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The Honourable Frederick Blake Jr, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

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Box 1320

Yellowknife, Northwest Territories

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

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

PRAYER	5353
MINISTER’S STATEMENTS	5353
Recognition of Minister’s Culture and Heritage Circle Award Recipients (R.J. Simpson).....	5353
Update on Film Projects (Wawzonek).....	5353
Pink Shirt Day (R.J. Simpson).....	5354
MEMBER’S STATEMENTS	5355
Recognition of Thebacha Constituents (Martselos).....	5355
Cabin Radio (Nokleby).....	5356
Housing Quality in Nunakput (Jacobson).....	5356
Integrated Service Delivery (Cleveland).....	5357
Long-Term Care Standards (Johnson).....	5357
Eulogy for Laura Sabourin (Edjericon).....	5358
Eulogy for Ruth Pulk (Archie).....	5359
RECOGNITION OF VISITORS IN THE GALLERY	5359
REPLIES TO BUDGET ADDRESS	5360
ORAL QUESTIONS	5367
WRITTEN QUESTIONS	5374
TABLING OF DOCUMENTS	5374
MOTIONS	5374
Motion 73-19(2) – Extended Adjournment of the House to February 27, 2023, carried.....	5375
CONSIDERATION IN COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE OF BILLS AND OTHER MATTERS	5375
REPORT OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE	5395
ORDERS OF THE DAY	5395

YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**Thursday, February 16, 2023****Members Present**

Hon. Diane Archie, Mr. Bonnetrouge, Hon. Paulie Chinna, Ms. Cleveland, Hon. Caroline Cochrane, Mr. Edjericon, Hon. Julie Green, Mr. Jacobson, Mr. Johnson, Ms. Martselos, Ms. Nokleby, Mr. O'Reilly, Ms. Semmler, Hon. R.J. Simpson, Mr. Rocky Simpson, Hon. Caroline Wawzonek.

The House met at 1:31 p.m.

Prayer

---Prayer

DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms. Lesa Semmler): Welcome, Members. Ministers' statements. Minister of Education, Culture and Employment.

Ministers' Statements

**MINISTER'S STATEMENT 310-19(2):
RECOGNITION OF MINISTER'S CULTURE
AND HERITAGE CIRCLE AWARD
RECIPIENTS**

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Madam Speaker, every year we honour the efforts of individuals, groups and organizations who strengthen the arts, cultures, heritage, and Indigenous languages of the Northwest Territories. Today, I am proud to announce the 2022 Minister's Culture and Heritage Circle Award recipients.

The Individual Award recipient is Karen Wasicuna of Yellowknife. As the co-founder of Crazy Legs Contemporary Dance, her passion and support for dance and performing arts has had a lasting impact on many of her students who are now sharing their culture through dance in various professional capacities.

The Elders Award recipient is Peter Paulette of Fort Smith. He has been influential in promoting his culture and language by teaching and promoting hand games and drumming. Peter's passion for sharing his language, culture and heritage has helped keep history, culture and language thriving in his community.

Shawna McLeod and Lois Phillip are the recipients of the Group Award. They developed the Fort Providence Arts and Crafts Development Program to help local artists expand their creative abilities. This has provided support for unemployed artists to expand their craft and knowledge in their ancestral traditions while tailoring it for a modern market.

Betty Harnum of Yellowknife dedicated her life to the revitalization of Indigenous languages and for this, she is receiving the Indigenous Language Revitalization Award in memoriam. Betty loved languages and culture and served as the territory's first Languages Commissioner from 1992 to 1996. In her nearly 50 years in the North, Betty helped to establish the Goyatiko Language Society, led the CBC Indigenous Language Archive Project, and developed a Dene Dedline dictionary and an Inuinnaqtun dictionary.

Madam Speaker, I also have the pleasure of selecting the recipient of the Minister's Choice Award. This year, I am honoured to present this award to Linda Duford of Hay River. Linda is an avid supporter of reviving the North's rich cultural heritage of fiddling, as a veteran instructor with the Kole Crook Fiddle Association and while operating a music studio. Linda has taught and inspired countless youth all over the territories by enthusiastically sharing her love of music.

Our award recipients come from different communities and backgrounds but the one thing they have in common is that their actions create ripples, inspiring others to get involved in strengthening the territory's arts, cultures, heritage, and Indigenous languages.

Madam Speaker, I invite everyone to join me in not just honouring this year's Culture and Heritage Circle Award winners, but in thanking everyone who is committed to promoting and preserving the NWT's arts, cultures, heritage, and Indigenous languages. The work of these champions helps to ground us, brings us inspiration, contributes to the wellness of our communities, and benefits all residents of the NWT. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you, Member. Ministers' statements. Minister for ITI.

**MINISTER'S STATEMENT 311-19(2):
UPDATE ON FILM PROJECTS**

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Madam Speaker, this time next week the residents of

Fort Simpson will be rolling out the red carpet for the fourth annual Liidlii Kue Film Festival. The festival is presented each year by the Liidlii Kue First Nation with funding and support from the Government of the Northwest Territories and the Northwest Territories Film Commission. It has become a yearly opportunity in the Deh Cho to showcase and celebrate the artistry and talent of local and territorial producers. Like the Yellowknife International Film Festival, it can be credited with encouraging creativity and collaboration and promoting traditional knowledge and language and cultural retention across our territory.

In all of this, Madam Speaker, it is easy to forget that behind the scenes, film and media projects also provide a significant economic boost to the regions and communities in which they are staged and can play a key part of our government's commitment to increase economic diversification through the non-extractive sectors and increase employment in small communities.

As we continue to implement the GNWT's film and media strategy and action plan, we are working to increase awareness among municipalities, communities, and Indigenous governments of the economic benefits and opportunities that can be realized in partnership with the Northwest Territories film and media sectors. Since this time last year, Madam Speaker, over 25 projects have entered varying phases of development and production across the Northwest Territories.

Meanwhile location scouting by major production companies has also taken place in the Sahtu and the Beaufort Delta. Madam Speaker, the GNWT's film rebate program helps to attract these larger productions to the territory by providing producers with a rebate on labour and expenditures. Since 2015, the program has supported 17 productions leveraging a direct spend of over \$5 million into the Northwest Territories economy.

It is not just feature films or prime time television that benefit our territory economically. Countless, small independent producers are attracted to the Northwest Territories every year. We are acutely aware of the rising demand, from our territory's community of passionate and dedicated film and media professionals, to invest more in the Northwest Territories film sector. ITI's film and media sector funding, under the support for entrepreneurs and economic development policy, is consistently oversubscribed.

Beginning in 2021, the department piloted a producers incentive program to better support

the development of professional quality, commercial-ready projects for presentation to broadcasters, co-producers, and other financiers. Most notably, Jen Walden used the opportunity to advance her feature film *Mother*, which was accepted into the 2022 Whistler Film Festival's power pitch program and is now in the financing stages.

Madam Speaker, recognition of success warrants acknowledgment and a thank you to two primary industry stakeholders.

Western Arctic Moving Pictures is a member-based non-profit organization with a mission to produce, support, and promote independent film, video, and digital media arts in the Northwest Territories and to showcase it to audiences at home, across Canada, and internationally. They do so, in large part, by organizing the Yellowknife International Film Festival every year.

Secondly, the NWT Professional Media Association who, as a representative body of Northwest Territories film and media arts professionals, are committed to the professional development and growth of the Northwest Territories industry. Together, these organizations are strengthening the local film and production industry and helping create paths for future contributions, and I extend them a sincere thank you.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the funding support of Canada's northern economic development agency, CanNor, whose partnership allows us to invest as much as we do in the Northwest Territories film sector and to invest in the ongoing development and diversification of our Northwest Territories economy overall.

Madam Speaker, the territory's film sector plays an important role in educating audiences about the Northwest Territories traditions and social issues and celebrating the culture and heritage of northern places and peoples. The Government of the Northwest Territories will continue to promote and support made-in-the-Northwest Territories productions and build up our local industry as it continues to enrich the lives of residents and communities across the territory. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Ministers' statements. Minister for Education, Culture and Employment.

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 312-19(2):
PINK SHIRT DAY

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Madam Speaker, the reason you see so much pink around the House today is because today we are acknowledging Pink Shirt Day, a day to reflect on how we treat one another.

Two brave teenagers in Nova Scotia sparked Pink Shirt Day 15 years ago after a male student in their school was harassed for wearing a pink shirt. The next morning, David Shepherd and Travis Price handed out pink shirts to all the male students. Now, Pink Shirt Day is a call-to-action for schools, communities, and workplaces to wear pink in solidarity against bullying.

Pink Shirt Day will be held nationally next week on February 22, 2023. The campaign reminds us to "lift each other up", not just on Pink Shirt Day or the month of February, but every day. It encourages us to be kind and inclusive, and not tolerate bullying.

Madam Speaker, it is important that our schools and communities are safe spaces for our young residents. The Department of Education, Culture and Employment, and our education partners, follow the principles of inclusive schooling. That directive is meant to ensure that our schools, educators and programming meet the diverse needs of our students, in a way that is responsive, accepting, respectful, and supportive. ECE is also working with the Department of Health and Social Services to evaluate the child and youth counselling program. Child and youth counsellors are in Northwest Territories schools and communities to provide mental health and wellness services to children, youth, and their families. This evaluation will help us improve those supports and ensure they are accessible, effective, and meeting the needs of our youth.

Madam Speaker, Pink Shirt Day is also a reminder to applaud what makes us unique. It is especially important here in the North, where we share so many different cultures, traditions and languages, that we embrace our identities and accept our neighbours for who they are.

I recently heard a great example of this from a school in the Beaufort Delta. The school was holding a presentation on ending anti-Black racism, and the students learned that we should celebrate our differences. A junior kindergarten student asked two teachers in the room to compare skin tones with her, to see how they all were. Then she wanted to celebrate their differences with a hug. I am told this was a powerful indicator that this very young student understood the message of the presentation. I also understand that our regional inclusive schooling coordinators have other stories about students across the NWT showing bravery,

standing up for one another, and supporting their peers. Let these students' actions be a lesson to all of us. Speak up when you see something that is wrong. Help out a friend, colleague, or stranger in need. Choose kindness, acceptance and compassion, and continue to "lift each other up." Thank you, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Ministers' statements. Members' statements. Member for Thebacha.

Members' Statements

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1369-19(2): RECOGNITION OF THEBACHA CONSTITUENTS

MS. MARTSELOS: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, earlier today, the Government of the Northwest Territories announced the recipients of the Order of the NWT for 2022, and among the names listed includes a very special Fort Smith constituent. And that person is Paul Kaeser Sr. II.

For those who don't know, the Order of the NWT recognizes people who have served with the greatest distinction and excelled in any endeavour benefitting the people of the NWT or elsewhere. This is the highest honour awarded to NWT residents.

Madam Speaker, Paul Kaeser and the entire Kaeser family have lived in Fort Smith for decades. In fact, they had roots in the community since the 1930s. The Kaeser family is well known and a respected family in Fort Smith who have had a family-owned business there for many years. Kaeser's Store, as it is known, is a grocery and a retail store that has been operated in Fort Smith since 1947. Over the years, their business has been owned and operated by multiple generations of the Kaeser family members, and their store has truly become a cornerstone of the community of Fort Smith.

Madam Speaker, I have also known Paul, or Paulie as most locals know him, for my entire life while living in Fort Smith. Paulie is a kind, loving and caring individual who is extremely devoted to the well-being of Fort Smith. Paulie is a very community-minded person who has helped to foster community development by always contributing to local events and causes through the years. He also is an avid sports fan, especially for curling. In his younger years, he was always active playing curling and baseball, and he continues to be very supportive of all sporting organizations and events in our communities.

Madam Speaker, it's always a pleasure when I get a chance to visit with Paulie because he always gives me great honest feedback on how to improve and maintain our community. I could not think of a person as deserving as Paulie Kaeser to receive the Order of the NWT. I know that all residents of Fort Smith will be supportive and proud in Paulie receiving this honourable recognition. On behalf of the constituents of Thebacha, I want to congratulate Paulie Kaeser for being selected for the Order of the NWT. Madam Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

Lastly, Madam Speaker, at this time I'd like to take the moment to congratulate the newly elected clerk of the Legislative Assembly, Mr. Glen Rutland. As chair of caucus, I'll be working closely with Mr. Rutland on various Assembly matters and I look forward to working with him in his new role. Similarly, I'd also like to wish our present and outgoing clerk Mr. Tim Mercer a happy and enjoyable retirement. I am sure he has other aspirations and interests in life so I wish him well with whatever he does next. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you, Member. Members' statements. Member for Great Slave.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1370-19(2):
CABIN RADIO

MS. NOKLEBY: Good afternoon Madam Speaker. As everyone is aware, Cabin Radio has been a staple of the northern media scene for the last five years. Launching in 2017 with an online format, Cabin made an application in August 2019 for their FM license to begin broadcasting over the airwaves. On Wednesday, 42 months after submission, the Canadian Radio, Television and Telecommunications Commission, or the CRTC, informed Cabin Radio that Yellowknife's economy could not sustain a new commercial FM radio station therefore ending Cabin Radio's bid for FM status.

One of the most shocking things about this decision was that the CRTC never even opened Cabin Radio's application. Instead, the commission chose to assess whether Yellowknife was big enough – and economically healthy enough – for Cabin Radio to join the lone existing commercial license holder True North FM. Citing in part a submission from Vista Radio, the corporation that owns True North and several dozen other Canadian stations, the CRTC said "the market of Yellowknife cannot support an additional radio station." The CRTC also said it was unlikely to accept new applications for another two years. They also stated that Vista Radio

had formally opposed Cabin Radio's license on economic grounds, citing that "the introduction of a new radio station deriving advertising in the market at this time will impact the incumbent stations' viability to provide local programming." Ironic given that at the same time, Vista has told the CRTC that they would like a second FM license in Yellowknife.

Summarizing the concerns of Vista Radio and CKLB, who was also in opposition, the CRTC said that "the introduction of a new radio station at this time will impact the incumbent stations' viability to provide local programming." However, Madam Speaker, Cabin Radio has already existed for five years and is already primarily financed by advertising revenue. Therefore, it would appear that this impact would have already been felt by the two established stations. Additionally, in an unusual move, two of the CRTC's panel commissioners filed dissenting opinions on the denial, showing that within its own organization there was confusion as to this ruling. Madam Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

---Unanimous consent granted

Thank you, I will just take some of the absent of their time. Madam Speaker, Cabin Radio has filled a void in Yellowknife's media scene and played a pivotal role in the dissemination of information during the pandemic with their COVID Corner. It is mindboggling to me that someone in Ottawa thinks that a multimillion-dollar southern entity, such as Vista Radio, should be protected from the competition of five local Yellowknifers, who vastly give back to our community in a variety of ways. This flies in the face of everything we talk about when we speak of supporting northern businesses in this House, and the only explanation that makes sense to me is who is Vista Radio's friend at the CRTC, as this reeks of cronyism to me. I will have questions for the Premier at the appropriate time. Thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you, Member. Members' statements. Member for Nunakput.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1371-19(2):
HOUSING QUALITY IN NUNAKPUT

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Madam Speaker. In the life of this Assembly, Madam Speaker, housing's been a big topic in Nunakput. In the Nunakput riding, the struggles of the constituents and the people I represent, 24 percent of our houses have mold problems, 18 percent have pest infestations, 25 percent have poor indoor air quality, 13 percent of our homes are overcrowded, 20 percent of our

homes in Nunakput have someone who can't get their own home and are homeless. We have poor quality homes just because of age and replacement is slow. We have to live in the coldest and darkest location in the Northwest Territories. We have overcrowded homes, not enough homes to house the people. We face the highest cost of living and very little employment opportunities. There are very little options for the people in my riding to change their situation, and help is needed, Madam Speaker.

We need the Minister of housing to think outside the box, to be creative in solutions. We need the Minister of housing to work with local community governments to train up apprentices and local housing maintainers so we can begin to take ownership of our own homes. I will have questions for the Minister today at the appropriate time. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you, Member. Members' statements. Member for Kam Lake.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1372-19(2):
INTEGRATED SERVICE DELIVERY

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, too many Northerners are falling through the cracks of the government's siloed approach to service delivery at the cost of residents' mental health, ability to survive and thrive, and the GNWT's bottom line. The government needs to provide wraparound client-focused supports that meet residents where they are at. Our success relies on government departments working together. We hear over and over again that the answer is integrated service delivery. But we also hear from the GNWT that we are years away from actually implementing integrated service delivery. The pace to actually implement it is deeply frustrating, and it causes huge challenges for effective program delivery and difficulty accessing supports. The GNWT currently spends over \$700 million annually on social programs through justice, health, housing, education, culture and employment. Each of these departments addresses a different aspect of a person's challenges but the siloed service delivery causes program duplication and the frequency and duration that the individual cycles through the public systems of care. It means residents are not receiving person-centered care, and the government is spending more down the road through cyclical costly use of resources, often emergency services, Madam Speaker. And this decreases the window of opportunity an individual will permanently or successfully exit the system.

Madam Speaker, you know I love a good high five, and I was desperately looking forward to celebrating progress in the life of this Assembly, but I am confident when I say that nothing has truly changed and integrated service delivery has not taken off. But that doesn't mean that there was nothing to learn. This government needs to be transparent about the successes and struggles of integrated service delivery so that more effective change can happen in the future. Too many people are reliant on the promise of wraparound client-focused services to survive, grow, and thrive.

