy.

MR. GUY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Currently, in this budget, there are four positions identified. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Deputy Minister Guy. Mr. Testart.

MR. TESTART: Thank you. Are all of these positions staffed? Are these people ready to go? Are we going to have to take time to put those people in place? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. Testart. Deputy Minister Guy.

MR. GUY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. We have completed the design work. We have completed the job descriptions. We have had the jobs evaluated. Some of the positions are out for staffing now. Some have been interim staff through transfer assignments.

The work on staffing is well under way, and we don't anticipate any delay. We are working on advancing some of those projects. We have engagement meetings next week on the Mackenzie Valley Highway Project. That is being done by some of those positions that we have in place here today. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Deputy Minister Guy. Mr. Testart.

MR. TESTART: Thank you. Just to be clear, because this new appropriation to support the division hasn't been approved, where are the resources for the people doing the work under what has been proposed? Where are those resources coming from, as they have not yet been approved? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. Testart. Deputy Minister Guy.

MR. GUY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Those positions that we have in place are being funded through the Invest in Canada Plan. We are allowed to use some of that funding towards the resources that we need to implement the projects, so federal infrastructure funding is paying for those positions right now. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Deputy Minister Guy. Mr. Testart.

MR. TESTART: Thank you. Nothing further on that. I did have more of a policy question around the concerns that Members and the standing committee have raised around prompt payment and whether or not any of part of this budget is allocated to developing prompt payment policies or prompt payment legislation. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. Testart. I point out that procurement is later on, but I will allow this. Deputy Minister Guy.

MR. GUY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. There is no specific funding around prompt payment. All of the work that we are doing on procurement procedures

and procurement policies, supporting the Department of Finance on the procurement procedures manual, any of that work is funded through a different activity in this budget. It is part of our base appropriation in the procurement shared services, and any of the work that we do around procurement is under there. There is no funding in here to develop legislation at this time. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Deputy Minister Guy. Mr. Testart.

MR. TESTART: Thank you. This line of policy planning and communication, I am assuming that is where the department houses its policy analysts and the people who would undertake policy development and legislative development. Am I incorrect in that? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. Testart. Deputy Minister Guy.

MR. GUY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The Member is correct. Under corporate management, our Policy Division has the responsibility for developing all of our legislation work on the Highways Act, Motor Vehicles Act, and any of our other legislative initiatives, but currently there is no work going on or planned in that division around prompt payment. We would be waiting for the outcome of any work that happens at the cross-jurisdictional level, at the federal level, and the findings of the Procurement Procedures Working Group that is working on the matter right now. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Deputy Minister Guy. Mr. Testart.

MR. TESTART: I will follow up on the work of the procurement group when we get to that activity. Thank you. Nothing further.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. Testart. Anything further from committee? Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. I want to follow up on some of the questions by my colleague, the MLA for Yellowknife North, on carryovers.

In the business plan that is posted to the Department of Finance website, 2017-2018, almost 50 percent of the capital infrastructure projects managed by Infrastructure were carried over. I did hear the discussion about trying to better manage this issue into the future, but is there actually a formal tracking system that the department now has in place to track carryovers? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Deputy Minister Guy.

MR. GUY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The information that I have is that, in 2018-2019, our client-managed capital carryovers was approximately 37 percent of the total GNWT Infrastructure carryover for 2018-2019. We have been doing a lot of work to improve on those results. I spoke to a lot of those details.

On the client-managed capital, which I believe the question was about, yes, we track each and every project. At the project management level, we have a tracking system in place. They are discussed regularly at the regional operations level, and at the regional project management level, progress on each project is tracked and monitored on a regular basis. We have an internal tracking system in place. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Deputy Minister Guy. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. I am glad to hear that there is a client-based project tracking system. I take it by that, then, it is individual projects where Infrastructure is managing these projects for other departments. Is that rolled up in some way across the whole government, and does it include the infrastructure projects that the department itself is undertaking? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Deputy Minister Guy.

