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The Honourable Shane Thompson, Speaker

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YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**Tuesday, February 27, 2024****Members Present**

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

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

Prayer

---Prayer

SPEAKER (Hon. Shane Thompson): I'd like to thank Karen Mitchell for the blessing today.

Ministers' statements.

Ministers' Statements

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 24-20(1):
HEALTH HUMAN RESOURCES
RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Mr. Speaker, the Government of the Northwest Territories continues to work to address the national shortage of health care professionals that has led to service reductions and system impacts not only in the NWT but across the country. Post-pandemic, this shortage has only intensified, with many health professionals resigning, retiring, or reducing their working hours.

The results of our internal staff surveys and feedback sessions indicate that employee recruitment and retention challenges persist within our system. To address this shortage and its impact on our staff, we have increased our focus on employee engagement and employee retention through the development of the NWT Health and Social Services system human resource plan.

While recruitment remains essential, it is equally important to recognize the hard work and dedication of our existing staff and thank them for their commitment to serving residents in the face of the many challenges experienced by our health care system over the past several years.

Multiple new recruitment initiatives were introduced in August 2022. These initiatives provide additional support to our existing health system, and include incentives to both recruit new employees and retain the valuable employees we currently have.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to provide an update on these initiatives. Expanding the use of paramedics has provided additional support to remote and isolated communities and to acute care emergency room operations. A contract for these services was issued in the summer of 2023, resulting in paramedics being used in multiple locations across the territory, including at both Stanton and Inuvik Hospitals, as well as in Fort McPherson, Deline, Aklavik, Tuktoyaktuk, and Ulukhaktok. Paramedics also supported emergency care operations at Stanton during the city-wide evacuation order in the summer of 2023 and assisted in Hay River during a physician shortage and during evacuation last summer.

The Friends and Family Program reimburses travel costs for family members visiting the Northwest Territories while an eligible HSS employee works over the holiday period. Last year, Mr. Speaker, the program supported 114 applications from employees. While we are still confirming this year's numbers, there appears to be a similar number of supported applications this recent holiday as well.

Mr. Speaker, the referral program is available to all GNWT employees and offers up to \$2,000 dollars for the successful recruitment of nurse practitioners, physicians, and registered nurses. Since the launch of this last July, there have been ten successful complete referrals. The international travel to and from the Northwest Territories incentive, which offers to cover the international travel costs of any Canadian physician, nurse practitioner, or registered nurse living abroad and wishing to relocate to live and work in the NWT, or work as a locum in our system, was taken up by six physicians since it began in 2022.

We also continue to reimburse licensing fees for locum physicians. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to report that 30 physicians were reimbursed in 2022, and 45 more in 2023. Additionally, four new positions were created to provide specialized support to new hires and as of January 24, all of these positions have been filled.

Mr. Speaker, aside from these initiatives we are actively recruiting for vacant family physicians and physician specialist positions across the territory. There was a small yet positive reduction in the system vacancy rate from June 2023 to September 2023.

The Health and Social Services recruitment team continues to work with hiring managers and Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority leadership to enhance our recruitment strategies. Scheduled monthly marketing campaigns for hard-to-fill high-vacancy positions are underway, ensuring a consistent advertising presence on key job boards and association websites.

The improved consolidated hiring process for nurses has significantly reduced hiring times, down to an impressive six-week turnaround for registered nurses and seven weeks for community health nurses.

Mr. Speaker, as a graduate of the Aurora College Northern Nursing Program, I am thrilled to share that all 16 Aurora College nursing graduates from 2023 have secured indeterminate employment with the Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority; 15 of whom have completed the Canadian Association of Schools of Nursing Mentorship Program created in 2022 in response to the national nursing shortage.

To support the recruitment of family medicine physicians, the NWT Family Medicine Medical Residency Training Program, launched in July 2020, has resulted in three of the four graduate residents currently working as permanent or locum physicians in the Northwest Territories.

Mr. Speaker, efforts continue to expand our work to attract NWT students and youth to careers in health and social services. Some of the work on this front includes the recent release of the 2024 NWT Health and Social Services career guide earlier this month. We have also found many opportunities for direct engagement between students and health and social services professionals, and we are supporting these through our clinical observation and job shadowing programs, in-person and virtual participation in the annual Take Our Kids to Work Day each November, and by attending health and social services career fairs in communities throughout the territory.