What I have learned this Assembly is that without integrated service delivery as a mandate priority, dictated by the Premier and outlined in all mandate letters, that this work will not happen, and Northerners will continue to not have access to these wraparound supports that they desperately need. This sitting, I hope to learn what lessons the government takes from its efforts toward integrated service delivery. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you, Member. Members' statements. Member for Frame Lake.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1373-19(2):
LONG-TERM CARE STANDARDS

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Madame la Presidente. The federal government recently announced the creation of a new national long-term care standard said to be aimed at addressing systemic problems exposed by the Corona virus pandemic. Canada as a whole had the worst record for COVID-19 fatalities in nursing homes among wealthy countries during the first wave of the pandemic. So the standard, while not mandatory, is an attempt to awaken jurisdictions to the need to review and adjust regulations and practices.

I cannot determine whether any COVID deaths took place in NWT long-term care facilities, although an exposure notice was issued for the Fort Simpson long-term care facility. Since the pandemic, this government has undertaken a "learning from the response to COVID-19" public consultation to evaluate our organizational reaction to the pandemic and to "improve preparedness for future public health emergencies." That consultation closed in the summer and the report is expected. However, in reviewing the discussion paper used as a basis for the consultation, there's no reference to issues or measures associated with continuing care facilities.

In February 2015, the Department of Health and Social Services established the Northwest Territories continuing care standards. The

standards document says it provides operational benchmarks for program and service providers and the means to evaluate programs and service delivery against best practices. The standard provides evaluation criteria for home and community care, supported living, and the long-term care program, including care provided under 14 different types of services such as palliative care, dietary, and adult day services. To me, this seems like a perfect coincidence of events and processes. We have territorial continuing care standards now almost ten years old. We have a new national long-term care standard to compare those standards against and a pandemic review that may not consider the impacts or implications for continuing care. I'll have questions for the Minister of Health and Social Services on the new national long-term care standard and how it relates to our continuing care programs and standards. Mahsi, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you, Member. Members' statements. Member for Yellowknife North.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1374-19(2):
FAMILY DAY

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Just as we take a break for the long weekend, I just wanted to wish all my constituents -- oh wait, Madam Speaker, it's not a long weekend because I thought perhaps we were in New Brunswick, Alberta, Manitoba, Ontario, Saskatchewan, or British Columbia where Monday will be Family Day, Madam Speaker. Or perhaps we were in PEI where they will be celebrating Islander Day, or Manitoba where they'll be celebrating Louis Riel Day or Nova Scotia Heritage Day. But no, Madam Speaker, even though our February is cold and dark, there's no holidays for us.

Madam Speaker, I want to commend the Minister with the introduction of the truth and reconciliation as a statutory holiday. We're now at a tie for first place for the most statutory holidays, with 11, tied with Yukon but, Madam Speaker, I challenge us to take the lead and beat Yukon and let's have the most holidays in Canada by introducing a February statutory holiday. I'll have questions for the Minister. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you, Member. Members' statements. Member for Deh Cho.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1375-19(2):
EULOGY FOR LAURA SABOURIN

MR. BONNETROUGE: Mahsi, Madam Speaker. I have got a eulogy for the late Laura Sabourin. Laura Mary Sabourin worked at Deh Gah School in Fort Providence for more than 30 years. In that time, she wore many hats in education. For example, Laura was a school counsellor for a time. Laura's heart and passion was for her Indigenous language and culture. Laura was instrumental in the revitalization of Indigenous education at Deh Gah School, specializing in the revitalization of the Dene Zhatie language and the Dene culture within the school and the community of Fort Providence as a whole. Laura was devoted for passing the Indigenous language and culture that she cherished so dearly to future generations, and she did that in her role at Deh Gah over several decades. Laura was the student assistant in the grade 2 and 3 classroom at the time of her passing. At Deh Gah, there is an Indigenous language immersion program from junior kindergarten to grade 3. It used to be 100 percent immersion but in 2020, Deh Gah School and its community of Fort Providence decided that they wanted to try a 50 percent immersion program to see if doing so would place young students at a grade level in terms of their literacy and numeracy skills. Laura was there for that transition.

Laura Sabourin was a very kind and gentle Dene woman. She loved her students and colleagues with an open heart. She greeted everyone with a smile and a good morning, always calling those she met by name to personalize the greeting. She loved her family, her parents, brothers, sisters, children, and grandchildren. She also loved her land.

Laura would go on the land at every opportunity. In the summer, she would stay out on the land for indefinite periods of time. Laura could be seen daily walking along the riverbank of the Mackenzie with loved ones. Often, she walked with them towards the Snowshoe Cafe to enjoy time and coffee with her friends and family. In the warmer months, Laura walked each evening with her daughters Cynthia and Rosalie and her granddaughters Beliha and Tautoo. They would sit together on the banks of the Mackenzie and talk watching the sun set in the evening sky.

When she was walking with her family along the bank, she would tell her grandchildren various stories which they enjoyed very much. She liked telling stories about being out on the land or making bannock or bush medicine. Laura Sabourin was of this place; she was of this land. She spoke our language and valued our culture. She embodied what it means to be a beautiful and proud Dene.

She will be forever missed. We give thanks for the time that we had her with us, gently teaching the next generation about the language and the culture she loved so dearly. Mahsi.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you, Member. Our thoughts and prayers are with the family.

Members' statements. Member for Inuvik Boot Lake.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 1376-19(2):
EULOGY FOR RUTH PULK

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Ruth Pulk was born Ruth Avinaguak Wingnek in Bathurst Inlet, Nunavut, to Annie Tutuavuan of Kent Peninsula and Serio Wingnek of Beatty Island. Avinaguak, or Big Girl as she was named, was the third youngest of ten children and, as her name suggests, was larger than life and a force stronger than her petite stature proposed. Her family, being remarkably close-knit, she was never far behind her older siblings, especially her sister Helen Maksagak.

She was a baby when their family settled into Tuktoyaktuk, as one of the first families to form the Salimiut community on the Banks Island of the Beaufort Sea. As a child that grew up on the coast, she had a preference for ocean fish and an affinity for Banks Island ptarmigan provided by a family that travelled to Tuktoyaktuk during summer hunting season.

Ruth would go on to attend the All Saints Mission in Aklavik. Her father, who received his education in Fort Smith alongside her longtime friend and proclaimed sister, Maureen Morphid's mother Mrs. Leland. Her father was a well-read man and impressed how important getting an education would be for surviving in a changing world. Ruth's mother would succumb to TB in 1945. As Ruth recalled, the excitement of the announcement of World War II's end was coupled with the sorrow-filled news of her mother's death.

Ruth was 14 when her brother Otto Binder would call her to leave Tuk and join him and his wife Ellen at Reindeer Station as they had welcomed twins and needed many helping hands. Ruth herself would contract tuberculosis and remain in the All Saints Hospital for several months where she made deep friendships that would span a lifetime.

Following extensive rehabilitation, Ruth began a mentorship program for TB survivors where she received training to work towards becoming a nurse. Just shy of graduation, she was called home to visit and would not return back to the program. She returned to Aklavik and during

her time there, she was courted by a young man that would ski regularly from Reindeer Station to Aklavik to ask her for a dance at the community gatherings.

Ruth and Nels would wed on New Year's Eve in 1959 at the All Saints Church in Aklavik. They made home in Reindeer Station and would bring their first child Michel into the world in a boat on the way to Aklavik's hospital. Ruth and Nels also ran dog teams alongside one another. Ruth and Nels would go on to follow the DEW line sites and travel the Inuvialuit settlement region with work. They were one of the families that made the riverside home in a 512 caboose in Inuvik when it was first being built. After having their daughter Debbie, they were called to move to Cambridge bay and served as hostel parents from 1963 to 1971.

Ruth had a distinct way of providing children with dignity and compassion that would brand her beloved mother to many across the North. Ruth and Nels would further dedicate their lives in raising and caring for vulnerable children when they returned to Inuvik to open their first official group home in the Mackenzie Delta from 1971 to 1984. Many children across the Inuvialuit settlement region and the Gwich'in settlement area have prospered on to better lives as a result of Ruth and Nels' positive influence, care, and guidance.

Children were always especially important to Ruth. She loved hearing their laughter and busyness right up to her final days. It was always evident in the way she would light up with childlike infectious joy from being in their presence. Each of her children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren will remember the fun and games played and agree that sleeping in grandma's bed will remain their sweetest and most treasured memories. Ruth Pulk will be dearly missed.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you, Member. Our thoughts, prayers are with Ruth's family.

Members' statements. Returns to oral questions. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member for Hay River North.

Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Speaker. We have a couple of pages from Hay River North here today with us, and so I want to welcome them - Madeline Fabien and Francis Cook. And I have a feeling we'll be seeing them back in this Assembly in our seats one day. Thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Madame la Presidente. I've had two pages in the House this week from Frame Lake, Aiden Tate and David Munford, and I would like to thank them for their service. Mahsi, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Replies to budget address. Member for Hay River South.

Replies to Budget Address

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON'S REPLY

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, I rise here today to reply to the last tabled budget of this 19th Assembly. I have to ask myself, what in the three plus years have we accomplished for those people who are struggling with addictions, mental health, unemployment, high cost of living, education, and homelessness as it is support in these areas where a difference can be made in one's life.

At the start of, and during my time here, I was not naive in thinking this government would provide everyone with everything they ever wanted. It was my intent first and foremost to provide residents, not only from Hay River but throughout the NWT, with access to their public government. To accomplish that, it meant an open office, being accessible, listening to each issue, being responsive, following up, and at times taking the matter into one's own hands.

Madam Speaker, it is important to recognize that most of the budget covers the day-to-day operations of this government. This budget has somewhat of a surplus and in this case approximately \$178 million. This may seem to be a sizable sum, but we know all too well the need to have reserves to account for the unknowns, emergencies, and providing supports to residents that are facing hardships.

In the last three plus years, this government had to address the pandemic, major flooding, increased cost of living, rising interest rates, all of which had a financial cost for this government, businesses and residents, which we are still feeling today. Now I am expecting this government to make use of some of that surplus to help those residents who are facing day-to-day hardships.

Madam Speaker, we must recognize that the Northwest Territories is made up of haves and have-nots, with those in the regional and smaller communities having the least. Many are

without housing, many are unemployed, many are living on less than a basic income, many are living with addictions, many are struggling with mental health, many are struggling with education, and the list goes on.

Madam Speaker, I want to talk about what is not offered up or what I believe is not sufficient in this budget. My comments will be directed at those supports and services needed by the many residents that are struggling day to day to make ends meet.

Madam Speaker, first and foremost, we see limited to no support for those facing the harsh reality of rising costs of goods and services. With an increase in the carbon tax coming and the talk of dropping the home heating fuel rebate, we know all too well that both will cause further hardship for many in the regional centers and smaller communities. This government and the federal government must come to grips with the severity of those issues resulting in an ever-increasing cost of living in the Northwest Territories. It is only worsening. We must find and offer up solutions to either eliminate or offset those cost-of-living increases experienced by residents. Families need to keep food on the table and a roof over their head and not be placed in a situation where they have to choose between the two. Residents are finding the NWT too expensive and are looking for solutions to reduce that cost. For many, the solution is to move away from here. The question is how we can keep people here and how we can encourage more people to make the NWT their home.

Madam Speaker, I see little in this budget to address this problem and would recommend that we make additional supports available to offset higher utility and living costs through added financial supports and for the establishment of a pilot program for a living wage for seniors.

Madam Speaker, we have seen an uptake in the use of illicit drugs and alcohol in the NWT and an increase in health problems resulting from that use. This brings me the issue of lack of supports for addiction services and, more specifically, I am talking about detox and aftercare services. These two components are essentially missing in the NWT and, in part, is why we are failing those who are seeking treatment. When one decides they need help, they first need a safe place to detox. Currently, persons who are looking to overcome addiction cannot get past that first step which is access to the dedicated detox bed and detox medical services they need. If in an off-chance they are successful with detox, they are then subjected to a long wait time to get into a treatment centre.

This may result in one relapsing and having to start the process all over. When returning home from treatment, many are finding that they have limited to no aftercare support services. Many want structure upon their return with help and time to process what they just went through. They need wraparound supports that will help rebuild their life. Failing to address this issue will only result in more people dying.

Madam Speaker, with added healthcare funding committed by the federal government, I am looking for this government to correct the deficit we are facing with respect to detox and aftercare facilities in the NWT. These supports are an immediate priority for the residents of the NWT who are seeking addiction treatment. To reduce this detox and aftercare deficit, as a start I would ask that funding of no less than \$3 million be added to this budget.

Madam Speaker, the Hay River Health and Social Services Authority, through the department of health, receives funding to operate the facility which includes, with the exception of doctors, recruitment and hiring of healthcare personnel. Recruitment for Hay River doctors is done through the NTHSSA, which is somewhat of a problem for the community. It appears that when there is a shortage of doctors in Yellowknife, doctors in Hay River disappear to Yellowknife leaving Hay River without a doctor thus resulting in reduced healthcare services for extended periods of time. This reduction in services not only affects Hay River but affects the surrounding communities of K'atlodeeche, Enterprise, Fort Resolution, Kakisa, and Fort Providence.

Madam Speaker, I am asking the department of health to turn physician recruitment over to the Hay River Health and Social Services Authority, along with the funding from this budget that goes with it.

Madam Speaker, our senior population is increasing and with the increased cost of living, along with a continued decrease in access to healthcare and healthcare services throughout the NWT, this is contributing to many of our seniors moving or considering moving to places outside the NWT that provide a lower cost of living and a stable and accessible healthcare system. Seniors who are looking to age in place are finding that homecare services are limited. And for those that can live independently, but do not own their own home, are faced with a severe shortage of seniors' housing. Many of these seniors have retired in the North and want to live out their life here but we are making that difficult, unaffordable, and unattainable.

Madam Speaker, I am looking for this budget to include added funding directed towards

regional centers and small communities to increase the number of homecare staff and more paid hours under the caregiver program.

Madam Speaker, we say our youth are our future, and yet when it comes to supporting them, we fall short on support for sport and cultural programs in regional centers and small communities. If we expect our youth to succeed, if we expect our youth to avoid drugs and alcohol and the problems it creates, we then need to provide them with positive sport and cultural options. If one comes from an affluent family, one is still not guaranteed to succeed but it does provide those youth with advantages that many in the smaller communities do not have and that is funds to participate in various activities.

Madam Speaker, I have stood up in this House on several occasions and advocated for additional multiyear funding for the Hay River Ski Club and the Kole Crook Fiddle Association. And I know there are many organizations looking for the same however, although I've had some, but limited success in getting any substantive commitment from this government at a time when we talk about youth suicide, youth addictions, youth mental health, and youth justice issues. To encourage youth to grow, sports and cultural activities are but two areas where we can make a difference.

Madam Speaker, I am looking for this government to include additional funding of not less than \$1 million in the budget to support opportunities for sports and cultural activities in the regional and smaller communities through multiyear agreements.

Madam Speaker, NGOs are the heart and soul of the NWT. We need to increase and support multiyear funding for services and supports they provide on behalf of this government. The services and supports I am alluding to include seniors' programs, youth programs, education and training, addiction and mental health supports, shelters, work placement, justice services, sports and cultural activities, food hampers, meal programs, emergency funds, meeting space, and much more. There are many organizations throughout the NWT that, on a shoestring budget, not guaranteed from year to year, take on the outreach work of this government. This underfunding and lack of multiyear agreements not only places the NGO at risk, but it also affects those NWT families that rely heavily on the services and supports provided.

Madam Speaker, I ask this government include additional funding of not less than \$1 million with multiyear agreements to support those

NGOs that provide a multitude of programs and services throughout the NWT.

Madam Speaker, another area that seems forgotten is that of our small retail businesses. COVID, timely access to products, increased overhead costs, and labour shortages, all affect the viability of small retail businesses throughout the North. Many are struggling to keep their doors open which is not only apparent in Yellowknife when one looks at the downtown core but as well throughout the regional and smaller communities. It was not only the pandemic that struck a blow to small business. It is now easy access to online retailers. It is an access to big box stores not only in Yellowknife but in centres such as Grande Prairie, Edmonton, and Whitehorse. If we want to encourage people to move to the NWT, we need to have more than higher wages. We need them to have access to local retail services and other amenities found in southern communities.

Madam Speaker, we need to include additional funding of not less than \$500,000 in this budget to support small retailers who are looking to survive. This funding will provide them with an opportunity to reinvent themselves so that they can then compete in a very competitive market.

Madam Speaker, there are many good initiatives in this budget already, but it is the gaps the need to be filled in. There is immediate need to place some of that surplus in programs and services where it will make the most difference, and that is to direct it to the people and organizations of the NWT who are struggling with the many issues I noted in this, my reply to the budget. Madam Speaker, thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you, Member. Replies to the budget address. Member for Great Slave.

MS. NOKLEBY'S REPLY

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, a lot of my colleagues have already spoken about what they feel is lacking in this budget, and I think I'm pretty vocal about what I also think. So instead I wanted to focus today on the economic outlook of the Northwest Territories going forward.

The Northwest Territories economy has shaken off the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Economic activity, output, and employment expanded throughout 2021 and 2022, recovering much of the economic loss that occurred in 2020. Labour markets have performed particularly well with resident employment and the employment rate rising to

record highs. This has helped support wages and incomes, which in turn has boosted consumer spending and retail sales. Diamond production has also returned to pre-pandemic levels and exploration spending intentions are up. However, the recovery from the pandemic returns the economy to its pre-pandemic path of slow decline. Maturing diamond mines, labour shortages, and a lack of economic diversification will continue to dampen economic growth.