MR. GUY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. We also track the ones that we deliver on behalf of our own department, particularly on the roads and the highways projects that are tracked within the Transportation Division. They keep track of that there, and it is rolled up through asset management. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Deputy Minister Guy. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. I understand that this isn't wrapped up into one figure, and we see that in the business plan itself. The deputy minister talked about the figure for 2017-2018, I guess.

In that tracking, is there a way of breaking down the reasons for the carryovers as well? If we understand the reasons why there are so many carryovers, then we can start to address the cause. Are the reasons identified more than just the dollar figures? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Deputy Minister Guy.

MR. GUY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Certainly, when we see a project not progressing as planned, that would lead to a carryover, we track the reasons. If it

is an issue around program design, in the client department, we would track that. If it is a reason around a contractor issue, whether it is a delayed winter road or a weather-related delay, we do track those types of issues.

Some of the carryovers are driven by the budgeting cycle in itself because of when the project gets approved, and by the time that procurement proceeds and we get through the award stage, there can be a bit of a lag that builds a carryover that usually disappears towards the end of the project, so where the project is in its actual cycle contributes to carryovers.

Some of the things I have spoken about in the past is just even project progression. Some projects, the larger ones, you can have monthly billings in the \$2- to \$3-million range when they are under full construction. It can be as simple as the contractor getting his progress payment claim in one month versus the next one. When we get to year end, whether that money is accounted for and the carryovers are not, after we passed the cut-off for payment, that money goes into the new year and it gets carried over. So there are lots of details, I guess, associated with it that can cause a carryover.

The ones we really focus on are the ones that are around projects that aren't proceeding on schedule and not proceeding, because our goal is to get public infrastructure on the ground and service for program delivery and for the public's use as quickly as possible once it is approved. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Deputy Minister Guy. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. Yes, I appreciate the reasons provided by the deputy minister, and I think I have heard them before. I want to know, though: does the department systemically track this across all infrastructure projects? Do they categorize the reasons why there are delays across the whole spending that takes place within the department? The project that they manage? It is great that they track this on an individual project by project basis, but do they roll this up so that they can see where the problem areas are, the systemic problems? That is what I am asking the deputy minister: are the systemic problems identified, and are they starting to address them? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Deputy Minister Guy.

MR. GUY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Certainly, that's the goal of this process, is to find any systematic problems that are leading across more than one

project. It is leading to some of those things that we have mentioned earlier today around adding capacity in the area of strategic infrastructure to free up line resources. That was one of those systematic problems we saw.

Also, understanding the capacity challenges at the front lines on the project delivery is one that we have also found was a systematic problem that we are addressing going forward. We continue to look for those. Some of them are process improvements and how we work with the Department of Finance and things like financial tracking and some of those broader business processes, which we are also looking for systematic challenges there that we can work across departments to address. So that work is going on. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Deputy Minister Guy. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. Thanks for that description. I don't think I got an answer to the question. I am going to ask this directly to the Minister: can the Minister make a commitment that, in future business plans, there is going to be more than just a dollar amount of the carryovers? That there is going to be some explanation of the reasons for the carryover, categorization of those reasons, and how the department is becoming to address those? If it takes a page or something in the business plans, I think that is time well spent, so that we understand, and his department seems to better understand, why there are carryovers. Can the Minister make that commitment to include that kind of information in the business plans moving forward for his department? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Minister Schumann.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I think what I can commit to doing is I am going to have to talk to the Minister of Finance because, at the end of the day, the carryover will fall through him. I can commit to having a conversation with the Minister of Finance on if this is something that we can do in future budgeting cycles. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Minister Schumann. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair, and I thank the Minister for agreeing that he is going to talk to his colleague, the Minister of Finance. Look, I don't think this is rocket science. I think that it is probably a paragraph in your business plan. It is a table that shows the carryovers, where they might be occurring, and some reasons why they are happening. I don't know why the Minister of Finance would have to approve that going into a business

plan, but if the Minister wants to chat with him and have that, that is great.