Mr. Speaker, hiring staff in an intensely competitive international labour market is one part of this work. The other equally, if not more important, is keeping invaluable staff we have. To this end, staff engagement at all levels has increased including through entry and exit

surveys and participation in the GNWT Employee Satisfaction Working Group. The information gathered through this engagement supports efforts to evolve our retention strategies, develop hiring priorities, create career opportunities, and reinforce the programs that truly resonate with staff and are meaningful and supportive of their day-to-day work.

Mr. Speaker, we will continue to monitor our initiatives as well as the broader health sector employment trends while ensuring we remain engaged and connected with the dedicated professionals working within our system. We have learned throughout the past several years that there are simply no quick fixes to end this shortage, but we remain committed to the steady improvement of our work environments and to providing the best care possible for NWT residents. And I am confident that with the support of my colleagues in this Legislative Assembly, combined with the strategic allocation of resources, and thoughtful ongoing engagement with staff, we can, and we will continue to make progress in our recruitment and retention efforts. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Minister of Health and Social Services. Members' statements. Minister of ITI.

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 25-20(1):
REVITALIZATION OF THE GREAT SLAVE
LAKE FISHERY

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Government of the Northwest Territories is committed to revitalizing the Great Slave Lake commercial fishery. The Northwest Territories has a long history of commercial fishing. From the 1950s to the 1990s, production varied between 750,000 to 2 million kilograms per year. But, in the last twenty years, production has declined due to several factors that reduced fishers' income while the cost of fishing went up. To reverse this decline, in 2017 the Government of the Northwest Territories released a strategy for revitalizing the Great Slave Lake commercial fishery.

This vision, which was developed through extensive engagement with fishers, aims to re-establish this once-powerful sector and, with strategic investments and actions, maximize opportunities to grow and diversify our economy, create jobs, and increase the food security of Northerners while supporting self-determination.

Mr. Speaker, an important element of this strategy is the construction of a new fish processing plant in Hay River. This state-of-the-art facility will have the capacity to

process fish from Hay River and around the lake, including Yellowknife, which will help add value to the NWT economy. While the 2022 floods and 2023 wildfires have delayed the plant's completion, I expect the plant to be operational for the 2024 open water season.

Another action to advance this strategy is to enhance training, recruitment, and retention programs for fishers. Last summer, we piloted the Commercial Fishery Support Program, which offers fuel rebates, volume incentives, and income supplements for newly established local fishers and experienced out-of-territory fishers. The program also provides financial support for implementing new technologies and sustainable practices, encouraging fishers to adopt innovative approaches.

Looking back at the disruptions caused by flooding, wildfires, and evacuations in the past year, it is remarkable that the Great Slave Lake fishery is exceeding expectations and growing. 2023 marked the highest recorded harvest since before COVID-19. This output highlights the resilience, ingenuity, and hard work of our fishers in the Northwest Territories.

Mr. Speaker, the Government of the Northwest Territories is focused on increasing participation in the fishery. We recognize the need to replace retiring fishers, to attract new fishers into the industry, and to empower existing fishers to increase capacity. Last year, the department's training sessions supported 20 participants to become certified commercial fishers, and the department plans more training sessions this year. Our long-term aim is to transition our fishery away from its dependence on the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation. The department is also actively exploring the possibility of developing a new Yellowknife harbour which would create opportunities for a new cohort of fishers on the north side of the lake. To support the existing Yellowknife-based commercial fishers and facilitate their operations, a collection station was opened last summer and again this winter for fish harvested in Yellowknife.

Mr. Speaker, revitalizing the Great Slave Lake commercial fishery is a long-term goal that requires investments in infrastructure, supports for new entrants in the industry, and changes in how we do business. With the dedication and resilience of NWT fishers, I believe the industry can thrive with a focus on ensuring a reliable food supply, creating income opportunities for residents, and promoting a stronger, more diversified economic foundation. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of ITI. Ministers' statements. Minister for Finance.

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 26-20(1):
GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHWEST
TERRITORIES HEALTH, SAFETY AND
WELLNESS POLICY

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Mr. Speaker, one in five Canadians experience a psychological health problem or illness in any given year. Only 23 percent of Canadian workers feel comfortable talking to their employer about a psychological health issue. Today I want to share how the Government of the Northwest Territories is recognizing the importance of our employees' psychological health and safety.