These challenges are heightened by high inflation and higher interest rates. Most pressing is the lack of workers that is putting a brake on private sector activity, as well as the impending closure of the Diavik Diamond Mine. There are currently no other projects on the horizon large enough to fill the economic gap that will be left by the closing diamond mines.

The recent performance of the Northwest Territories economy is evaluated using the 13 Macro-Economic Policy Framework performance indicators. The Macro-Economic Policy Framework was developed in 2007 following a consultation with Northwest Territories residents that resulted in a consensus that the future economic growth should be balanced, diversified and sustainable. The Macro-Economic Policy Framework provides a comprehensive policy and planning framework to guide government spending and investment decisions that support economic development.

The framework's 13 performance indicators evaluate the economic well-being of the territory and provide an indication of the effectiveness of the GNWT's investments in developing the economy. The performance indicators compare current indicator values to their 2007 baseline levels. The year 2007 was chosen as the baseline because it is the year the economic policy framework was developed but also because it marked a period of great expansion and optimism in the Northwest Territories when the Snap Lake Diamond Mine was being built. For such a small economy, returning to this abnormally high level of economic output and activity may not be possible.

Five of the 13 indicators have improved. These include incomes, population growth, retail sales, and non-resident workers. Earnings, population, and retail trade are all higher now, and the number of fly-in/fly-out workers is lower than in 2007, which all point to favourable labour market conditions and a high quality of life. However, seven of the 13 indicators have worsened. These include real GDP,

productivity, new investment, imports, wholesale trade, and resource sector services.

The indicators are all smaller now than in 2007, signalling economic decline. The employment rate is unchanged. Today and in 2007, close to three-quarters of the working age population in the NWT is employed. However, the composition of employment between industries has changed.

The Northwest Territories economy has shaken off the effects of -- oh sorry, I seem to have repeated myself.

Over the near term, the NWT labour market is expected to remain robust while a real economic output is forecast to persist at lower levels compared to pre-pandemic conditions. The real GDP is projected to shrink by 2.9 percent in 2023 after dipping by an estimated .4 percent in 2022. Declines in economic output are due to the unwinding of pandemic-related government spending that supported residents, businesses, and industry as well as lower export values because of decreased diamond production. Household spending, while still growing, is slowing down as pent-up demand from the pandemic dissipates and consumer price inflation erodes purchasing power, forcing many households to draw down savings and cut back on purchases. Investment, however, is forecast to rise by 8.2 percent in 2023 after increasing by an estimated 9.4 percent in 2022.

The Northwest Territories economy has been contracting prior to the pandemic. Despite a strong rebound in 2021, several years of decline will leave the Northwest Territories economy nearly 9 percent smaller in 2023 than in 2019, before the COVID pandemic. This is largely because of low investment and a significant drop in exports. Household and government spending are expected to be higher than before the pandemic.

Resident employment is projected to increase by 1.2 percent in 2023 after rising by 5.5 percent, or 1,300 people in 2022. Strong employment gains lifted the territorial employment rate to 73.1 percent in 2022, indicating that the NWT is nearing full employment. A robust labour market is expected to continue in the near term as job vacancies and labour shortages of skilled and unskilled workers remain high. Resident employment is projected to reach a record high of 25,200 people in 2023.

Tight labour markets will help push wages over the near term. Average weekly earnings are projected to increase 2.8 percent in 2023 after rising an estimated 2.1 percent in 2022. There is variation of average weekly earnings across

communities which will affect wage growth. As well, wage growth is being outpaced by the consumer price growth.

The consumer price inflation is projected to slow this year as many of the geopolitical events that caused global supply chain disruptions and commodity price fluctuations are resolved. High inflation is eroding the purchasing power of Northwest Territories residents and exacerbating the already elevated costs of living and doing business in the North.

After a decade of low and stable prices, inflation, as measured by the Yellowknife consumer price index, increased 6.8 percent in 2022 and is further forecast to rise 3.3 percent in 2023. Consumer price growth is projected to outpace wage growth in 2023 thereby muting real wage growth for workers. Should CPI stay elevated for an extended period, and depending on reactions to inflation in other jurisdictions, the Northwest Territories comparative advantage of offering high wages and salaries may be diminished. Eventually consumer price inflation may push wages up and create further labour cost pressures on business.

Near term risks facing the Northwest Territories economic outlook are the continued disruptions to global supply chains, persistently high inflation, and decreased demand for Northwest Territories exports such as diamonds and Aurora tourism. These risks, which are driven by international factors, including China's pandemic policies and the Russian invasion of Ukraine, are expected to persist throughout 2023. This could lead to increased costs of living and doing business, lower consumer spending and investment, and reduced export values. Taken together, these could cause economic growth to decline further than currently projected.

However severe these short-term risks may be, failure to prepare for inevitable structural shifts to the Northwest Territories economy, such as the closure of the remaining diamond mines within the next decade, poses a more significant threat than the short-term economic disruptions.

Structural challenges specific to the Northwest Territories include ongoing labour shortages, a lack of economic diversification, and maturing diamond mines. These challenges pose both intermediate and long-term risks to our economy. Most pressing of these challenges is labour shortages in key Northwest Territories industries such as healthcare, construction and education, as well as the impending end of the diamond mining in the Northwest Territories,

which has been the engine of private sector for the last two decades.

A persistent lack of skilled and unskilled workers will further hamper private sector activity and reduce the quality of living and working in the Northwest Territories while the expected closure of all operating diamond mines by 2030 will lead to a severely diminished NWT mining sector. Several mineral resource projects, including the Nechalacho rare earth project, are currently underway in the NWT. However, at this time there are no mining projects on the horizon large enough to fill the gap in economic output and well-paid jobs that will be left by the closure of the diamond mines.

Persistently high inflation poses a downside risk to the economic outlook because households and businesses are likely to reduce or delay purchases while prices rise. This will lead to less economic activity. Consumer spending, which supported the Northwest Territories economy throughout the pandemic, slowed in 2022 as pent-up demand dissipated and consumer prices rose by 6.8 percent. Although inflation is moderating, prolonged or rising inflation risks accelerating the slowdown in consumer spending.

High inflation has triggered several rounds of interest rate hikes by the Bank of Canada. The bank's target for the overnight rate increased by 425 basis point last year, rising from .25 percent in January of 2022 to 4.5 percent in January of this year. Higher interest rates make borrowing and investing in the NWT more expensive and increases the risk of loan defaults. This has the potential to stifle spending by households and industry.

Total investments by the private and public sector are forecast to grow by 8.2 percent in 2023 helping to soften the contraction in real output. However, should the Bank of Canada raise interest rates further, private sector capital investment may be lower than currently forecast.

The unemployment rate dipped to 5.1 percent in 2022 and the employment rate, or the share of working age residents that are employed, rose to 73.1 percent, a 4 percentage point increase from 2021 and an 8 percentage point increase from 2022 -- or sorry, 2020.

This suggests the NWT is near full employment. Tight labour markets are occurring at a time of rising job vacancies, and this has resulted in labour shortages in several industries including healthcare, construction, food services, and education. Labour shortages pose short-term and long-term risks to the economic outlook because an inability to fill vacant positions may

hamper private sector activity; i.e., businesses cannot maintain or expand operations and may reduce the quality of life for Northwest Territories residents as previously available services become limited or unavailable.

Labour shortages are a chronic issue for the Northwest Territories due to the small population and is one reason for a large number of non-resident workers. Between 2008 and 2018, the number of non-resident workers fluctuated between 5,500 and 8,500, representing between one-quarter and one-third of the Northwest Territories workforce. These jobs including seasonal, rotational, temporary, and special projects that fill gaps that are not met by the resident workforce. Total aggregate earnings paid to non-resident workers ranged from \$275 million to \$440 million a year between 2008 and 2018, representing close to one-fifth of all employment income generated in the territory. This employment income earned in the territory by non-residents represents lost income that could have been spent in our economy.

One contributing factor to chronic labour shortages is the outsized footprint of the government in the economy. Government administration at all level - federal, territorial, municipal and Indigenous - is the largest industry in the Northwest Territories, generating over a fifth of the economic output. It is the largest employer, employing close to 6,500 Northwest Territories residents, or a third of all NWT employees. Public administration includes courts, policing services, correction services, firefighting, defense and government administrative work but excludes the health, social assistance, and education sectors. The public sector typically offers pay packages that small and medium-sized businesses in the NWT cannot compete with, and this may be worsening staff shortages in the private sector.

For the first time, there are now more residents employed in the public sector than in the private sector. This significant and concerning development occurred during the pandemic and continues to persist. If the composition of the employment does not reverse, there is a risk that the NWT economy will become increasingly dependent on the government leading to a hollowing out of our private sector.

Aging diamond mines are a significant risk to the economic outlook of the NWT. Diamond mining is a primary driver of our economy but currently producing mines are set to end in 2030 as stated. The Diavik Diamond Mine is scheduled to close first, in 2025, followed by the Ekati Mine in 2029, and Gahcho Kue in 2030. Ekati resumed production in January of 2021

and could operate for an additional decade if underwater mining is successful and the Sable Deep, Fox Deep, and Point Lake Deep kimberlite expansions go ahead. Decisions to expand existing diamond mines and develop new kimberlite pipes will depend on a range of economic and financial factors, including global, capital, credit conditions, consumer demand, and rough diamond prices.

Diamond values and production have recovered from steep declines in 2020 caused by weak consumer demand for this luxury good, the pandemic disruptions, as well, in 2022 Northwest Territories diamond shipments were valued at \$17.8 million, a 17.9 percent increase from 2021, due to the widening spread between prices for rough and polished diamonds, and a 42 percent rebound in the rough diamond prices for the last two years.

Madam Speaker, I think I actually have way too much stuff here to talk about, so I am going to stop there with this. But I did want to say if any of my words here sound familiar, they can be found attached to the Minister of ITI's address on the budget. And the reason that I chose to read this, and unfortunately did not get all the way through the economic forecast -- and I thank ITI for all their work on it -- was that I'm really concerned to see this shift in our economy to the public sector. And I have actually heard in this House almost a sense of pride or of such for keeping that sector going and in fact growing it during the pandemic.

For me, we had a very missed opportunity when it came to the pandemic. At that time, the federal government was quite flexible. They were open to new ideas. They were trying to think creatively. And, really, they just wanted us to come up to them with solutions. And I really think that rather than taking this time to really re-evaluate and come up with some new thinking, we just kept with the status quo and we just kept doing things the same way. And now that that money was dried up and we didn't use it to be innovative or to make any changes, we're now in the exact same boat that we were prior to that. All that did was offset the time for our economy to fail, you know, from that period of time until much later.

I am encouraged by what we have heard from the diamond mines and that perhaps there is an expansion to their timelines. However, that is not anything that we can rely on as a government. So where I want to go with this is that I would hope that I can encourage Cabinet and departmental people looking at government renewal to really look at the public sector and start evaluating job descriptions better. Look at the people that come to me and

tell me that they only really work about 50 percent of the time and should they try to take on more work, they are stopped by union processes, etcetera. So I really think that given the state that we're at, now is the time to make some risky moves. We have nothing to lose, Madam Speaker. We're going to fail. We're at that stage, at that point. So I just want to urge my Cabinet colleagues to get creative, to start thinking about ways to diversify. Let's look into cold climate storage for computer systems. Estonia, when I was at COP, is doing that kind of work where they use their climate to host a bunch of servers. We could be doing things like that. We should definitely be supporting the agriculture sector after everything that we heard at our food security panel, which I would encourage all members of the public to watch. It's on the Legislative Assembly's website and social media pages. Really, I think that could be our key way to solving our problems here, not only from the supply chain perspective but also then from an employment perspective. As well as mental health and that grounding. You know, there is literally a mental health technique about -- and it is called grounding -- where you go outside, you take off shoes and you stand on the ground. And as human beings, we become very disconnected from nature and the earth, and I feel like this is a way that could provide benefits in many of our departments, not just from a food supply perspective.

So I'm going to leave it there, Madam Speaker. I want to thank everyone for indulging me and listening to the very dry economic forecast and not so hopeful, I guess. But, you know, I'm looking forward to a new Assembly and a new term and some new ideas coming in and hopefully we're going to be able to turn this economy around, Madam Speaker. Thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you, Member. Replies to budget address. Member for Kam Lake.

MS. CLEVELAND'S REPLY

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, this is the Northwest Territories and we do things a little different up here. The way we live, work, and govern together is different than southern Canada. It's a product of a different history.

Madam Speaker, the North continues to be a place of unrivalled opportunity. We're open for business, adventure, and life. We want to grow our population and our economy. During the budget address, the Minister of Finance stated the primary economic driver for the NWT economy will be government investment. I would agree that this is the case, at least for the

short term, until we further diversify our traditionally resource-based economy.

As long as government investment is driving the economy of the Northwest Territories, the government has an obligation to ensure that we maximize the benefits of this investment for Northerners. This is what we meant when we agreed that adopting a benefit retention approach to economic development would be a priority of this 19th Assembly. This means we cannot settle for -- wait, Madam Speaker, this is my 2020 budget address or maybe a 2021 or a 2022. They all kind of start to blend together, much like our main estimates over the years.

I start to feel like we're in our own version of the movie Groundhog Day, Madam Speaker, and I hated that movie.

Madam Speaker, ultimately this is a business as usual budget, a status quo budget that does not serve us at a time where we need to innovate and transform. It should create a vision, know where we want to go, and plan on how to get there. I get that we're only here for four years but our budget needs stars that are so effective that the next Assembly wants to carry them forward to build on our success. That got me thinking, Madam Speaker - how can I do my budget address a little different this year and maybe help break the Groundhog Day.

Cycle and together build a better blockbuster.

I want to start with a positive, to pay some gratitude to the other side of this House, and then I want to focus on three things I think would have helped this government release a blockbuster less reminiscent of Groundhog Day.

As a promised start, some gratitude. Madam Speaker, I want to highlight the bold move taken by the finance minister in the fall when she broke the cycle of a traditionally unrealistic large capital budget that once required an even larger borrowing plan commitment. This was once used as promises for political gain, or an easy way to say yes to everything while accomplishing very little of it. This change will not only make the GNWT more fiscally responsible, it will also enable the difficult conversations about what actually is a priority of this government. So kudos to the other side.

Madam Speaker, I would also like to acknowledge the work of staff across government who have worked hard to prepare the budget within the parameters they were given.

So three things to build a better blockbuster. First is a budget. You don't make a movie with the same budget you made the last one. You build a new budget that makes sense for the landscape, stars, and potential return on investment of this one. And that brings me to government renewal.

I want to see results-based budgeting where we make budget decisions that position us with flexibility, strength, and courage to choose wisely and be well prepared to shift. What we have here is starting from what we've always done and then adding some forced growth. This shift is reliant on a successful government renewal. I support the intent of government renewal, Madam Speaker. We need to be able to cut the redundancies and increase the effectiveness of public dollars to achieve our goals. This budget is missing any visible success of government renewal. While I support the intent, I do not feel a sense of urgency that needs to purvey government renewal exercises.

I hope the government renewal process will evolve GNWT program evaluations to focus on outcomes and value for dollar of the programs, but that needs to hurry up and show some results or it will sadly fade away.

Ensuring the government is using public funds to better serve NWT residents is half of the picture. Revenues are the other piece of government renewal, or building our blockbuster. The GNWT was built over decades during a different time and has today given risk aversion the starring role in an action adventure world. This government needs to raise revenues for a more balanced approach to fiscal sustainability. We need to build a bustling North with population growth and a flourishing private sector, achieved by government getting out of the way of business, diversification, and proactively helping people figure out how to make their plans fly rather than asking if they were ever meant to fly in the first place.

Where there is a will, there is a way, Madam Speaker. Sometimes we just need to step out of the box of how it's always been done and out of the cubicle from where it's always been done. Empower staff to get out of the office. You do not change lives from a cubicle, Madam Speaker. Be present and be proactive.

The second piece of building a blockbuster is supporting characters. Any good movie has a cast, not just one character. The GNWT's leading support characters are municipalities and NGOs. This budget does not go far enough to begin to close the municipal funding gap. Closing the municipal funding gap would bring

220 more jobs into the territory spread across every single community. So closing the municipal funding gap is huge. It means jobs, recreational programming, and infrastructure that have direct impacts on mental and physical health - the frontline operations that build connected, vibrant communities, Madam Speaker.

Our NWT NGOs struggle to keep the lights on and are ones the GNWT relies on the most when it comes to frontline service delivery to our territory's most vulnerable residents. Multiple GNWT departments are transitioning to application-based funding pots aimed at NGOs. But empowering them to keep the lights on and keep staff paid is just as important as program dollars. One-time increases, far below inflation, do not keep these organizations running. So I agree with colleagues that inflationary increases need to be delivered to all NGOs this government relies on and on an annual basis if this change is going to be sustainable.

Honourable mention here, Madam Speaker, is Jordan's Principle. This territory's incredibly reliant on Jordan's Principle. Our office has helped residents access Jordan's Principle supports for treatment, rent, food, while communities across the territory rely on them for so much more. Jordan's Principle floods tens of millions of dollars into this territory every year. If Jordan's Principle funding were cut to our territory, it would suffer immensely and this needs to be better tracked.