I think we need to get to the bottom of why this money is not going out the door on time and understand the reasons why, and develop a plan to address that. I just don't get that comfort level from the Minister that he is going to include that kind of information in business plans moving forward. Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Minister Schumann.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The reason I would say that I would have to talk to the Minister of Finance is because he is the one who dictates the format and the content of the business planning cycle, of what is in here. I guess I could commit to bringing something back in the next cycle, not in super great detail, but I think in a little more detail, probably a little more to my liking than the Member's liking, of what some of these conditions are of why there are so much carryover and variances on these things. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Minister Schumann. Mr. Simpson.

MR. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Recognizing that you will be reporting progress in the next few minutes here, I will keep it brief. I am looking at the business plan under strategic infrastructure development. I couldn't quite hear the conversation that just went on about that. Everyone in this room speaks sort of quietly, and so I didn't quite catch everything, but in the business plan, it talks about dredging and it talks about improving the railhead up to Hay River.

Now, would anyone in this division be tasked with following up on those, hopefully, initiatives? I mean, those have appeared in the mandate and they have appeared in every business plan, but I haven't really seen anything happen with, like, dredging in particular. Will that division be tasked with trying to track down some federal money, or is there federal money that could be used for that right now? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. Simpson. Deputy Minister Guy.

MR. GUY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Those types of projects, where we are seeking federal funding, yes, there would be a role for the strategic infrastructure to assist in the application and the pursuit of that money. Those particular projects, we do have a number of asks in with the federal government already through the Ocean Protection Plan. We will continue to reapply, and the Strategic Infrastructure Division would be supporting those

types of applications. So I guess the answer to the question is, yes, this capacity will help us do that work that has already been done in other areas in the department and the policy planning shop, and also in Transportation. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Deputy Minister Guy. Mr. Simpson.

MR. SIMPSON: Thank you. I just wanted to make sure it doesn't get lost in the mix, because there are some very big projects here, and I know that dredging the port of Hay River might not be a priority for some people, but for my constituents, it is a priority. So I would like to see that move forward.

Mr. Chair, I move that the Chair rise and report progress.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. McNeely): Thank you, Mr. Simpson. A motion is on the floor to report progress. The motion is in order and is non-debatable. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried.

---Carried

I will now rise and report progress. Sergeant-at-Arms, please escort witnesses from the Chamber.

MR. SPEAKER: May I have the report, Member for Sautu?

Report of Committee of the Whole

MR. MCNEELY: Mr. Speaker, your committee has been considering Tabled Document 322-18(3), Main Estimates 2019-2020, and would like to report progress, and Mr. Speaker, I move that the report of the Committee of the Whole be concurred with.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Do we have a seconder? Member for Tu Nedhe-Willideh. The motion is in order. All those in favour? All those opposed?

---Carried

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

Orders of the Day

COMMITTEE CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Ms. Franki-Smith): [Translation] Orders of the day for Monday, February 25, 2019, at 1:30 p.m.:

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

4. Returns to Oral Questions
 5. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery
 6. Acknowledgments
 7. Oral Questions
 8. Written Questions
 9. Returns to Written Questions
 10. Replies to the Commissioner's Opening Address
 11. Petitions
 12. Reports of Standing and Special Committees
 13. Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills
 14. Tabling of Documents
 15. Notices of Motion
 16. Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills
 17. Motions
 18. First Reading of Bills
 - Bill 38, Protected Areas Act
 - Bill 39, Environmental Rights Act
 19. Second Reading of Bills
 20. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters
 - Bill 32, Naturopathic Profession Statutes Amendment Act
 - Minister's Statement 131-18(3), Sessional Statement
 - Minister's Statement 151-18(3), New Federal Infrastructure Agreement
 - Tabled Document 322-18(3), Main Estimates, 2019-2020
 21. Report of Committee of the Whole
 22. Third Reading of Bills
 23. Orders of the Day
- [Translation ends.]
- MR. SPEAKER:** [Translation] Masi. This House stands adjourned until Monday, February 25, 2019, at 1:30 p.m. [Translation ends.]

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 2:04 p.m.