As an employer, the Government of the Northwest Territories is responsible for safeguarding the health, safety, and well-being of territorial public servants to ensure we have a strong workforce. Traditionally, eliminating occupational and physical hazards in the workplace has been guided by an occupational health and safety policy and efforts to create and maintain the psychologically healthy workplace have, until now, focused on training. Designed to address and promote mental health and reduce the stigma around mental health in the workplace, the Working Mind Program is available to all GNWT employees and is mandatory for all managers and supervisors. While training is a good start, it is only one part of supporting employee wellness.

Mr. Speaker, the GNWT has taken steps to incorporate the national standard on psychological health and safety in the workplace into how we do business. Published by the Mental Health Commission of Canada, this standard provides a systemic approach to developing a psychologically healthy and safe workplace with the aim of improving recruitment, retention, productivity, financial performance and risk management. To this end, the Department of Finance has enacted a new corporate health, safety and wellness policy that allows the GNWT to give equal consideration to both physical and psychological hazards by creating training and resources that supports employees.

By covering occupational and psychological safety of our employees and guests in the workplace, this new policy reflects the GNWT's commitment to implementing the national standard. Broadening our efforts to include psychological health allows for the GNWT to better understand the psychological risks of our work environments and how they impact employee mental health.

Mr. Speaker, the 2021 GNWT Employee Engagement and Satisfaction Survey showed that only 52 percent of GNWT employees felt

they worked in a psychologically healthy workplace. As an employer, we must do better. By replacing the existing occupational health and safety policy with one that includes employee wellness, we are making a statement that the GNWT supports a psychologically healthy and safe workplace and that our approach must support the well-being of our employees. In the coming months, we will be engaging with employees to assess where we need to focus our work to meet their needs.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage all employees, managers, and senior leaders to participate in these engagement sessions. Establishing and maintaining a psychologically healthy and safe workplace is a shared responsibility and cannot be accomplished by the employer alone. Collective and intentional action is crucial to actively promote, prevent, and mitigate both physical and psychological hazards in the workplace.

Mr. Speaker, it is my hope that this new health, safety and wellness policy sets us on a path towards creating and maintaining a workplace culture across the territory that is genuinely supportive of employee well-being, ensuring a resilient and thriving workforce for generations to come. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Finance. Ministers' statements. Member from Range Lake.

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MR. TESTART: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Inuvik Boot Lake, that the Minister of Health and Social Services' Minister's statement, Health Human Resources Recruitment and Retention, be referred to Committee of the Whole for consideration. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. The motion in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. All those in favour? Opposed? Abstentions? Motion carried. The statement moved into Committee of the Whole.

---Carried

Ministers' statements. Members' statements. Member from Frame Lake.

Members' Statements

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 117-20(1):
PHARMACISTS' SCOPE OF PRACTICE

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm adding my name to the growing list of MLAs who have risen in this House in the recent past to speak to the potential benefits to our health care system of expanding pharmacists' scope of practice.

---Applause

I need to finish this, you guys.

The Member for Yellowknife Centre beat me to it during oral questions yesterday, but I certainly don't mind joining the chorus because I have also been hearing about this one from Frame Lake residents who are looking for anything we can do to help create efficiencies in our critically overburdened primary care system. To summarize the issue, most other jurisdictions in Canada have expanded the scope of practice for pharmacists to include basic primary care functions such as managing prescriptions, initiating lab work, administering vaccines, which has been shown in research to have the potential to reduce pressure on emergency rooms by as much as 35 percent.

Mr. Speaker, I think we enjoy support from both sides of the House for this idea. As the Member for Kam Lake said herself less than a year ago that pharmacists continue to be an underutilized health care resource in the Northwest Territories. When they can't practice to their full scope, Mr. Speaker, it means that patients aren't receiving the best possible care and the system can't work to its full potential. The Member made a strong case, Mr. Speaker, and tabled a document comparing pharmacists' scope of practice across Canada and, indeed, our jurisdiction falls second to last on the list. There is a lot of room for improvement to bring us in line with neighboring jurisdictions.