Madam Speaker, the third piece this blockbuster needs is a star. A star is the character almost everyone can connect with, leave something behind, and ultimately you don't forget them. Hansard could tell you who the star of this Assembly has been, but this budget could not. This term, where the most regular thing we did as Regular MLAs, was host housing-themed days on top of housing-themed days. Social development made housing its one and only priority on top of its regular work, and we'll continue to table another housing report this sitting. This week alone, Regular Members spent three days in Committee of the Whole reviewing the Housing NWT budget - the fifth smallest budget of the government. And a small fraction of the health budget. We have worked hard to force the hand of the government in choosing its blockbuster star, but this script has no star, no legacy. On multiple occasions, Cabinet Members have said housing is a priority of this Assembly, but talk is cheap and houses are not. True, Madam Speaker, this Assembly has invested more in housing than any other but when you're starting from crumbs, a cookie looks like a feast.

Let's be honest, I would have loved an NWT version of the ambitious action adventure Nunavut 3000, but we're celebrating a hundred houses, the same number of houses Nunavut has built every year for the last three years in a row. Housing NWT is not sustainability funded. With inflation and rising cost of living, access to affordable housing in the NWT has gotten worse. Housing drives economic development, education, health outcomes, population growth, and climate change mitigation and adaptation. The impacts are huge. Housing NWT needs to shift, evolve, be bold, and also be prepared to let go.

I know that April 1st is supposed to bring a new era of Housing NWT but I'm not confident the changes will go far enough to address the NWT's affordable and accessible housing crisis. I want to know the future of housing funding models and if they will include realistic and sustainable O and M, the evolution of autonomy of Indigenous governments and organizations and empower housing delivery, if unintended policy barriers will be addressed, if shelters and safe spaces will be fairly funded, and if the vision of Housing NWT will be as ambitious as it needs to be to carry the starring role.

So there you have it, my three recommendations to help turn Groundhog Day into a blockbuster.

Madam Speaker, I took a risk today, loosely comparing a very serious budget to a movie production, but both ultimately are big business where people's livelihoods rely on their successes.

Today my message is this: Take risks, shake up the way things have always been done, don't forget about your supporting characters, and choose a star, build a legacy.

Madam Speaker, this budget is not a done deal, and I look forward to the continued budget negotiations of 2023. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you, Member. Members, we are going to take a short recess. That was a lot. I think our translators deserve a little bit of a break.

---SHORT RECESS

MADAM SPEAKER: Acknowledgements. Oral questions. Member for Nunakput.

Oral Questions

QUESTION 1380-19(2):
HOUSING IN NUNAKPUT

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, today I brought up, across my communities, apprenticeship programs, you know, the lack of -- I ain't going to say lack of trying, it's just a lack of manpower, I guess, in having certified people across the territory in all communities and especially my riding. Madam Premier -- Madam Speaker, you got a promotion there. No, I'm hoping that with trades with the local LHOs, how many communities in my riding in Nunakput right now have a trades apprentice in the community? Thank you. Or communities I represent. Housing. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you. Minister of Housing NT.

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to the Member for his question, and it's very important that, you know, we address these -- we address these situations in the smaller communities, especially when it comes to trades and especially when dealing with the higher Arctic communities. I don't have the numbers in front of me right now, but I can follow up with the Member. But I look forward to continuing this conversation. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, we have the trades trailer sitting in Inuvik outside of the Aurora College. I'm just wondering, we've been asking for those in the communities, like Paulatuk and Ulu and Tuk. Are they able to utilize those trailers to get a trades program going on in the communities? With all these new houses that we have being built, it would be good to tag along with that and to have youth because youth are graduating now and they have -- basically we have nothing, really nothing going on in our communities, Madam Speaker. Are we able to put trades programs in the local communities where the new houses are being building built with our local LHOs? Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you, Madam Speaker. We don't -- Housing NWT doesn't own the trades trailers in the Beaufort Delta. But I can follow up with my colleague in looking at what opportunities we can come up with in looking at the collaboration with the Member's riding as well too. And I just want to say that it's trades and looking at apprenticeship is what housing has really prided on within this government. We've made significant improvement building the requirement for trades apprenticeships also into our contracts that -- for our hundred unit builds that are being constructed within the lifetime of this government. I look forward to further

conversation with the Member. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Will the Minister commit to working with the community governments in Nunakput riding to increase housing apprenticeships in the region? Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Absolutely. I would like to look at those numbers, look at the interest. I do understand that the communities in Nunakput are quite isolated. I'm interested to see what else we can be doing different in the Member's riding. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you. Final supplementary. Member for Nunakput.

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Madam Speaker. In regards to that, I just want to say again, we have youth that are graduating that are potentially able to go into the trades program. We could take care of our own units, housing units in the communities and having our own local people taking care of the -- taking care of ourselves and caretakers for that.

Will the Minister commit to establishing local apprenticeships in the Nunakput riding, in all four of my communities, working with the local leadership, ask Aurora College to get the trades trailers in and start working towards that? Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you, Madam Speaker. And absolutely, this already has been a success in the territory. I want to just mention Ne'Rahten Developments in my riding has taken a hands-on approach and have worked directly with CMHC and directly with the federal government. They were able to access federal funding. I was fortunate enough to attend their housing forum. It's quite interesting what that Indigenous group and government have come together to establish and work towards trades and home and repair programs within our community. Very optimistic about what we can do in Nunakput. I'm more than willing to work with the Member and work with his Indigenous governments as well in Nunakput. Mahsi, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you. Oral questions. Member for Yellowknife North.

QUESTION 1381-19(2):
FAMILY DAY HOLIDAY

MR. JOHNSON: Madam Speaker, is this going to be the year that the Minister of holidays gives us Family Day? Well let's find out. When will we

get a statutory holiday in February? Thank you, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you, Member. Minister for Education, Culture and Employment.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Well, since the last time the Member asked this, I did add another holiday. It's not the holiday he was looking for though. So there will not be a statutory holiday on February 21st. The Member is well aware that that takes legislative change and that is not in the works. So it won't be happening this year. However, as I stated last year, this is the year that we are going to look at the Employment Standards Act and see what changes need to be made. So there will be engagement on the act including the potential establishment of a holiday in February. So the department will be going in the spring and consulting on that. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 1382-19(2):
LONG-TERM CARE STANDARDS

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Madame la Presidente. My questions are for the Minister of Health and Social Services. First off, is the Minister aware of the release of the new federal long-term care standards, and are these under review in light of our 2015 continuing care standards? Mahsi, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you. Minister of Health and Social Services.

HON. JULIE GREEN: Yes, thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, I have all kind of good news for the Member from Frame Lake.

The standards for long-term care were released on January 31st by the health standards organization. And what's very important to know about these standards is, not only there are lots of them, but they really are aimed at ensuring the comfort, safety, and dignity of seniors who are in long-term care.

I'd like to say that developing the standards was a collaborative process. It involved the Department of Health and Social Services from the GNWT at a government advisory table. There were several forums, and the department had an opportunity to review the standards and provide input into them. We are using them to develop our own long-term care standards which will be complete by the end of March and go into effect immediately after.

The other thing I want to say about the standards is that they are about more than just the response to COVID. They were in development prior to COVID and so they look at a whole range of issues, not only things like infection control and prevention. Thank you.

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Madame la Presidente. I think that was a yes; that was great. I'll keep it rolling. Our continuing care standards have been in place since 2015 and reviewing that document, I did not see any discussion of the special precautions and practices necessary during a pandemic or a public health emergency.

So can the Minister tell us whether these revised standards that she mentioned, or the review of our 2015 standard, whether there's going to be anything in there in light of any lessons learned from the COVID pandemic? Mahsi, Madam Speaker.

HON. JULIE GREEN: Yes, thank you. Given the disastrous start to COVID and the large loss of life, up to as many as 18,000 seniors who died in the early days of COVID, the health and social services authorities developed a management policy for long-term care facilities in the NWT. And this was aimed at managing the outbreak that was happening all across the world at that point, and also with the support of the chief public health officer who provided her input as well. So the document was a living document. Each wave of COVID was different and so the policy was updated each time we confronted a new situation, a situation where it was more contagious or a situation where it was more lethal, and the results of that have been incorporated into the standards I mentioned earlier. Thank you.

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Madame la Presidente. I want to thank the Minister for that. So I had a chance to look at the discussion paper that was released around learning from the response to COVID, and there didn't seem to be anything in there about continuing care or long-term care standards or how the pandemic response relates to seniors in particular in long-term care.

So can the Minister tell us whether there was any public engagement as part of that review of our COVID response that dealt with long-term care standards and whether any public concerns were raised as part of that review? Mahsi, Madam Speaker.

HON. JULIE GREEN: Yes, thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, this work is not being led by the Department of Health and Social Services but what I understand is that there was, as the Member said, a discussion paper and a period of time for people to discuss

the things that they wanted to be recorded as lessons learned from COVID. So my hope is that when I see this report, there will be the reflections in there of the kind of questions I got during COVID, which actually had less to do with the health side of COVID and more to do with the social side about isolation, visitor policies, and so on. So I'm looking forward to seeing that report and seeing how we could incorporate the information into the standards or into new policies that deal with pandemics. Thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you. Final supplementary, Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Madame la Presidente. I want to thank the Minister again for that. This one might be a bit of a stretch, but I gave the Minister's a heads up, so.

Can the Minister tell us when the results of the learning from the response to COVID-19 public engagement and the actual report will be released, and whether standing committee will be given an opportunity to review and comment on them first? Mahsi, Madam Speaker.

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, it's my understanding that the report is not yet complete but that the production of the report will follow the normal practice of providing it to Regular Members for comment. Thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you. Oral questions. Member for Great Slave.

QUESTION 1383-19(2):
REQUEST LETTER TO CRTC

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, it's my understanding that the Minister of Finance would like to take my question rather than the Premier, as I stated in my statement.

My question has to do with the CRTC, and would the Minister commit to, on behalf of the entire Cabinet, so having the Premier's signature there, send a letter to the CRTC explaining how Yellowknife works and our small business of Cabin Radio versus our southern international firm of Vista Radio, and intervening on Cabin Radio's behalf? Thank you, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you, Member. Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, the Department of Finance does maintain the relationship with the CRTC through the office of

the information -- or the Office of the Chief Information Officer so that is the reason that the question was more appropriate to go to here. I certainly can't commit any other Member of Cabinet, certainly let alone the Premier, to signing any letters. That said, Madam Speaker, I'm certainly happy to say that it would be within the Department of Finance to put together some sort of letter to comment upon or to express some concern that there may be around this decision. We aren't experts in telecommunications/radio broadcasting. We do work more directly with CRTC with respect to broadband. However, in just a brief review of this and in a brief discussion with the department, it would be within our purview to be able to comment on the decision in that regard. Thank you.

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Speaker. And I appreciate the Minister's response, and I'm sure Cabinet will be willing to work with her to ensure that the CRTC does recognize that it's not just the Minister of Finance that would like to see that. But I think I speak for my colleagues as well, that all of us would like to see this looked into.

Can the Minister speak a little bit about the fact that Vista Radio or True North is still a BIP'ed registered company with the Northwest Territories government? Thank you, Madam Speaker.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Speaker. So the Department of ITI maintains the BIP registry, which fortunately I'm able to speak to a little bit. And as I've mentioned I think earlier this session, we are conducting certainly the procurement review in looking at the registry for the BIP, wanting to ensure that it's reflective of what an appropriate definition for northern businesses is. The final version of what that definition might in fact be is not now final and so in that regard, the Schedule 3 to the BIP remains as it is from something that long predates, I think arguably most, if not all of us in this room. However, again, as I had previously committed, that work is underway; I do expect changes to come and if the current businesses on Schedule 3 continue to meet the definition, they'll find themselves under BIP and if they do not, well then they won't. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. I'm just going to remind Members their line of questioning should remain on the same Minister with the same topic. But this time I will -- if you can keep it on the same topic. Thank you. Supplementary. Member for Great Slave.

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Speaker. And Madam Speaker, I was going to thank you for your latitude in that last question. And given that it's not a super controversial topic, I do really appreciate that. I will leave this as my final question.

If it should be required, will the Minister commit to meeting with Cabin Radio to better understand the situation and ensure that whatever correspondence goes forward to the CRTC that it is, you know, with their input and the Minister's full understanding of the situation? Thank you.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, certainly have an obligation, as I see it, to not any one single company but to the market as a whole, and I certainly only read the decision very briefly today. Would want to ensure that, really, that the CRTC is fully aware of the nature of our economy, of the nature of the business environment here. That is exactly the kind of thing we want to be speaking to. And so in that regard, more than happy to meet with the local players to ensure that anything that comes from government reflects and properly balances the interests. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

QUESTION 1384-19(2):
FISH PLANT

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Speaker. This is for the Minister of ITI. I didn't give her a heads up on it but I know she will answer these ones; they're pretty easy. I'm just asking about the status of the fish plant in Hay River and a possible opening date? Thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you, Member. Minister of ITI.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, I am happy to speak about the fish plant. There is quite a lot of activity underway and senior members from the department were, in fact, in Hay River just recently, and we are still anticipating a summer or early spring opening to the fish plant. It'll be commissioned in the spring with an opening to follow I believe in line with the summer fishing season. Thank you.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Can the Minister tell me if the CFI certification process has been completed or underway? Thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you. Thank you, Members. It's back, the translation is corrected. Minister of ITI.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, I believe that the CFIA process is on track in terms of timing. Whether it has already happened or whether it's scheduled to happen, I can confirm that possibly in advance of appearing on ITI's main estimates this afternoon, Madam Speaker. Thank you.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's going to take staff to run that plant so I'm just wondering if the Minister can tell me if staff recruitment has taken place or if something's in the works. Thank you.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, I don't think there's an active recruitment for staffing right now, but I can say that there's quite a bit of work happening with the Tu Cho Fishers Cooperative as well as with FFMC to ensure that those players and parties are all involved, that there's no overlapping work going on but that, in fact, everyone's working together. The goal, again, is to have this plant open and operational for the fishing season, including with having a manager and including having the staffing available. I, in fact, only spoke to FTI about this yesterday and had a very thorough assurance that the work necessary to reach that goal is underway. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you. Final supplementary. Member for Hay River South.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Speaker. This last question is self-serving. Will the Minister commit to a fish fry during the opening of the fish plant in Hay River? Thank you.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Without knowing the date of the fish fry, Madam Speaker, it's a bit difficult to commit but I would love a fish fry, and I'm sure we can coordinate an appropriate date to be in Hay River for a fish fry. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 1385-19(2):
MIDWIFERY PROGRAM

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Madame la Presidente. I was so excited yesterday about Cabin Radio -- they turned me into a meme -- that I didn't get to my questions about midwifery for the Minister of health yesterday. So my

questions are for the Minister of Health and Social Services.

My first question is, as we enter the final phase of implementation of a territorial midwifery program, what major actions remain to be done? Mahsi, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you. Minister of Health and Social Services.

HON. JULIE GREEN: Yes, thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm happy to provide an update on the midwifery program. The major issue we have right now is with staffing. The Fort Smith program is now Monday to Friday because they're down two staff. We're also looking for a senior consultant in Yellowknife. So we're not fully staffed anywhere so it's difficult for us to move forward with the implementation program until that happens. Thank you.

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Madame la Presidente. I want to thank the Minister for that. In her recent update to me by email, the Minister noted that for the territorial midwifery program, it's being guided by something called an implementation project charter. That's the first time I've heard of a charter outside of the actual strategy.

So can the Minister tell us when and how the charter was developed, including what involvement there was from stakeholders such as the Midwives Association of the NWT? Mahsi, Madam Speaker.

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, a project charter is like a vision and mission statement. It sets out the project that is to be accomplished, breaks it down into timing, responsibilities and actions, and so on. The project charter for midwifery was created in 2021 to guide the work of implementation of the midwifery program. It's an internal document that employees refer to and measure their progress against. And while it wasn't developed specifically with external stakeholders, I'm sure the Member is aware that there was a very thorough public engagement on the question of midwifery in 2017, and the results of that engagement informed both the project charter and the implementation. Thank you.

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Madame la Presidente. I want to thank the Minister for that. I'd be interested in seeing the project charter at some point, but. And the Minister spoke of the difficulty in staffing these positions. So can the Minister tell us whether there's a recruitment and retention strategy for the territorial midwifery program or what special considerations are required as part of an overall

health worker strategy to maintain midwifery? Mahsi, Madam Speaker.

HON. JULIE GREEN: Yes, thank you. We currently have two ads out for midwives. One that is for two midwives in Fort Smith, and one is for a senior consultant in Yellowknife. Those ads are open until filled. The one for the midwives in Fort Smith has been up for three weeks; the other one for Yellowknife has been up for one week. So midwives are included as people who can have the benefit of the labour market supplement recruitment and retention payments, as well as the other incentives that we introduced such as having friends and family coming to spend holidays with people who are working here. So I think our greatest challenge, really, is the same as it is for other health professionals, which is convincing them to make the Northwest Territories a long-term home so that we can provide stability and continuity in patient services. Thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Madame la Presidente. I want to thank the Minister for that, sincerely thank her because that was a lot of good news there and I hadn't heard all of that, so. But I think we need to start to think about evaluation of this moving forward as well. So how is the implementation working group and the project charter preparing for the essential task of gathering data and evaluating program effectiveness, including the engagement of stakeholders such as parents, staff, and advocates? Mahsi, Madam Speaker.

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, I'm pleased to say that there is a performance measurement framework. It captures a broad range of activities that are part of the implementation plan for midwifery, and it adheres to the recommendations that were provided in the stakeholder engagement in 2017. So I am not sure when this first measurement framework will be complete and ready for the public to review, but that's certainly something I can provide as a followup. Thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Oral questions. Member for Great Slave.