In February 2023, in response to questions in the House, the health Minister at the time stated that the department was planning to draft regulations to bring pharmacists into the Health and Social Services Professions Act and to do that work early in the life of the next Assembly. Time has flown, and we now find ourselves early in the life of the very Assembly the previous Minister was referring to. If there's one thing I can seek to achieve today by raising this issue in the House yet again, Mr. Speaker, it is to help convey a sense of urgency and hopefully get a commitment from our health Minister to act quickly on this and make good on the commitment of her predecessor. To that end, I'll have questions for the Minister of health later today. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 118-20(1):
DAYLIGHT SAVINGS TIME

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That's a hard act to follow but I'm going to try, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to bring back the animus, the spirit, nay the gumption of a previous MLA Mr. Rylund Johnson. Though I'm delighted to work with the current MLA for Yellowknife North, I'm a bit sad the previous MLA didn't stick around so we could be co-workers once more, Mr. Speaker. And what better topic to bring forward the ghost of Yellowknife North's past than the evergreen topic of daylight savings, Mr. Speaker. The DMV opening on Saturdays will have to wait for another day.

Let's focus on the issue that saw the highest number of NWT residents participating in a GNWT engagement to date, Mr. Speaker. Other 3,500 people responded to the survey on daylight savings time. Of those people, 87 percent professed their hatred of daylight savings time. Let's listen to residents who are overwhelmingly in favour of ditching spring forward and fall back down. Let's stop losing sleep, getting into car crashes because of that lack of sleep, and calling in sick so we can get some more shut eye, Mr. Speaker. And I'll have questions for the Minister of holidays -- I mean the Minister of Justice, Mr. Speaker, at the appropriate time.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Great Slave. Members' statements. Member from Tu Nedhe-Willideh.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 119-20(1):
HOUSING PRIORITIES AND THE FUTURE
OF HOUSING NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

MR. EDJERICON: This is just making me tired now.

---Laughter

Mr. Speaker, I want to follow up on my statement yesterday concerning our new housing priorities and speak to the future of the Housing NWT. As we move towards a future government on collaboration, I mentioned yesterday how Indigenous governments need to take control over the new housing programs at the local level. Today I want to expand upon why the government's current housing and policies does not work for Indigenous people here in the Northwest Territories and to see what the government is thinking for long-term solutions so that we can transition Indigenous housing into the hands of Indigenous governments.

Housing NWT is not working for Indigenous people. Too many families are being evicted or are forced to live in overcrowded poor condition housing. Many more are awaiting for a buy low renovation and the waitlists for homes is far too long.

Indigenous governments would not let this happen to their people. They want the ability to make housing work for them with the money that is allocated for Indigenous housing by the federal Government of Canada. There's a lot of anxiety over the fact that in 2038, federal housing corporation, Canada Mortgage Housing Corporation, will cease with funding through Housing NWT. That's just in 14 years. We'll have to find a whole new way of delivering housing in the Northwest Territories. This is a challenge but also an opportunity to create a collaborative government approach as spoken by this Premier.

There are many creative and cooperative ways we can change the housing system for Indigenous people and their communities, but we need to start working together towards this goal now. Regardless of how fixed our delivery of housing is today, we know that just 14 years to get a solution in place. I hope when I ask the Minister of housing later today that this Assembly will get a clear picture of their plans to deliver on housing after 2038. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Tu Nedhe-Willideh. Members' statements. Member from Inuvik Boot Lake.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 120-20(1):
GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHWEST
TERRITORIES POSITION VACANCIES

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm concerned about a trend in government operations. There appears to be a high number of vacant positions and positions that have gone unfilled for an inordinate amount of time. Mr. Speaker, I understand there's staff turnover and for a variety of reasons, it can be hard to fill positions. Maybe the position is specialized which makes filling the position difficult, especially in the more northern and remote communities.

Mr. Speaker, how is the GNWT monitoring this trend across the government? Is the number of vacant positions being monitored over time? Is the government tracking the vacancy rates of positions overall by department or by region?

Mr. Speaker, unfilled positions can also provide surplus funding on unallocated spending dollars for regions or divisions. Unfilled

positions can provide slush funds for upper management, and this is a concern.

Mr. Speaker, we are in a time of fiscal restraint. As Members, we all agree this Assembly needs to exemplify good governance. We need to tighten up how government does business and address vacant positions. Why are these positions going unfilled, Mr. Speaker? Can the GNWT address the root cause of these vacancies?

The GNWT needs to identify where these positions are located by position, by department, and start to uncover why they're going unfilled. The GNWT needs to dig into this to determine what positions could be filled and which ones are more challenging to improve operation of government and to improve efficiency in government service. Mr. Speaker, the GNWT also needs to ensure the senior positions in the regions are adequately filled, such as the regional director position in the Beaufort Delta, Mr. Speaker, and other senior positions throughout all of the Northwest Territories. These positions are integral to ensure all regions have a voice and that decision-makers are located in the regions that these decisions affect the most. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 121-20(1):
ECONOMIC IMPACTS OF UPCOMING
CLOSURE OF NORTHWEST TERRITORIES
MINES

MR. TESTART: Mr. Speaker, it is often said that history has a way of repeating itself and, surely, we can agree that's the case with our territory's mining industry. Just as we did 30 years ago when the gold industry began to wrap up, we are facing another round of mine closures. Today our diamond mines have at least past the halfway point to their operations with Diavik slated to close in 2026. It's not just our diamond industry either. Norman Wells is due to cease operations in 2026 as well. Those are two big hits to our economy that are just 24 months away.

The NWT and Nunavut Chamber of Mines recently published work analyzing the impact these closures will have on the territory. And it's frightening, to say the least. They see a leaner future ahead with thousands of jobs and therefore a government without millions of revenues. This will affect across our economy with far-reaching consequences as the demand for goods and services related to the mining sector disappear as does the disposable

incomes made possible by good mining wages. The best in the world I might add, Mr. Speaker.

A future without mining is a future of fewer business, poorer services, and less Northerners as many will be forced to look elsewhere for opportunity. This is a future we do not accept, Mr. Speaker. Here in the Northwest Territories we move forwards, not backwards. The government must be up to the challenges posed by these closures and work with the mining industry to look beyond oil and diamonds. The pivotal aspect of this challenge is not the lack of resources. We know we have many exciting new opportunities to pursue with minerals such as cobalt, nickel, lithium, and rare earths. This challenge, instead, rests on how we make stronger partnerships with new industries and build the economic environment these partnerships can thrive in.

This work needs to start now, Mr. Speaker, and a good place to start is exploration. The government can retool our regulatory system to match regulatory needs, the size and the risks of projects, and stop holding early-stage exploration to the standards of advanced projects. A much-needed boost to exploration could be achieved by doubling the Mining Incentive Program and building new infrastructure to fuel clean energy at mine sites. These are just a few key suggestions, Mr. Speaker, but it's up to this new government to come up with a concrete plan to reinvigorating and restarting our mining sector for future generations. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 122-20(1):
GIANT MINE REMEDIATION PROJECT
WORKFORCE

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So last week we announced the priorities for the 20th Assembly, and one of those was building a strong economic foundation. One major area of economic opportunity that we are currently letting slip through our fingers is remediation. Now, I want to say upfront that I don't want us to promote the idea of remediation as this economic growth opportunity that will be our long-term ticket to prosperity. I believe that would send the wrong signal to industry that we actually want them to leave a big mess behind so that we can continue spending billions in taxpayer dollars cleaning it up. But our unfortunate present situation is that we do have billions of dollars' worth of work to do cleaning up mud sumps in the Beaufort Delta, old oil and gas wells at Cameron Hills, Ptarmigan Mine, and hundreds of other contaminated sites.

Now, the Giant Mine Remediation Project has an estimated cost now of \$4.38 billion over the life of the project at least over the next 30 years, and maintenance on the site could run in perpetuity. To quote the Giant Mine Oversight Board's latest annual report, the Giant Mine Remediation Project will be one of the largest, if not the largest, single economic project in the history of the Yellowknife area.

Increasing participation by residents, Indigenous and non-Indigenous workers and businesses will bring about greater financial prosperity and set the NWT on a path for a stronger and more integrated economy in the future. However, as of last year, only 24 percent of the employees of the Giant Mine Remediation Project were northern. The person hours was at 36 percent however the target was for at least between 55 and 70 percent. 10 percent of employees were northern Indigenous although that was 16 percent of person hours and the target was at least 25 to 35 percent. And to put this in perspective, the number of northern Indigenous employees have actually gone down slightly since 2018.

So while the GNWT does sit on the Giant Mine socio-economic advisory body, it's not clear what results we've achieved from being part of this group. The proposed polytechnic university could be a great venue to develop partnerships to train Northerners to work in remediation. Mr. Speaker, I ask for unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

---Unanimous consent granted

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So our task here is urgent. We have to train and equip more Northerners to work in remediation and offer pathways for them to continue upgrading their skills to match the technical requirements of the work that needs to be done. This task was urgent 10 years ago, 20 years ago, and I don't see evidence that the GNWT has devoted the necessary attention and resources to such an urgent task. I will have questions for the Minister of ECE. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 123-20(1):
DEVELOPING REMEDIATION SKILLS IN
SAHTU

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, developing remediation skills in the Sahtu, Mr. Speaker, it has been documented that Northerners have not fully benefitted from

environmental cleanup and remediation sites across the Northwest Territories. In the Sahtu, we can see a major remediation project is on our horizon. It is expected the Norman Wells oil field will stop producing recoverable oil, and the site will need to be remediated.