QUESTION 1386-19(2):
TULITA HEALTH CENTRE PROJECT
UPDATE

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, my questions are for the Minister of Infrastructure. Could the Minister please provide us with an update on the Tulita Health Centre? Thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you. Minister of Infrastructure.

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, right now we are working with the department of health to have a look at the project going forward. Thank you.

MS. NOKLEBY: Okay, so not much of an update. Can the Minister respond to whether or not Clark Builders, the contractor for that work, has demobilized from site? Thank you.

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. No.

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm a bit confused by that answer as it's been brought to my attention by several people in the area that the health centre has now been halted and is not progressing. Can the Minister please speak to the rumors and why that would be being said? Thank you.

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, the construction of the Tulita Health Centre was suspended in June of 2021. We had concerns from the community that during COVID that they did not want anybody outside of the residents to be in the community so therefore we did put a halt on it. And right now we are continuing discussions with the department of health to see what we do with the project. I don't have answers right now other than we are looking into it. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Final supplementary. Member for Great Slave.

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, it's my understanding that work did resume on the health centre over the last while and that since then there's been a demobilization or a stop of work. Can the Minister speak to that? Thank you.

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, we did work with the department of health. We went back to the community. We are -- we did halt, that is correct. And now we're looking at trying to get the project back on track. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Oral questions. Member for Great Slave.

QUESTION 1387-19(2):
TULITA HEALTH CENTRE PROJECT

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm going to continue along this line of questioning.

Can the Minister speak to when the last halting or demobilization or stoppage of work at the Tulita Health Centre occurred? It must have been past the time of the COVID stopping. Thank you.

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, I don't know the dates. I can get back to the Member with the timeline on what we've been doing with the project. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm disappointed to hear that the Minister doesn't have this answer, considering it's an outstanding request that I have into her department that I've yet to see a response for. Maybe the question is when will the Minister respond to me with my answers to my questions? Thank you.

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, we can definitely work with the staff at infrastructure and pull up the BF and make sure that we respond. Thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you. Final supplementary. Member for Great Slave.

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, is it the intent of the Department of Infrastructure to re-tender this project or; i.e., send it out for another RFP round? Thank you.

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. The project for the Tulita Health Centre, we're still having discussions. The BF is due tomorrow. We'll try and get a response back to the Member. In terms of what do we do going forward, we're still having those discussions. Thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Oral questions. Member for Great Slave.

QUESTION 1388-19(2):
TULITA

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, the BF for this -- or as the public doesn't know, the email for this question that I've asked the Minister is not due tomorrow. It is actually overdue, and I would like that to be clarified for the record. Thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you, Member. I'll take that as a statement. Oral questions. Written questions. Member for Deh Cho.

Written Questions

WRITTEN QUESTION 59-19(2):
HEALTH CARE IN SMALL COMMUNITIES

MR. BONNETROUGE: Mahsi, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, healthcare in small communities is not serving the needs of small community residents. There are numerous firsthand experiences of repeated misdiagnosis, which can lead to fatal outcomes for patients. The department states that "regular audits are undertaken at each health centre." Can the Minister of Health and Social Services provide:

1. The results of the audits undertaken at each healthcare centre in the Deh Cho region in the past five years;
2. The results of any data collected from healthcare centres related to client satisfaction of Indigenous people, specifically in the Deh Cho region;
3. The prioritized topics of each healthcare centre audit in the Deh Cho region over the last five years; and
4. Details of how the audits assess misdiagnosis, and the results of what is known about misdiagnosis in the Deh Cho region.

Mahsi.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you, Member. Written questions. Returns to written questions. Replies to the Commissioner's address. Petitions. Reports of committees on the review of bills. Member for Kam Lake.

Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills

BILL 56:
AN ACT TO AMEND THE NORTHWEST
TERRITORIES HOUSING CORPORATION
ACT

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Your committee would like to report on its consideration of Bill 56, An Act to Amend the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation Act.

Bill 56 received second reading in the Legislative Assembly on October 20th, 2022 and was referred to the Standing Committee on Social Development for review.

On October 16th, 2022, the standing committee held a public hearing and a clause-by-clause review of the bill with the Minister responsible for the Housing Northwest Territories.

Madam Speaker, the committee reports that Bill 56, An Act to Amend the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation Act, is ready for consideration in Committee of the Whole. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you, Member. Bill 56 stands referred to Committee of the Whole.

Reports of committees on the review of bills. Reports of standing and special committees. Tabling of documents. Minister of Justice.

Tabling of Documents

TABLED DOCUMENT 841-19(2):
GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHWEST
TERRITORIES RESPONSE TO COMMITTEE
REPORT 34-19(2): REPORT ON THE
REVIEW OF THE 2020-2021 ANNUAL
REPORT OF THE OMBUD

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Madam Speaker, I wish to table the following document: Government of the Northwest Territories Response to Committee Report 34-19(2): Report on the Review of the 2020-2021 Annual Report of the Ombud. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Tabling of documents. Member for Frame Lake.

TABLED DOCUMENT 842-19(2):
RESPONSE TO JANUARY 13, 2023, LETTER
REGARDING PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN
RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Madame la Presidente. I wish to table the following document: It's a letter dated January 13th, 2023 from the Minister of Lands; the Minister of Environment and Natural Resources; the Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment, to myself dated February 16th, 2023. Mahsi, Madam Speaker.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you, Member. Tabling of documents. Notices of motion. Motions. Member for Hay River South.

Motions

MOTION 73-19(2):
EXTENDED ADJOURNMENT OF THE
HOUSE TO FEBRUARY 27, 2023,
CARRIED

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON:

I MOVE, seconded by the Honourable Member for Hay River North, that when this House adjourns on Thursday, February 16th, 2023, it shall be adjourned until Monday, February 27th, 2023;

AND FURTHERMORE, that any time prior to February 27th, 2023, if the Speaker is satisfied, after consultation with the Executive and Executive Council and Members of the Legislative Assembly, that the public interest requires that the House should meet at an earlier time during the adjournment or at a time later than the scheduled resumption of the House, the Speaker may give notice and thereupon the House shall meet at the time stated in such notice and shall transact its business as if it had been duly adjourned to that time. Thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you, Member. The motion is in order. To the motion?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

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

---Carried

Motions. Notice of motion for the first reading of bills. First reading of bills. Second reading of bills. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters, Bill 23, Bill 29, Bill 57, Bill 61, Committee Report 40-19(2), Minister's Statement 264-19(2), Tabled Document 681-19(2), Tabled Document 694-19(2), and Tabled Document 813-19(2), with Member for Deh Cho in the chair.

Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): I now call Committee of the Whole to order. What is the wish of committee? Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. Committee wishes to deal with Bill 57, Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2022; and, Tabled Document 813-19(2), 2023-2024 Main Estimates, with Industry, Tourism and Investment. Mahsi, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Mahsi, committee. We shall take a short recess.

---SHORT RECESS

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Committee, we have agreed to consider Bill 57, Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act,

2022. I will ask the Minister of Justice to introduce the bill.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am here today to present Bill 57, Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2022.

The purpose of Bill 57 is to amend various statutes of the Northwest Territories for which minor changes are proposed or errors or inconsistencies have been identified.

Each amendment included in the bill had to meet the following criteria:

- a) it must not be controversial;
- b) it must not involve the spending of public funds;
- c) it must not prejudicially affect rights; and
- d) it must not create a new offence or subject a new class of persons to an existing offence.

Departments responsible for the various statutes being amended have reviewed and approved the changes brought forward in this bill.

The proposed amendments are minor, uncontroversial or non-substantive, and many consist of technical corrections. The amendments are of such a nature that the preparation and legislative consideration of individual bills to correct each statute would be time-consuming for the government and the Legislative Assembly.

This concludes my opening remarks and I would be pleased to answer any questions the Members have. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Mahsi, Minister. Minister, would you like to bring witnesses into the Chamber?

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Yes, I would.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Sergeant-at-arms, please escort the witnesses into the Chamber. Mahsi.

Please introduce your witness.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. With me, I have Christina Duffy, director of legislation division with the Department of Justice. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): I will now turn to the chair of the Standing Committee on Social Development, the committee that reviewed the bill, for any opening comments on Bill 57. MLA for Kam Lake.

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, Bill 57, Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2022, received second reading in the Legislative Assembly on October 20th, 2022, and was referred to the Standing Committee on Social Development for review.

On February 13th, 2023, the Standing Committee on Social Development held a public hearing with the Minister of Justice and completed its clause-by-clause review of the bill. Individual Members may have additional comments or questions at this time. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Mahsi. I will now open the floor to general comments on Bill 57.

Has committee agreed that there are no further general comments or no comments at all?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Can we proceed to a clause-by-clause review of Bill 57, Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2022?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Where possible, I will call the clauses in groups of five. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Committee, we will defer the bill number and title until after consideration of the clauses.

Please turn to page 1 of the bill.

---Clauses 1 to 43 inclusive approved

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): We will now return to the bill number entitled Bill 57, Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2022. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Committee, to the bill as a whole, does the committee agree that Bill 57, Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2022, is now ready for third reading?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Mahsi, committee. Does committee agree that this concludes our consideration of Bill 57, Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2022?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Mahsi, committee. We have concluded consideration of Bill 57, Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2022. Mahsi, Minister, and mahsi to your witness. Sergeant-at-arms, please escort the witness from the Chamber. Mahsi.

Committee, we have agreed to consider Tabled Document 813-19(2), 2023-2024 Main Estimates. We will now consider Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment. Does the Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment have any opening marks?

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am pleased to present the 2023-2024 Main Estimates for the Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment, or ITI. Overall, the department's estimates propose an increase of \$1.9 million or 3.1 percent over the 2022-2023 Main Estimates. These estimates support the mandate objectives for the Department of ITI while continuing to meet the Government of the Northwest Territories fiscal objectives to prioritize responsible and strategic spending.

Highlights of the proposed estimates include:

- initiative funding totalling \$1.40 million, which includes:
 - \$324,000 to continue our support of the tourism sector under Tourism 2025 towards the five-year investment strategy for the tourism sector;
 - \$280,000 under the Mineral Development Strategy focused on a Resource and Energy Development Information, or REDI, program designed to improve awareness, understanding, and participation in the Northwest Territories natural resource regulatory system, promotion and marketing; and prospector training, to deliver in-person and virtual introduction to prospecting courses to residents across the Northwest Territories;
 - \$250,000 to support the development and implementation of regional tourism marketing initiatives;

- \$200,000 to increase funding for our Mining Incentive Program to stimulate prospecting and exploration, and increase resource exploration and development in our territory in line with our mandate commitment; and
- \$200,000 to continue our support for the growth of film and media sector and increasing the competitiveness of the Northwest Territories NWT generate benefits to the Northwest Territories economy.
- Forced growth funding totalling \$169,000, which includes:
 - \$70,000 to increase contributions to the Northwest Territories tourism to address the rising fixed costs due to inflation and provide stability as the tourism industry returns to pre-COVID levels; and
 - \$35,000 in funding for the Community Transfer Initiatives Program and \$18,000 in funding for the NWT Community Futures Program which are economic development initiatives designed to support business and economic capacity building in the Northwest Territories.
- A change in accounting treatment of \$732,000 for the Canadian Agricultural Partnership Program, or CAP, stemming from the review of the Office of the Auditor General that indicated that CAP should be reported as a cost-shared agreement and funding should be classified and reported in Fund 1 operation expenses;
- Other adjustments of \$383,000, comprising of \$323,000 for secondment program funding, \$50,000 for assessing the Northwest Territories Geological Materials for Cement Production, and \$10,000 for French language communications and services; offset by a reduction to the contract services budget of \$211,000 and \$58,000 funding transfer for the office lease cost in Hay River to the Department of Infrastructure; and finally
- Sunsets of \$884,000.

These estimates continue to support the priorities of the 19th Legislative Assembly and vision of Budget 2023, notably by the following:

- A regional approach to service delivery, where many of the department's programs are delivered in partnership with community organizations to support regional

decision-making and increasing employment in small communities;

- Focusing on economic diversification by supporting growth in a variety of our sectors and continuing engagement with Indigenous governments, regional and industry leaders, and community members across the territory, on establishing regional economic development plans to increase awareness of economic opportunities;
- Supporting the re-emergence of the tourism sector through the endemic phase of COVID-19;
- Planning to take advantage of Northwest Territories critical minerals to improve mineral security, strengthening the competitiveness of the critical mineral industry, and support the development of secure and reliable supply chains;
- Advance the development of the Mineral Resources Act regulations in collaboration with the Intergovernmental Council, including modernizing the Northwest Territories approach to royalties and socio-economic agreements and to support adopting a benefit retention approach to economic development; and last,
- Finalizing construction and opening of the Hay River fish plant, negotiating a new agreement with the federal government for support for northern agriculture, and collaboration with the Ministers of Health and Social Services, Environment and Natural Resources, and Executive and Indigenous Affairs, to support increasing food security through locally produced, harvested, and affordable food.

That concludes my opening remarks. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Thank you, Minister. Does the Minister wish to bring witnesses into the House?

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Yes, I do, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Sergeant-at-arms, please escort the witnesses into the Chamber.

Could the Minister please introduce her witnesses.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, on my left I have the deputy minister Pamela Strand. And on my right, Nina Salvador, who is the director of finance for the department.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Committee has agreed to forego general comments. Does committee agree to proceed to the detail contained in the tabled document?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Committee, we will defer the departmental summary and review the estimates by activity summary beginning with corporate management, starting on page 226, with information item on 227. And I open the floor up for questions. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. So I'm going to ask a question here about contributions to NGOs and partly because finance and administration is found in this particular activity. So I know that the Minister, wearing a different hat, talked in the budget address about increasing NGO contributions by 2.2 percent I think across the board. Are there any NGOs that ITI funds that did not receive this 2.2 percent increase? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Mahsi. Minister.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So, Mr. Chair, the call that went out to departments was under the forced growth process of business planning, and it was so that those NGOs or non-profits across the Northwest Territories that provide services on behalf of government could now see increases to their budgets given that they are, you know, filling in where public servants would have to step in and provide those services in the alternative. And in that regard, the departments -- or I'm sorry, the organizations on behalf of ITI, who perform those types of functions, include the community futures organizations as well as Northwest Territories Tourism. I don't believe there were any others that we felt met that definition of providing services on behalf of government. So there were no others that we applied that definition to. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Mahsi for that. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. And thanks for that response. So I take it then that if you're not community futures, community transfer initiative -- well, you know, I don't want to -- you know what, maybe I'll just wait until we get to some of the other activities to raise this again to find out who got the increase, who didn't get it. Yeah, I think I'll just do that. Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Mahsi, Mr. O'Reilly. Ms. Nokleby.

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. My question is just that there seems to be a trend of under spending in this area, and I'm just wondering if the Minister or the department can explain why that is and if that is the case, then do they need to maybe start thinking of changing how they're doing the budgeting then if they're not spending here? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Mahsi. Minister.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I presume there's sort of -- there may be a look here at what's happening with some of the actuals. I would just note 2021-2022 was still a COVID year where we would have had a lot of COVID relief funding coming through the department. So while I don't want to presume exactly which line item might be at issue, that is a fairly reasonable chance that that's going to be the situation. One other -- sorry, Mr. Chair, there may be one other explanation available, which is to say that there were some changes in the TSC charge back approach and so there was some under spend in that regard but, again, that can depend on the number of positions, how many of them may be filled and, you know, again with COVID, not necessarily seeing a normal year in terms of who was in our out of the office or relying on their TSC charge back amounts. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Mahsi. Ms. Nokleby.

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm good.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Any further questions on this section? Seeing no further questions. Industry, Tourism and Investment, corporation management, operations expenditure summary, \$9,253,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Mahsi. Economic diversification and business support beginning on page 229, with information item on pages 230 to 232. Any questions? Ms. Nokleby.

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I like this area of the budget. It's really the place where -- given my -- or really the Minister's reply that I gave to the budget address today, we can tell that the non-diversification of our economy is quite concerning with the sunset of the diamond mines. So my first question is going to be around the Canadian Agricultural Partnership. I note that in the estimates for

2023-2024 that it's at \$1.2 million, and prior to that we saw actuals of \$488,000.

So can the Minister or the department please let us know what that significant increase of money is for and maybe just a little bit more about some of the future work that's being done there. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Mahsi. Minister.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So the CAP, or the Canadian Agricultural Partnership agreement, is a bilateral agreement with the federal government. It does get renegotiated time to time. And there has been a new framework that was negotiated with the provinces and territories and the federal government. So we are expecting, as a result of that, a 25 percent increase to the overall funding envelope.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Mahsi. Ms. Nokleby.

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I think that's wonderful. I'm sure the Minister's aware we had our food security panel recently and have had a couple, actually, of different presenters come in. I just really can't underscore how important food security is and that also it isn't really always, though, a money issue. So if the Minister hasn't watched or her staff hasn't watched that food panel, I would definitely recommend that they take a look at that.

My next question is just -- I note that there is some sunsetting here of different supports, which I would assume are because of the COVID funding etcetera sunsetting. That would be things like the regional relief and recovery fund and as well the -- just various contributions for ECDEV and business support. So I'm not going to ask a lot about that. However, I do look and note that when we look at some of our arts and film industry type subsidies -- or sorry, contributions, they're not really increasing by much. I know we've put \$200,000 into the film industry rebate, which I think is great. However, I really am struggling to understand how we would think that film can go anywhere in the North if only we've got towards it is \$300,000.

So can the Minister speak to what is the plan there. I know she's spoken in the House already about film but are we going to see, say in 2024-2025, a bigger jump there? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Mahsi. Minister.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair -- yeah, I mean at this point

we'd like to get through 2023-2024's budget before I have a hope about what might happen in 2024-2025.