Imperial Oil has submitted their closure and reclamation plan to the appropriate authorities. It must be noted the oil field is owned by the Government of Canada, Mr. Speaker. This presents a unique opportunity for both levels of government on joint collaboration. Imperial Oil is well underway to determining the objectives for progressive reclamation and the eventual end of life activities at the Norman Wells oil fields. Closure and reclamation is moving forward in Norman Wells, but how are the regional residents prepared to benefit from this activity?

Mr. Speaker, we only have to look at the federal administration of contracts for the Giant Mine site to see local labour and businesses are missing an economic opportunity in remediation. The Giant Mine Oversight Board 2022 Annual Report states disappointment by the lack of local activity from the project. The board continues to urge the proponents to implement improved access to remediation work for the local small businesses and to create more employment and training opportunities for residents.

Mr. Speaker, I want to acknowledge the GNWT is responding to the remediation opportunity by developing two remediation focused courses at Aurora College through the Industry, Tourism and Investment department, supporting a pilot program designed to support Indigenous business capacity in the remediation sector. The GNWT is also working with the federal government to explore the viability of a remediation economy in the Northwest Territories. Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement. Mahsi.

---Unanimous consent granted

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, colleagues. This, Mr. Speaker, raises more training, a trades training readiness for remediation and reclamation workforce opportunities authored and, most importantly, supported by myself, but how does all this benefit the residents of the Sahtu? What is the GNWT doing to ensure benefits has the local labour force and business capacity to take advantage of the Norman Wells oil field --

MR. SPEAKER: Member from the Sahtu, your time is up. Members' statements. Member from the Mackenzie Delta.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 124-20(1):
ALCOHOL AND DRUGS IN NORTHWEST
TERRITORIES COMMUNITIES

MR. NERYSOO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I would like to bring the concern of alcohol and drugs within our communities. This issue is nothing new to the residents of the Northwest Territories and this government. The legalizations of marijuana, the dealers from the southern region of Canada have had to resort to hard drugs to keep their business going. Unfortunately, these hard drugs have made their way into our communities within the NWT.

Mr. Speaker, when I was the interim band manager for the Tetlit Gwich'in Band Council, we dealt with the influx of alcohol and drugs on a daily basis. We would have interagency meetings, and the common denominator of all the community problems was alcohol and drugs. We had resource people invited to our meetings in hopes of finding a solution, but their hands are tied with policies and procedures. We have concluded that these people, whether they are from the community or not, seem to have more rights than the law-abiding citizens of our communities.

Mr. Speaker, it is unfortunate that we have our own people within our own communities involved in these illegal activities - our own people killing our own people. It is the amount of money that one can make without being worried about the consequences that is being imposed on others.

Mr. Speaker, as a band manager, and now as an MLA, I have been contacted by residents who are worried about the future of their community and their families. Some of these residents have lost members to alcohol and drugs. In the past few years, there have been local members of and others from the south who have been caught conducting these illegal activities and, to this day, these same people are still in this illegal trade.

Mr. Speaker, we have worked with the RCMP and they too are exhausted, both physically and mentally. This is a no-win situation. We have been requested to help the RCMP with tips but the offenders are detained for a day or so and released with a promise to appear. Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

---Unanimous consent granted

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, colleagues. Mr. Speaker, I believe that we have taken the wrong approach. We need to target the persons who are addicted to these substances and get them help therefore the

bootleggers and drug dealers have no customers. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Mackenzie Delta. Members' statements. Member from Monfwi.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 125-20(1):
SUPPORTS FOR PERSONS WITH
DISABILITIES

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I would like to talk about people who are unable to work because of a disability. I have constituents in my riding who have progressive deteriorating conditions. For these people, it becomes even more difficult to work as they age.

Mr. Speaker, as you are aware many families in the NWT, especially in small communities, are very large. Many households in small communities are multigenerational families with children, grandchildren, or nieces and nephews.