But with respect to film, we certainly did see -- this was an area where we are seeing a significant amount of growth, both in terms of local production but also in terms of the amount of films that are coming and scouting locations. This was actually an area that saw a lot challenge in COVID because people couldn't travel into the territories even though they were asking. They were looking to come and get ready to film so that they'd be ready to go when COVID lifted and that obviously wasn't how we approached keeping everyone safe here in the Northwest Territories.

The good news is though, is that the interest remains and there's been a lot of growth in this area. So this is a significant increase to the budget, to go -- it's more than doubling where it was at, but there is certainly that demand there. And if it is successful and is utilized successfully, which we fully expect it will be, then there may be an argument in favour of seeing something more in the future. But at this point, we'll be happy to spend the money that's been projected or been allocated at this point. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Mahsi. Ms. Nokleby.

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. And I do appreciate that the Minister does not have a crystal ball to tell us what's going to happen in the future. But I know that -- I think I can even speak for my colleagues that this is an area where obviously we would support, I think, increased funding.

Another area where we would support increased funding is under the SEED program. And one of the reasons I really enjoyed -- like the SEED program is that it's not specific to any type of industry, and really anybody can access. And I very much try to promote people when they tell me they have a business idea that they need to go and talk to ITI about getting themselves some SEED support. So I know why we've gone from \$4.2 million to 3.86. That is additional money that was put in for COVID. I am disappointed though that we didn't maintain that extra funding and, really, I think that we should actually really look at increasing this more, not only by what maybe we might be wanting as Regular Members but even greater than that, because it can just be used so versatily.

So can the Minister speak to whether or not we think we're going to see an increase in funding for the SEED pot? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Mahsi. Minister.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. And Mr. Chair, this is certainly an area that I know can be very popular in terms of having that SEED support. What we did during COVID was because there was other areas that weren't being fully utilized in light of the restrictions and changes during the pandemic, there was some ability to move money over to the SEED program to provide supports at times when small businesses were very much struggling. As far as what the future of the program is, we are -- you know, this is an area where there hasn't been a significant in-depth review done in some time. It is still a significant amount of public dollars that goes out into the private sector, in an area that I would agree, is quite important. So at this point looking for an opportunity to, you know, make sure that that funding is being utilized effectively and then potentially seeing it come through another initiatives process in the future. But, again, that's a bit speculative right now. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Mahsi. Ms. Nokleby.

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yeah, again, as I echoed, said before, I think you would definitely find support from the Regular Members for more money into that. We often talk about getting money into communities, etcetera, is better for our economy than having it sit in the government pots.

Speaking of that, the community futures -- sorry, the community transfer initiatives -- no, I'm looking at the wrong one. What am I looking at here? Community futures, sorry. Perhaps maybe we could think of some different naming for some of these pots, but.

I note that it's at \$450,000. We had given \$600,000 before. This is the area where there are a couple community futures organizations that are not under the funding or under the umbrella or support of the GNWT. Is that correct, Mr. Chair?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Mahsi. Minister.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Mr. Chair, there is just one that is operating on its own. It's I believe in Hay River, Mr. Chair. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Mahsi. Ms. Nokleby.

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you. I just wanted to make sure I was talking about the right thing before I proceeded. Is there any chance then that this community futures group would be

brought back into the fold so to say, and what really is -- this is again another area where I think perhaps some increased money would be useful as it takes the burden off the department to find the people to give money to and gives it to a different organization. However, I have heard complaints that at times these organizations are not being fairly run or at times that there's appearance of favoritism in the communities.

So can the Minister or department speak a bit to is there any reach that they have in there that they then use to sort of control that and, really, this negligent sort of increase of less than 20K isn't really that much. So, again, another area I would support increased funding for. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Mahsi. Minister.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. With respect to the one organization that's not part of the community futures program formally, Mr. Chair, that's been a decision of their own making. I'm certainly happy to see them come back should they wish to be part of this particular process and the funding pot and the funding stream. There's reporting requirements and obviously requires the organization to have its books in order and to be able to report on them and whether they want to follow the guidelines as provided. But certainly can't force anyone to modify their governing structure according to what we would expect to have public dollars. And then as for, you know, seeing further increases, again the 2.2 percent that was put out by the Department of Finance was, you know -- can't necessarily predict what inflation was doing but it was meant to reflect a CPI increase. And I know the Bank of Canada is hoping we'll be back down at 3 or 4 percent next year so hopefully that ongoing 2 percent increase will be a little more meaningful as time goes on. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Mahsi. Ms. Nokleby.

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. And if I don't already have this in the schedules, could the Minister provide me with the breakdown of the different community futures and how much money they're each getting? It perhaps is in the schedules and maybe she just needs to remind me of which page that's on. I'll let her answer that.

But I just want to do one last thing while I've got 17 seconds left here. The northern food development program, glad again to see that we've sustained the funding of \$550,000.

However, again, my comment being that it's probably too low. Can the Minister speak a little bit to whether or not there's other funding that they can find or whether that money is going to go -- the number's going to go up? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Mahsi. Minister.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. And certainly we'll commit to make sure we can provide the breakdown. I'm not sure if it's in the schedules for sure or not. I don't need to read it out here.

And as for an increase to the northern food development program, again, at this point, our understanding is that it is actually meeting needs. This isn't a program that's necessarily oversubscribed. But I'll certainly take that comment back and just confirm with the department that that continues to be the case. It certainly was from 2022-2023 until now. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Mahsi. Next up, Ms. Cleveland.

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I'm going to pick up where MLA Nokleby left off which was in agriculture there.

And just in terms of the grants that are available to different people involved in agriculture, what I have heard is that the reporting requirements or expectations are a little bit too onerous for the value of the grant. And so I just wanted to kind of leave that there. I do understand from the agri-food association that that is something that they have been following up with the GNWT on, and so I think it's worth noting just so that we can ensure that these dollars get out the door and get into hands of Northerners who want to participate in food growing and be part of that future. So just a note there, Mr. Chair.

My next line of questions that I wanted to ask about was fisheries. And was just laughing with the Member for Hay River South that I never thought I would speak so much about fish as I have in the length of this term, so I appreciate the opportunity.

I understand that the fishery sector support position is being sunset. And I'm wondering if the Minister can speak to how they intend to fill the potential gap that might be left by that sunset of the position or how they intend to fulfill that role without those dollars? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Mahsi. Minister.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, so, firstly, just quickly with respect to agri-food, I am conscious of the Member's time but I'm actually at their association AGM next Friday and so certainly can follow up immediately and make note of the fact that this has been brought to our attention with respect to reporting to see exactly what the issue is.

And with respect then to the position for the fisheries, it is, indeed, a sunset but that is in part -- I think there was an expectation that the position was going to be seconded to the Tu Cho for two years and in fact now the position is just changing in terms of responsibility in who is paying, Department of Fisheries and Oceans is able now to help with that, support that, and so I'm happy to not have to spend the GNWT's dollars in that respect. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Mahsi. Ms. Cleveland.

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. So I see under commercial fisheries and contributions, there's a little bit of a difference, which I assume is that, that sunset there.

Can the Minister speak to whether or not there are any expected legislative changes required to the Fisheries Act coming forward from changes to the fisheries sector expected in the next year and if they have the resources to fulfill that work? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Mahsi. Minister.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes, there are changes expected but exactly where they will be coming from is still unknown. That is in the sense that the Freshwater Fish Marking Act is a federal piece of legislation. They, the federal government, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, has been doing a review of that and is working on some form of transition that I, as of yet, don't know for sure. We are working closely, though, with them. There was, in fact, just a meeting last week with both the Tu Cho Fisher Cooperative here in the Northwest Territories, ourselves, and the FFMC to just make sure everyone's aligned. And right now, our priority is getting the fish plant operational, having a manager in place to run the fish plant and then that will transition so that the FFMC-run plant will transition to ours and that can then allow the process by which the fish can move out to the south directly and we'll, hopefully by that point, know what FFMC's plans are to extricate themselves entirely and allow us to move forward. So then we'll know whether it's -- their legislation that's changing, our legislation that's

changing, or exactly when -- we're figuring it'll be about a couple of years of working, Mr. Chair, but right now not anticipating at this time any need for further supports outside of the capacity of the department. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Mahsi. Ms. Cleveland.

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you Mr. Chair, I just want to repeat I know something that the Minister has heard me say before, but I think it's really important to repeat, and that is that there are existing federally-accredited fish plants in the Northwest Territories already. And I just want to essentially hear a commitment from the Minister to ensure that when they're going through these talks at federal tables that that is recalled and advocated for so that we're not inadvertently pushing out people in the business sector who have had a tremendous amount of investment into this sector already. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Mahsi. Minister.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I am well aware that there are other fish plants and thrilled that there are other fish plants. We are not even remotely close to meeting our quota of fishing of freshwater fish here in the Northwest Territories. There's ample opportunity. If anything, I think our challenge is more on the side of having more fishers. And we certainly will make that point to raise this issue. I think the deputy minister actually may have an opportunity as early as tomorrow. If this comes up, she's at FFMC's meeting tomorrow just to make that they are aware of the complexity of our industry, that it's not just about the fish plant. But there's no intention to compete, and there's no need to. There's enough fish and enough market for that fish. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Mahsi. Ms. Cleveland.

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I absolutely agree with the Minister and think that there is ample opportunity for business development across the territory and absolutely support that. I just want to make sure that we don't have legislation at the end of the day that cuts out people who maybe are not directly affiliated with the plant but who also support the plant. Which brings me to SEED.

And so, again, in terms of what one of my colleagues noted was the decline in SEED with the removal of the COVID supports. My concern is that with the economy where it is

right now and the high rate of inflation, that this is a time where people might be looking for things like SEED in order to expand their business and find every opportunity to do so. And so I think that the more that we can put into SEED and invest in northern economic development, the better.

One of the things that I'm wondering here is in terms of the micro business, if the Minister can speak to whether or not that pot of SEED funding that is specific to artists and artisans was fully subscribed, and if it is and other pots aren't, if they're able to pull from other pots that have not been fully subscribed in order to meet the demand for that one? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Mahsi. Minister.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So, again, I'm happy to hear the support for the SEED program. Again, recognizing it's popular but recognizing, too, that there was a desire just to make sure that that fund is actually being effectively used. We want to make sure that those that are getting the money are using it in a way that grows businesses, in a way that supports local economies. There are some that are frequent returners to the program and that may or may not be the best use of public dollars to actually grow a marketplace economy. But these are all questions that need to be answered in a methodical and analytical way before putting more money into the program. We certainly are able to move money from within this division to support if there's particular elements under SEED, because there are some divisions within SEED-- I'm sure the Member knows -- including micro business. Mr. Chair, I would suggest there's a fairly detailed analysis done in the grants and contributions as to who gets the SEED money. And I'd rather suggest that we -- I not do that, taking up the Member's time, but can certainly provide that information after the fact. I can say I'm informed that we have about \$100,000 left right. So even coming up at the end of the fiscal, there's still room in SEED. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Mahsi. Ms. Cleveland.

MS. CLEVELAND: That is excellent news, Mr. Chair. Thank you very much for that. So what I would like to know is if the review that's currently taking place with SEED, if that will include a review of the market disruption clause and also any kind of potential down the road for a residency post-grant requirement. So people who are getting SEED aren't turning around as soon as they get it and leaving the territory with that investment in their business, that they're

actually staying and doing that business development here in the territory. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Mahsi Minister.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, there was an effort done to do some engagement on SEED right towards the end of COVID. It wasn't -- it didn't get a lot of uptake in terms of feedback and this is the program where, obviously -- and specifically looking at the question of market disruption. That was one of the main areas that was asked. It is one where there's a divide a bit between small and large centers in terms of whether there should or should not be market disruption. And so while I -- this is policy and it can change, wanted to go back when the economy's settled a little bit so there is a desire, and I know I've spoken to the department just in the last few days, about making sure we get that work done this Assembly, to look at the market disruption clause in SEED and see if we can approve it. So I hope that is a sufficient commitment for the Member. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Mahsi Ms. Cleveland.

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm going to squeak in one last question, and that is in regards to the manufacturing strategy.

One of the things that came out of the procurement review was a recommendation to actually implement the recommendations that came out of the manufacturing strategy. So I'm wondering if the economic diversification and business support team have the dollars to -- and resources, rather, to actually implement those recommendations and what recommendations we can see implemented before the end of the 19th Assembly? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Mahsi Minister.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, we are still doing some work on the manufacturing strategy. Some of it comes in under the procurement review stream, but I don't have the exact order. Perhaps I'll turn it to the deputy minister if she could give a bit of a brief summary of where we're at on that.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Deputy minister.

MS. STRAND: Yes, thank you, Mr. Chair. So, yes, with respect to the NWT manufacturer's products policy, the first thing that you're going to see released are guidelines which will

provide, you know, more transparency, timelines. And within that as well, as the Minister referred, the procurement review, we will be looking at some additional pieces on what the future of that policy should look like.

With respect to the manufacturing strategy, yes, there are 17 actions and a number of them are well underway. Some of them are completed. And, yes, at this point we do have the inhouse resources to advance most of those. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Mahsi. Not seeing any further questions on this section -- all the hands came up all of a sudden there. Mr. Simpson.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just want to go to -- I guess back to the fishing. And we have the revitalization strategy so I'm just wondering if there will be any more additional funds allocated to advancing that strategy and efforts to increase, I guess, the number of fishers into the territories or into the industry? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Mahsi Minister.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, right now we did have an influx just as part of the winter fishery obviously for this current fiscal to support the winter fishery. But -- that was a million dollars. As for what might be needed for -- I mean, I don't know how far into the future we're looking. I mean, there may well need to be something further into the future but at the moment, CanNor has provided some significant supports. It's going directly to Tu Cho, not to the GNWT, so it's not necessarily showing up here. But they have received, as I say, a million dollars going in to support their development of the industry. With that kind of support for the moment, there's not an immediate need from the GNWT. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Mahsi Mr. Simpson.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So are we looking, I guess, at the federal government programs to, I guess, to advance the revitalization strategy more so than use internal funds? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Mahsi Minister.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I'm happy to take the federal money before I need to spend the GNWT's money. And for the moment, we have seen a fair bit of support from CanNor. And I

think I said earlier this fiscal, I think I meant this book in front of me. So it's for the 2023-2024 year that there's a million dollars expected to go in to the Tu Cho on behalf of CanNor. At least that's what we were sort of hoping right now. Nothing is completely confirmed but anticipating that dollar -- that those dollars are invested. And if so, there is not -- again, there's not a need for more money from the GNWT. There has also been a fair bit of money from CanNor into the fish plant and into the fish revitalization strategy. So it's an area where we expect them to continue to be involved, given the investments to date. And, you know, certainly, as with anything, if the GNWT winds up in a situation to have to fill gaps, then that can happen. But for now, it doesn't look like that's a need that's been identified. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Mahsi. Mr. Simpson.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just want to question about the Canadian Agriculture Partnership. You know, we see the increase there from 488 to 1220, and I'm just wondering, you know, we're spending that kind of money and what benefits -- or when we will we see benefits from money spent in agricultural-type partnerships or initiatives? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Mahsi. Minister.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. With respect to seeing benefits, I mean, Mr. Chair, this is an area that was seeing fairly significant growth prior to two years of rather significant floods obviously and the agriculture sector was very dramatically impacted by the floods. I know the Member will be very well aware of that. That said, we are seeing that the sector's bouncing back, that folks are returning, and it's hoped that with -- given that there's been this change on the federal system and the increase of money coming through the federal CAP program, that this may be an opportunity for folks to really rebuild in a sort of rapid fashion. So, again, exactly what the timeline of growth will be, perhaps after next Friday when I'm at the agriculture association's AGM, Mr. Chair, I'd be happy to answer more questions about what they envision to be the next steps for their industry. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Mahsi. Mr. Simpson.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yeah, one of the issues, I guess, well after the flooding is that, you know, location of land that was being used for agriculture. And so some of

the people actually are looking for different areas to secure so they can continue. I guess one of the issues is going through the consultation with the Indigenous groups. So is your department, I guess, working with Lands to try and identify and maybe secure lands for people who want to continue farming that are outside of the flood zone? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Mahsi. Minister.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am familiar with at least one project in particular where I know there was definitely a story of an individual who I think in fact did go ahead and move away. But, Mr. Chair, simple answer, absolutely happy to work with Lands. I know the department officials are already working with Lands and there was, not that long ago, that myself and Minister Thompson often had regular check-ins and meetings because we have overlaps such as this one. So what I can do on my end is confirm that we'll add that to a future meeting that we have between the two departments with Ministers and deputies. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Mahsi. Mr. Simpson.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. And one thing I mentioned earlier today was support for retail businesses. I know in Hay River I've talked to a number of them and a lot of them are suffering, I guess, you know, because of COVID, because of the flooding. And, you know, some are, you know, talking about actually closing up shop. They're finding it difficult, you know, to find -- to get goods. They're finding it difficult to compete against, you know, the big box stores, you know, with online shopping and that. So I think it's -- we need to do something to provide some support for it, and that was what I was asking for earlier today, was to earmark some dollars specifically for that. And that's just not for -- not just for Hay River but for Yellowknife and other communities as well because, you know, you look at the downtown core here in Yellowknife and you see that it's pretty well dried up for retail outlets. So is there anything on the radar to provide support directly to the small retailers? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Mahsi. Minister.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So, Mr. Chair, I mean this is a time where I would say that the pandemic recovery, although many indicators show a recovery, there certainly are -- it certainly hasn't been even. It hasn't been even for all individual

businesses or all individual retailers for example. I can certainly follow up, you know, perhaps with some of the chambers as well, just to see if there's specific types of businesses or retailers that are struggling more than others. One of the things I can say that's happening, perhaps more over on the BDIC side, is that there's efforts to work with businesses to develop online -- their own online marketing and their own online sales opportunities and basically to try to innovate the business models that exist because the industry's changing and commercialization's changing across Canada. It's -- we can't cover losses. We can cover changes in innovations. And I say "we" in the broad sense - ITI and BDIC. So happy to provide more information of that sort to the Member if that's what he's looking for. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Mahsi. Mr. Simpson.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just on economic diversification and business supports, I see that we went from 349 down to nothing. Can you just talk a bit about that and give me some idea of, you know, when we talk to diversification, what are we looking at, I guess, on a smaller scale for communities? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Mahsi. Minister.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Mr. Chair, I'm going to suggest this go to the deputy minister, please.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Deputy minister.

MS. STRAND: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So with respect to that category within our grants and contributions, those are contributions that we don't project. Those are ones that come in after the yearend is over. For example, we've had one-off contributions to heritage centres or our producers incentive program for film. It's not a budgeted program, but we fund that. So you will see them in our actuals for this year as well. So, you know, that is -- I hope explains that category. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Mahsi. Mr. Simpson.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. One area that is of interest to me, and there's a few of them, buildings I guess, around the territories is the makerspaces. And it would be nice to see some of that rolled out into some of the other regional centers and maybe, to some extent, to the smaller communities as well. Is

there any thought, I guess, or has there been any thought in how to address that and promote that from the department's side? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Mahsi. Minister.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I am a huge fan of the makerspaces as well. I know that the makerspace here in Yellowknife has done a lot with an initial investment from ITI. In fact, I think I'm meeting with them for an update tomorrow because they are continuing to see an expansion of their programs. I can say, very frankly, the thing that I've heard from them as to what their success has been, as well as in Inuvik what the challenges they're seeing, is having a local champion, someone who also believes in the program as much as the Member and I do. We can provide those dollars, but if there's not someone to grow and expand the program, it won't grow and expand. It does need someone there. So yes, Mr. Chair, we're happy to work with any local community, community organization, that's interested. There is funding available under the innovation strategies with the department, but we need someone at the community level to be the champion. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Mahsi for that. Next, I have Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Yeah, thanks, Mr. Chair. So earlier I'd asked about whether there were any organizations that did not receive the 2.2 percent increase, and on page 230, it's pretty clear that a number of organizations did not receive the increase, or at least areas - advance the knowledge economy, Business Development Investment Corporation, commercial fisheries, Great Northern Arts Festival, SEED. You know, I recognize that some of these are, you know, programs rather than individual NGOs but can the Minister -- you know, some of the other ones did, like community futures, community transfer initiatives. Could the Minister try to explain again for me why some programs got an increase, and some did not? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Mahsi. Minister.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes, thank you, I'm happy to have the question. So this wasn't intended to be a blanket increase to every funding pot, every contribution agreement, every grant agreement, every program dollar that goes out the door to the nonprofit sectors across the Northwest Territories. This was to address the

fact that for up to now, non-profits were out offering services and conducting business really that, without their taking that on, the Government of the Northwest Territories would have to take it inside. So the easier examples often are around the health and social services side. So, for example, you know, organizations that provide sheltering services, that provide disability services, that provide residential services. On ITI's side, it's tourism association that does work and the CF's deliver the programming to the business sector on our behalf. If they weren't doing it, public servants would have to do that work. Public servants see increases obviously in their wages. The non-profits were not. That was the gap that we were trying to fill, not to increase every single, you know, project-based fund that goes out the door. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Just for clarification, what was the CF you mentioned?

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Sorry. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Community futures. The community futures organizations.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Mahsi. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. Okay, I got some specific questions about some of the funding programs here if I could.

Let's start with advance the knowledge economy. Yeah, there's a big drop there from 240 to 100 this year. And I see that there's actually an ongoing engagement that I think ITI seems to now have the lead on this. So why has this dropped, especially when, you know, there's this public engagement going on and probably looking for some money to maybe start to implement and do some things? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Mahsi. Minister.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So, Mr. Chair, there were two areas of sunset in here, and that's what led to the drop. The first is with respect to the advancing the knowledge economy, there was a position there that is -- as that work has advanced already now and there is this strategy in place that that position is gone. And then also there's some changes with respect to, again, the makerspace, money that was there has moved out as well. So, you know, in short -- and then to say that, yes, there's the work that's going on currently on the regional economic development plans but that wouldn't necessarily -- depending on -- well, depending on what comes of those plans, it wouldn't

necessarily come in the same spot here. There may be -- I mean, there could be a whole number of different ways to advance individual projects and plans across the individual regions. Each one may well be quite different. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Mahsi. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. So let's talk about the knowledge economy piece. I think somehow the name's been morphed into something called the innovation action plan, which I really don't understand what it means. But I think it gives the connotation that somehow something has to be new and swanky before it's going to get funded. It's really -- looks like it's really aimed at the commercialization of knowledge. I think there's a number of other aspects here, like, you know, intellectual property rights when it comes to traditional knowledge that needs to be looked at. But in any event, I disagree with the name that the Minister's given this. But if the regional economic plans are in here, what's the status of that work and is it actually going to get done in the lifetime of this Assembly? And although the department seems to be out there talking about regional economic development plans, the mandate item actually is about setting regional economic diversification targets. That's something different than a plan. So maybe the Minister can address a few of those comments. Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Mahsi. Minister.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So work is underway right now to put together regional economic development plans. And I know I've had this conversation with the Member before as to whether one can have a target before one even has a plan so, you know, again, and we may have to agree to disagree about the process by which that is determined, but having something there, having some guidance and some direction so that communities can then develop their targets once they know some of their areas, that may well be the ultimate outcome of it. But it's meant to be something that empowers and drives community economic development and in a measurable fashion.

They are expected to be completed this Assembly by -- certainly before the August session, if not hopefully even sooner, much sooner than that.

And the knowledge economy versus innovation, Mr. Chair, I think it was -- if I'm not mistaken, last year we went out to do the work

around the knowledge economy. It came back very, very clearly from the consultation process that went out publicly that most folks did not like the word "knowledge" economy. They didn't understand it, didn't make sense to them. So, you know, it's not unanimous by any stretch and this House shows that, but the recommendations we got quite firmly were to make it a name that more people could identify with and that aligned more to the federal government's approach which may help us get some money for it. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Mahsi. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Mr. Chair, yeah, I guess we're going to have to agree -- continue to agree to disagree. So where does the remediation economy fit into all this stuff? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Mahsi. Minister.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, that is something that is a ITI lead but it is worked on, as I mentioned earlier, a shared area with Department of ENR as well. And right now it's under ITI as there's a discussion paper out for comment and review, and it would certainly be helpful if more people would look at it and provide their comments and feedback to it. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Mahsi. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. So is there any money earmarked in this budget for further work on our remediation economy? And I guess I'm not talking about the \$20 million contract that went to a southern firm to do remediation at Cameron Hills where nobody's getting any jobs out of it from the Northwest Territories, but is there any actual dollars in here for further work on remediation economy? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Mahsi. Minister.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, at this point, the paper and the consultation process around coming up with a bit more of a strategy, that is being done in house. No further funds are required in this respect. It is an area where I can say there has been a fair bit of interest from the federal government with CanNor and with CIRNAC. There is what's called the SPI funding -- and I'm going to get the acronym wrong -- SPI funding, which is an area of -- strategic partnership initiative funding, which we expect could well

support some training if that is what's required. But, really, at this point the first step is to go out and figure out where are the gaps, what gaps need filling, so that more businesses and residents can participate in the remediation work. That is within the mineral resource sector at the closure stages of that industry. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Mahsi. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. I'm going to ask for your indulgence; I've got two more questions.

The SEED program I understand went through some kind of a review in 2021-2022 but no changes have been made. There's no increase in funds. What's going on with that previous review; and the Minister alluded to another review, why are we doing another review and when is it going to get completed? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Mahsi. Minister.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I'd like to send this to the deputy minister to give a bit more of a sense about where it's been and where it's going. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Deputy minister.

MS. STRAND: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So, yes, with respect to the SEED review, it was during the COVID years so yes, the intake wasn't that high. That being said, we still did get some direction. What you'll see coming for SEED very shortly is, one, release of some guidelines for SEED. The department is looking to create guidelines that are consistent for all of our programs. So this is obviously a very important one. We did look at market disruption and the equity piece. The second piece coming out will be program evaluation matrices for the SEED programs.

And I think, you know, what we are looking at right now is how you define need. So you can talk about market disruption or you can actually try and see how you define "need" a bit better that isn't necessarily market disruption. The Yukon, for example, doesn't have market disruption but they have a way to evaluate needs. So those are things that the department's going to be looking at and hopefully we will be having something out on those two pieces in the next four to six months. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Mahsi. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Yeah, thanks, Mr. Chair. I appreciate it. I just have one more question. The northern food development program, one of the things that, you know, there was a joint public hearing -- or SCEDE had a public hearing I think last week on this, or maybe it was the week before. And one of the things that came out of that meeting was there doesn't seem to be any way to actually measure agricultural production in the Northwest Territories. So we give out money, but we have no way of actually knowing whether there's increased agricultural production; there's, you know, some way of addressing food security in some way. What kind of stipulations are there in contributions agreements for the northern food development program about reporting of data and, you know, whether people actually increased their food production or sales or whatever? Is that part of the reporting requirements under contribution agreements for this program or other agricultural supports from the department and if it's not part of the reporting requirements, when it is going to start to be made part of the reporting requirements? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Mahsi. And Minister.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So Mr. Chair, there's certainly are -- particularly because of the nature of this being in a joint federal program, the federal programs do have reporting requirements. There are some data collection. I don't have one of those agreements in front of me but what I can commit to do is to perhaps provide -- we'll go back and see what we can provide in terms from those reporting requirements that we have so we can provide that to the Member and if it's public, we'll make that public. I just need to confirm that there's nothing within those agreements that I'm unaware of that would limit that.

As for new data that may be gathered, all I can say on that one, Mr. Chair, is that the new agricultural partnership process with the federal government was live to the need for more data. I recall that being very clearly discussed amongst all the ministers. So there may well be some support and guidance coming on a pan-Canadian level and happy to report back as that continues to develop. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Mahsi for that. Mr. Edjericon.

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I got a few questions. In regards to your -- on page 230 and then I go to page 232, in here it talks about South Slave region. As you know, I represent the Tu Nedhe-Willideh riding, which is four communities. In here, can you explain to me -- it says full-time, and there's ten positions. Can you explain to me where are the positions? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Mahsi. Minister.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, none of -- I mean, GNWT is not organized based on the 19 ridings of the Legislative Assembly. So I appreciate that we'll have to get some detail there. I'm not sure if I have it broken down by 19 Members here. And let me see if the deputy minister is able to and if not, we'll certainly get back to the Member with that detail. Thanks.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Deputy minister.

MS. STRAND: Those positions would be both based in Hay River and Fort Smith, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): All right, mahsi. Mr. Edjericon.

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I know this year my colleague Jane, MLA from the Tlicho region talked about the way the Tlicho is mixed into the North Slave. I also too want to raise that as an issue because you just clarified to me that, you know, you don't have that information right now but it's only Hay River and Fort Smith. But then -- so when you say that, this information is kind of skewed in a way that it rolls in Fort Resolution, Lutselk'e and N'dilo and Dettah. So where does N'dilo and Dettah fall in? Does that fall into the North -- sorry, South Slave? Or sorry, North Slave? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Mahsi. Minister.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So the Tu Nedhe-Willideh riding, in general, would be under the North Slave. Again, we're not going to be in a position as a government to break down -- to allocate regions to being 19 regions. Whatever economies of scale that we have in the North, which are few and far between already, would be utterly lost. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Mahsi. Mr. Edjericon.

MR. EDJERICON: Okay, thank you. Thank you for that and for clarifying that. I'm not sure

when -- on one hand, you know, when I became the MLA, I represent the four communities of Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh, and I'm not sure when are we, the government, you're going to start looking to recognize that, because right now as it is the positions that are on these documents, or the monies that's going to the North or South Slave region, it's really -- I mean, how much money is it really coming into Dettah and N'dilo, to Lutselk'e and Fort Resolution? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Mahsi. Minister.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So certainly some effort can be made perhaps to try to determine what monies are going in, and it would depend upon if we're looking at positions or if we're looking at contributions. There are EDO contribution agreements, for example with the YKDFN and Fort Res, where we are funding an economic development officer in those two communities. There would obviously be quite a large number of, you know, individual grants and contributions that go to individual businesses in all four of those communities and that would be in the contract report so we can provide that detail. There would be quite a number of supports that flow from the headquarters office, probably to Dettah and N'dilo in particular. So again, you know, there's a lot of funds that go out but perhaps, as I said, I can identify if it's a public servant question or if it's money into grants and contributions and then that can be a starting point to try to break that down a bit. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Mahsi. Mr. Edjericon.

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. So it's just a matter of time I guess, that the department's going to have to start catching up and starting to recognize that Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh riding is a separate riding on its own. It's got four communities but yet we're rolled into the South Slave region and the positions that are there are not identified. So then when you say that there's money going to be going to South Slave region, really it's only going to include Hay River and Fort Smith but nothing for Tu Nedhe, which is N'dilo, Dettah, Fort Res and Lutselk'e. But that's okay, I'm hoping that the Minister could just elaborate a little bit on that as to when this might happen. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Mahsi. Minister.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, again, the entire Government of the Northwest Territories is

not -- reorganize itself into 19 ridings. The Beaufort Delta allocate region right now includes all of Nunakput, both of the Inuvik ridings and the Mackenzie Delta. So we're not drawn up into 19 different groups. There are public servants based in the communities of Lutselk'e and Fort Resolution. There are positions funded with YKDFN as well with respect, as I said, to the EDO for example. And there's funds that go out to individual community members. Some of it is done through the regional determinations, so there's regional headquarters in North Slave which, in this case, is based in Yellowknife. But there's not going to be a splitting up of government services into 19. So if the question is when, that is not on the horizon for the government. The budgeting that would be required would be significant and it would completely undercut the availability to actually put monies into the communities and out to residents. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Mahsi. Mr. Edjericon.

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you. I only got three minutes and 42 seconds left so I think we'll have that discussion at another day. But I think it's a valid question that, you know, we need to be recognized and that monies that are going into the South Slave region or North Slave region, that it goes in -- for my riding goes into different regions and it's all over the place so that needs to be recognized.

Anyways, moving forward though, right now as it is as we -- and you mentioned in your speech today that there's -- we're going to be closing the mines in the next couple years. And we're going to be looking at new ways to create employment and jobs going forward to sustain ourselves and especially right now in our communities, we have members that are working at the mine site that have picked up a lot of good skills along the way in the last 25 years in the operation of the mining industry. So I guess the question to the Minister, what are we going to do to look at how we're going to offset that because when that happens, what are we going to fall back on to, because right now in here, you know, I don't see anything in here that's forestry, and I look under ITI -- or sorry, infrastructure, and I'm thinking, you know, we're going to have to start shifting gears here and looking for new ways to build homes. And so forestry is one way, and I just thought maybe if you could elaborate on that a little bit. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Mahsi. Minister.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I agree. I want all the

things. So, you know, the forestry specifically, that would actually fall under ENR. And, again, I'm going to add that to my list, the ENLR department, so lands, natural resources -- Lands, ENR -- well, now ECC and us do meet, and I'll add that to our next meeting item, just to make sure that we're checking in and working together from an economic development perspective and from the forestry perspective. You know, we want to continue to see mineral resource development. We want to see Indigenous governments participating at an equity stage in mineral resource development.

Folks that are from communities that are in that industry now can utilize their skills. You know, we're working right now with Diavik; we're sitting with them. But I know the other two mines are more than happy to hire more local workers and not bring up a fly-in workforce. So in a short term, there will be some jobs available. But in the long term, again I would really like to see all the opportunities. I mean, again I talked earlier about fishery. All of the communities around Great Slave Lake have an opportunity to participate in the fishery and in the fishery revitalization, and we are not anywhere close to meeting the maximum. So there really are a lot of opportunities. I don't have a clock in front of me. I'll wrap up, which is to say that I open that regional economic development plans are an opportunity for individual communities to see the opportunities and then to be able to access the training to take advantage of them. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Mahsi. Mr. Edjericon.

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I guess I had one more -- a couple quick questions here if I could. In Hay River they have the Aurora Wood Pellets, and they have an arrangement with I guess that company in -- that's going to made up to look at building wood pellets, etcetera. Would you have any more information on that so you could share with us on that, or is that going to be in Minister Thompson's portfolio? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Mahsi. Minister.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. This is yet another chance for ECC and ITI to work together. Minister Thompson and I have spoken about the Aurora Wood Pellets project many times. The deputy minister will likely have the latest on that. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Deputy minister.

MS. STRAND: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So, yes, Aurora Wood Pellets, or AWP, they have evolved. They have a very aggressive business plan, including wood pellet and a sawmill. ENR and ITI are working together to support them as they wish. They have multiple business plans. Agriculture, as I said, wood pellets, sawmill. Right now they are -- have invested significantly in a railhead where they are bringing in a lot of the supplies for the diamond mines - fuel, dry products. So, you know, we're very optimistic that this will be an economic opportunity down in that region. And as I said, we will be continually working them as they wish. Thank you, Mr. Chair

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Mahsi. Committee, we went through one round of ten minutes each. There are no further questions, we'll move on.