Mr. Speaker, I want to acknowledge the government created a new income assistance for seniors and persons with disabilities program that is intended to reduce barriers to accessing income assistance. But, unfortunately, even with the new program in place, constituents in my riding are still unable to access support. Mr. Speaker, in many cases, we know that people with disabilities can be at risk of abuse. Luckily for the constituent in my riding, there is a loving and supportive spouse that provides care; however, as people age and grandchildren become part of the family that is cared for, it is more difficult to make ends meet on a single income. Yet this constituent who is aging with a progressive disability and caring for many children and grandchildren is ineligible to access support through income assistance.

Mr. Speaker, there needs to be a more holistic approach to delivering income assistance for people with disabilities. We know these people are more challenged to complete paperwork and also are some of the most vulnerable people in communities. How are we protecting and supporting seniors with disabilities? I will have questions for ECE Minister. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 126-20(1):
HOLISTIC HEALING FOR INDIGENOUS
COMMUNITIES

MRS. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I wish to speak about a topic

of holistic health and the need for our communities to heal from historic traumas. Mr. Speaker, most of the social issues that Indigenous communities face today, such as health inequities, lack of education, high crime rates, and higher rates of homelessness, are because of colonialism and residential schools. I myself have gone to residential school, as have many others, and now our communities are dealing with the multigenerational effects of that collective experience. That is why, Mr. Speaker, the NWT has some of the worst crime statistics in the country.

For example, the NWT has the highest whole crime rate in the country per capita and also has the second highest rate of violent crime in the country per capita. Additionally, according to the NWT Bureau of Statistics, the Deh Cho region, my region, has some of the highest rates of property crime and violent crime in comparison to the capital region. And the rate of unemployment is several times higher compared to Yellowknife as well.

Mr. Speaker, as a Dene woman representing mostly Indigenous constituents, I can say confidently that we come from strong people. Despite past governments trying to take the Indian out of the child and trying to make us forget about our cultural teachings and depriving us of who we are as Indigenous people, we remain resilient. We cannot allow governments to continue setting us up to fail any longer, and we cannot keep making excuses preventing us from advancing ourselves and making a better life for our families and our communities.

Mr. Speaker, as elected leaders in this House, it is our duty to do what we can to help our people get back on track. It is very important that our government, all levels of government, support or traditional way of being. If our communities truly want to be self-sufficient, then we must begin standing up for ourselves in a respectful and assertive way to create better lives for ourselves and successive generations. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 127-20(1):
EXTENDED HEALTH BENEFITS

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Before I begin, I want to say they must have been serving Happy Meals at lunch time because there's a lot of enthusiasm on this side of the House today.

Mr. Speaker, Tommy Douglas would be rolling in his grave if he saw the changes to the extended health benefits to Northerners, Mr. Speaker. Health care is a Canadiana promise, Mr. Speaker. It's a promise all Canadians will take care of you in your time of need. Mr. Speaker, those folks in the ivory towers downtown in Yellowknife coming up with these policy maven ideas about how to concur and change the world at the expense of Northerners, shame on them. Shame. Health care is for all, and that should be a mandate of this government. It's certainly a mandate by me, and I have not ever heard of a Member say cut health care, take away. Well, that seems to be the government, Mr. Speaker. So as they chop up policies and try to find groups to support one policy over the other, it's a divide and conquer, Mr. Speaker. And I don't care what the old Assembly came up with as a policy idea. I don't care what they think this Assembly should do. It's this Assembly, the 20th Assembly, should be making choices about the extended health care.

Mr. Speaker, as those who have suffered through many problems, the burden is not theirs to share alone. It's ours to help them collectively. So as they see the burden or the financial tsunami of expenses coming their way, where is this government? No, it's take it away, Mr. Speaker.

The report of What We Heard clearly said expand health care and drug coverage, Mr. Speaker. It said don't take it away from granny in Nahanni and give it to Tommy in Tu Nedhe; it said share, help, help, help, help others. But no, those people in the downtown ivory towers are turning a fiscal financial knife into Northerners. This is unacceptable based on the northern spirit of helping all, working for other, collectively working, working, working, because we care about Northerners, Mr. Speaker.

I'm telling you right now in this age we are living in and we're struggling with the cost of living, it is a slippery slope. What's next? This government goes from co-pay to private health care? Shame on this government, because I know they're looking at it, Mr. Speaker.