Please turn to page 229, Industry, Tourism and Investment, economic diversification and business support, operations expenditures summary, 2023-2024 Main Estimates, \$18,959,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Mahsi. Minerals and petroleum resources beginning on page 234, with information item on pages 235 and 236. Questions? Somebody's tired to raise their arm? I'm not seeing any questions in this section. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. So on 234, there's Minerals and Petroleum Resources Act implementation. In 2021-2022, the actuals, it was almost \$200,000 overspent. But how much total have we actually spent on the Mineral Resources Act implementation as a government to date? Maybe to the end of the fiscal year. Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Mahsi. Minister.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, let me get back to the Member on that. The challenge I would see on that is there's going to be MARS funding. There's going to be the mineral resource -- the sort of specific line item here, and I want to make sure that we don't lose anything over the course of a few fiscal years. It's embedded work that this is what -- this is sort of where -- this is the meat of what a lot of public servants over at ITI do right now, but we'll try our best to pull the specifics of it. I'm confident I won't have that number -- and, yes, the mining recorder's office as well. So it's work that's spread out in a lot of places. There's not a single line item. We'll do our best to put something together. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): All right, mahsi. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: No, thanks, Mr. Chair. Yeah, I appreciate that. And it is important work, and I think we want to get it right. And in Ontario they took ten years to do this. So yeah, maybe I'll just turn to the same -- there is some line items in the contributions around this. There's a line item, Mineral Resources Act Implementation under contributions. It was \$22,000 back in 2021-2022. In 2023-2024, it's anticipated to be \$12,000. What's that money for and who actually gets it? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Mahsi. Minister.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I believe that is probably funding that's going directly to the Indigenous governments, and I'm getting some nods around me. So that is part of the contributions to support their participation in that process. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): All right, mahsi. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks. So does that go to the Members of the Intergovernmental Council, or does it go to non-Intergovernmental Council Indigenous governments. Thanks.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Mahsi. Minister.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's not going to the -- towards the Intergovernmental Council process or to the Intergovernmental Council itself. That has a separate funding arrangement. It is for non-IGC members. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Mahsi. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Okay, thanks. Yeah. Yeah, look, and I compliment the department. They seem to be very successful in getting money out of the financial management board for resource management legislation. I just wish that ENR and Lands was as successful because they don't seem to get any extra money for their work. So that's just a comment, Mr. Chair. As much as I would like them to get money to do things, particularly in terms of public participation, that doesn't seem to happen. But are we actually going to get mining regulations before the end of this Assembly? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Mahsi. Minister.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I expect we will see the draft regulations before the end of the Assembly. There is still going to be the gazetting process and probably a section 35 consultation process. And I don't know that those two pieces will be complete before the end of the Assembly. Because this has gone through the IGC's legislative protocol development process, I expect that the section 35 process will be, hopefully, straightforward, though certainly don't want to presume, and then thereafter the gazette process is also standard. So those two pieces are likely to be after the end of the Assembly. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Mahsi. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Okay, thank you for that. And will these regulations, and the Minister's talked to us before about this, I think there's like four or five different sets, is one of them going to be on royalties? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Mahsi. Minister.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Yes, thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes, that's correct. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Mahsi. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. Yeah, I attended the geoscience forum. There was a public presentation given by, I think it's a consultant that's been hired by ITI to do some modeling. Is that money reflected in here somewhere and where is that work at? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Mahsi. Minister.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I expect that is going to find itself under the contract services line item. I don't have the specific here. But it would be in the contribution -- it would either be reported under the procurement reporting that takes place around our own grants and contributions report. So I can figure out which one of the two it is and provide that to the Member.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Mahsi. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Yeah, thanks, Mr. Chair. I have a funny feeling I probably got a couple of Members statements lined up on that subject as well so I don't think I'll pursue that any further here right now. But I will say that I'm interested in seeing the modeling, and I think committee should probably have a say in that, in what gets

modeled or at least better understand or perhaps suggest some kind of modeling that might be done but that might be coming to the Minister in a different way.

So there's some other contributions here I'd like to ask about. The NWT Chamber of Mines, the \$50,000 in core funding, can someone explain to me what that is going to be used for in 2023-2024? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Mahsi. Minister.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, it's not core funding, and let me just pre-empt the question. They did not get any 2.2 percent inflationary increase. As for what this is going to be used for, I'll ask the deputy minister to speak to that, please.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Deputy minister.

MS. STRAND: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So, yes, as the Minister stated, with the grants and contributions to the Chamber of Mines, they're all project specific. We do work on them to deliver different events at the geoscience forum here, at roundup, other promotional products such as Mining North Works, on their website. So, yes, they're all based on actual projects within that budget item, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Mahsi. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. Well, we've had this debate many times - if it looks like a duck, walks like a duck, squawks like a duck, it probably is a duck, so.

I'd like to move on to -- so there's this thing called Indigenous mineral development support program. And I note that the territorial agri-food association put on a recent -- or I guess it's still coming up. February 2023-2024, Grow NWT; it's a conference on agriculture. Where would Indigenous governments or, you know, NGOs in general, go to ITI to get money to attend a conference like that? Could they apply to this, you know, Indigenous mineral development support program for funding to go to an agri-foods conference? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Mahsi. Minister.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. No, Mr. Chair, this again, this is funding that's under the mineral petroleum resources portion of ITI's funding, which I would note gets 26.8 percent of the budget whereas the economic diversification and business support services gets 30.8 percent of the

budget. So there may well be some funding that's available under those areas or perhaps through various other departments in the Government of the Northwest Territories that provide supports to Indigenous governments. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Mahsi. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Great. Thanks, Mr. Chair. Yeah, I appreciate that. Pass it on to some folks that I know. So I would like to know, you know, the name of this activity is minerals and petroleum resources. So how many staff does ITI have that are assigned to oil and gas or petroleum resources, and are all those positions filled right now? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Mahsi. Minister.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, let me see if perhaps the deputy minister might have that -- the number in terms of the positions -- oh well, we do have. Six positions right now, Mr. Chair, in the PRO office. As for whether they are filled, again let me see if the deputy has that information. If not, we'll get back to the Member. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Mahsi. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. Yeah, so I guess in the last fiscal year there was a review done for OROGO in terms of looking at their needs and so on given that oil and gas activities are way way down. In fact, I don't think there's anything happening other than some oil abandonments, maybe M18 perhaps if it ever gets going. But has ITI actually ever done kind of a needs assessment, a review of its oil and gas resourcing, and, you know, the staff levels and so on in that part of its department -- you know, activities, to look at whether there might be some efficiencies there? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Mahsi. Minister.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So there certainly is -- I mean, there's going to be some work that is still underway that -- for example, there's still management of assets. There's still monitoring of areas where interest is being held. The staff in Inuvik are also working on the mineral development -- mineral resources -- mineral resource regulations development. There is M18, as noted. So it's not necessarily a traditional sense of out drilling oil rigs. There's still a fair bit of work that needs to be undertaken and that is undertaken by this

office. And as I'm saying this, there's a flood of information from staff coming in as to all the various and many things they do. So perhaps I suggest rather than listing that off now and taking the time, I can certainly provide a brief explanation to the Member to describe what that office is responsible for. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Mahsi. Ms. Nokleby.

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. And I just wanted to start on page 234 with the increase in funding to the NWT geological survey. I do know that \$50,000 of that is to explore the possibility of using the fine silica sand at the Nechalacho rare earth deposit, whether or not there's some sort of cement potential for that. And could the Minister speak to, do we have the results of this assessment around the potential there and if so, do we have potential there? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Mahsi. Minister.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Let me see if the deputy minister has a more up to date report.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Deputy minister.

MS. STRAND: Yes, thank you, Mr. Chair. So, yes, that increase is both for \$200,000 for the mining incentive program and \$50,000 for the cement production. So I'm happy to report that the work is being conducted with the University of Alberta. They were up for the geoscience forum. They have scouted locations for cement products and have poured the first prototype. So that is very good news. So the program is underway. They will be reporting on results as we go. So good news on the infancy and again this helps for our capital projects for not importing, you know, these products, you know, all of that reducing our GHG. So we will report on the results as they are available. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Mahsi. Ms. Nokleby.

MS. NOKLEBY: I never thought I would be so excited about hearing about cement but, yes, I'm really happy to hear that there is that potential. And it is my understanding that not only could it be used for basic cement products but that it is also such a high grade that there's other really sort of niche applications for some of our sand. So I think that's awesome, and I am excited to look into that or get more information on that as it progresses. And thank you for answering what the other portion of that

money or that increase was for, because that was going to be my next question. So I appreciate that.

I just wanted to ask a little bit about the Chamber of Mines. And so I know that the Minister explained that the \$55,000 supports various activities. Given that mining plays such a huge part in our industry, and pretty much is our industry as I said earlier in my reply to the budget address, besides the government itself, you know, and given that tourism, which is such a small portion of our industry gets such a huge investment of millions of millions of dollars, it's actually quite shameful to me that we only provide the Chamber of Mines with \$55,000.

Recently, we attended the geoscience forum. There was a lot of excitement for that to be in-person once again, however, it was apparent that the chamber is struggling to meet the demands of the industry and to do the correct lobbying that such an important industry and contributor to our GDP would require. And I don't get that difference between why tourism is getting such a -- if we go to -- when we get to the next pages, I think it's, like \$6 million and the Chamber of Mines is only getting \$55,000. Can the Minister speak to whether there's a plan to increase funding to the Chamber of Mines? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Mahsi. Minister.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So I mean, some of this will be owing to historical funding arrangement. I would note with respect to Northwest Territories Tourism as an organization specifically, the function of providing marketing and promotion of tourism was handed over to Northwest Territories Tourism. So they do get a larger proportion of funding in that respect because they don't have some of the programs and services -- or rather, they are undertaking programs and services that used to at one time be done by the GNWT and therefore are an organization that is actively acting in our stead whereas ITI continues to have, for example, the client service and community relations officers who would provide some of that similar pathfinding for the mineral resources sector. So there is a bit of a difference in function there. But I would acknowledge it is alive to me that the Chamber of Mines is facing some struggles and the fact is as the industry faces struggles -- and they're commodity-based, if they struggle, their own membership is less well placed to contribute and then that is exactly what would happen. So I don't have a solution for the sustainability of the Chamber of Mines right now, but we are alive to that challenge. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Mahsi. Ms. Nokleby.

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. And I appreciate that explanation because it is something that I've never actually really delved into but kind of always wondered about. And don't get me wrong, I fully support the tourism industry and I'm super excited to see all of the return of the blue parkas around town and here at the Chamber, coming in to see the Assembly while we've been in session and such, so fully deserved to the tourism industry. They're doing great work in getting our name out there. And, you know, there is also even a cross-component there. You know, there is a need now for -- or an interest in mining tourism. Diavik, before the pandemic -- I think it was Diavik -- I'm sure I'll be corrected if I'm wrong -- was planning to do some flights up to the mine and take people up there to show them what we do and, you know, sort of the difference that the diamond mining is because it is actually quite an inert type of mining compared to, say, gold or other heavy metals. So yes, I will actually be anticipating sometime in the next year seeing a significant ask for the Chamber of Mines to be increased given the essential need for that industry in our territory. Literally, it is the reason that we have been able to be afloat over the last few years.

In relation to that, some of the work the chamber does, and I believe they are part of this but it may be the Mine Training Society, is the prospector training course. I posted about the prospector training course on social media and it got a huge reaction to it. Actually surprisingly so, and not just from my nerdy geological friends.

So can the Minister speak to a little bit more about that training course, who's been putting it on and, you know, the intent for the future of it and expansion, really? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Mahsi. Minister.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The prospector training course is indeed a success, and it's one that has had a lot of increasing uptake. Perhaps I'll just turn it to the deputy minister who might have some numbers to provide. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Deputy minister.

MS. STRAND: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I don't have the numbers offhand, but I can -- I'm happy to say that March will be the next delivery. During COVID, of course, we went to a virtual format. We're hoping that, you know,

there can be both virtual and in-person formats provided because there's nothing like looking at rocks truly in the field. We deliver that through the Mine Training Society. It's one of their programs. I think they've got it down to an art now, to deliver that. And there have been some great successes out of it as well where some of those individuals taking it have staked claims and optioned them to companies. And, you know, it's -- just even people just wanting to know what they see when they're out there camping. So anyhow, we're glad that it's funding -- funding has come back to this program because it is oversubscribed and, you know, we are tracking those numbers. I just don't have them at hand here.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Mahsi. Ms. Nokleby.

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you. And yeah, I also cannot say enough good things about the Mine Training Society, particularly in how a lot of their course work or options or training is free. They do a lot of training around community members and repurposing or re -- I don't know what the word is -- reorienting people in their professional path that have come out of other areas that are maybe not so prosperous at the moment.

Can the Minister or the deputy minister or Ms. Salvador speak about where the money for the Mine Training Society would fall in these contributions and do we actually, in fact, other than on a project basis, do we provide any funding to the Mine Training Society? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Mahsi. Minister.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Let me direct that to the deputy, please.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Deputy minister.

MS. STRAND: Yes, thank you, Mr. Chair. So the Mine Training Society, we don't provide funding to them on an ongoing basis. ECE and ITI did assist in the 2022-2023 fiscal based on need but they are largely funded from federal programs to deliver training. I know they currently have applications in, and they're waiting to hear on that long-term funding. So ECE sits on the Mine Training Society board as our GNWT rep. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Mahsi. Ms. Nokleby.

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I'll make sure to follow up with the ECE Minister when he sits in the hot seat.

My last questions are around the scientific collaborative research projects. I'm always a big, big proponent of this type of work. We've only seen an increase in the number of universities and other institutes that are in the North and working and providing great collaborative relationships in that area.

Can the Minister speak a little bit more maybe to, we obviously -- we didn't spend anything last year it looks like but then we're back up to the 350. What do those projects entail, and do we see -- or do we anticipate an increase in this area mostly, I would assume, from other funding sources such as those universities? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Mahsi Minister.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I just wanted to note, so a detailed reporting of which universities and for which projects receives this money is in the grants and contributions results reports for 2021-2022. That would give a bit more of a sense of what's been ongoing, which I'm also happy to provide directly just rather than reading it out. It is an NTGS administered funding. Mr. Chair, I think I've missed a thread of what the question was. Let me see if the deputy minister wants to add anything, sorry.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Deputy minister.

MS. STRAND: I don't have much more to add. But these are based on -- they change annually based on the research needs and the length of the projects that the NTGS has with different academia and different institutions. And further to the Minister, yes, we can provide a detailed description of them. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Mahsi. Any further questions from committee on this section?

Not seeing any, please turn to page 234. Industry, Tourism and Investment, minerals and petroleum resources, operations expenditures summary, 2023-2024 Main Estimates, \$16,469,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): Member for Frame Lake, what's the...

MR. O'REILLY: Mr. Chair, I move that the chair rise and report progress.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Bonnetrouge): There's a motion on the floor to report progress. The motion is in order and non-debatable. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried.

---Carried

I will now rise and report progress.

MADAM SPEAKER: May I have the report. Member for Deh Cho.

Report of Committee of the Whole

MR. BONNETROUGE: Madam Speaker, your committee has been considering Bill 57, and Tabled Document 813-19(2), and would like to report progress, and that Bill 57 is ready for third reading. And, Madam Speaker, I move that the report of the Committee of the Whole be concurred with. Mahsi.

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you. Members, do I have a seconder for the Committee of the Whole? Member for Range Lake. The motion is in order and non-debatable. All those in favour? All those opposed? All those abstaining? The motion is carried.

---Carried

Third reading of bills. Orders of the day. Mr. Clerk.

Orders of the Day

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Tim Mercer): Thank you, Madam Speaker. Orders of the day for Thursday, February 27th, 2023, 1:30 p.m.

1. Prayer
2. Ministers' Statements
3. Members' Statements
4. Returns to Oral Questions
 - Oral Question 1343-19(2), Impacts of COVID-19 on Education
5. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery
6. Acknowledgements
7. Oral Questions
8. Written Questions
9. Returns to Written Questions
10. Replies to Commissioner's Address

11. Petitions
12. Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills
13. Reports of Standing and Special Committees
14. Tabling of Documents
15. Notices of Motion
16. Motions
17. Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills
18. First Reading of Bills
19. Second Reading of Bills
 - Bill 64, An Act to Amend the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act, No. 3
20. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters
 - Bill 23, An Act to Amend the Public Utilities Act
 - Bill 29, Resource Royalty Information Disclosure Statute Amendment Act
 - Bill 61, An Act to Amend the Ombud Act
 - Committee Report 40-19(2), Standing Committee on Government Operations Report on Bill 61: An Act to Amend the Ombud Act
 - Minister's Statement 264-19(2), Response to the NWT Chief Coroner's Report on Suicide
 - Tabled Document 681-19(2), Government of the Northwest Territories Response to Committee Report 26-19(2): Report on the Child and Family Services Act – Lifting Children, Youth and Families: An All of Territory Approach to Keeping Families Together
 - Tabled Document 694-19(2), Northwest Territories Coroner Service 2021-2022 Early Release of Data
 - Tabled Document 813-19(2), Main Estimates
21. Report of Committee of the Whole
22. Third Reading of Bills
 - Bill 57, Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2022
23. Orders of the Day

MADAM SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. This House stands adjourned until Monday, February 27th, 2023 at 1:30 p.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 5:53 p.m.