So let's turn -- let's not let this government turn the report What We Heard into what we're now ignoring. Mr. Speaker, I'll have questions later today for some lucky Minister. Perhaps the health Minister. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Yellowknife Centre. Members' statements. Member from Hay River South.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 128-20(1):
HAY RIVER EVENTS

HON. VINCE McKAY: Wow, how do you follow that?

I just want to acknowledge a couple exciting events happening in Hay River, my region, this coming weekend, week. First of all, neighbours across the river, K'atlodeeche is having an annual carnival this weekend. This week, we're also welcoming Members from throughout the Northwest Territories in Hay River for the annual NWT Association of Communities training and annual general meeting. Also this weekend in Hay River is the annual pond hockey tournament which is put on by a bunch of amazing volunteers in Hay River. And I'm looking forward to being back home and taking part in some of the activities this weekend in Hay River, along with a few of my colleagues I believe, and wish everybody a safe and enjoyable week and weekend in Hay River. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Hay River South. Members' statements.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT 129-20(1):
2024 ARCTIC WINTER GAMES

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Good afternoon, colleagues. As we are all aware, the Arctic Winter Games were held in the Mat-Su Valley in Alaska. The Games will mostly take place in the Valley's two largest cities, Palmer and Wasilla. Just an hour north of Anchorage, separated by 16 miles, they serve as a major hub of commercial, tourism, and recreation. The games are being held March 10th to the 16th. We will witness approximately 2,000 participants, coaches, admission staff, and officials from eight contingencies attend these games.

Colleagues, I'm very proud to say we have nine athletes representing five sports, one coach and two youth ambassadors from the Nahendeh riding representing the Team NWT at these games. I have attached the list to this statement and will ask it to be deemed as read and printed in the Hansard.

I would like to thank their parents, local coaches, teachers and friends that supported these athletes and ambassadors as they prepare for this very important international event. As we heard in the news, there was some challenges in getting passports for some of the athletes across the NWT. I would like to thank our Member of Parliament and his office staff for working hard to help address this issue. I can tell you they did not stop and took the issue right to the top.

As he was a former Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs, he understands the

importance of getting youth to these games. As well, I would like to thank Service Canada NWT branch and Passport Canada for helping our youth achieve one of their goals.

From the NWT side, I would like to thank the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs, his staff, Chef De Mission, and Sport North staff for working together to solve this issue.

Now back to the athletes. I can tell you their hard work, determination, and dedication to their sport is very inspiring. I know that they are very proud of their accomplishments and are looking forward to their next adventures at these games.

Like athletes, the youth ambassador representatives are going to have a great time being part of the volunteer team at these games. What I seen in the past is a life changing opportunity for these youth and what a great event to continue to volunteer. I wish the NWT team all the best, and hopefully we bring the Stuart Hodgson Award back. Thank you.

Athletes from the Nahendeh Riding

Amaria Tanche-Hanna	Fort Simpson
Brittany Kendo	Fort Simpson
Callie Thomas	Fort Simpson
Gina Hardisty-Isaiah	Fort Simpson
Jaicee Tsetso	Fort Simpson
Lydia Nelner	Fort Simpson
Payton Bennett	Fort Simpson
Shawna McLeod	Fort Simpson
Tanner Isaiah	Fort Simpson

Athletes from the Nahendeh Riding

Valerie Gendron	Fort Simpson
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Youth Ambassadors from the Nahendeh Riding

Kaechoa Rocque	Sambaa K'e
Adrian Allen	Fort Liard

Members' statements. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member from Hay River South.

Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery

HON. VINCE McKAY: I'd like to recognize Georgina Rolt, a longtime friend of mine who used to reside in Hay River and still holds a membership with the Hay River Legion in Hay River.

MR. SPEAKER: Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member from Tu Nedhe-Willideh.

MR. EDJERICON: Mr. Speaker, I just want to recognize Brad Enge, a former lawyer and

former RCMP. He's here today. So I want to say mahsi and welcome.

MR. SPEAKER: Recognition of visitors in the gallery. If we missed anyone in the gallery today, welcome to your Chambers. I hope you are enjoying the proceedings. It's very festive today. It is always nice to see people in the gallery.

Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Report of committees on the review of bills. Reports on standing and special committees. Returns to oral questions. Acknowledgements. Oral questions. Member from Yellowknife Centre.

Oral Questions

QUESTION 114-20(1): DRAFT ORDER FOR WILDFIRE INQUIRY

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question will be directed to the Premier of the Assembly.

Last week the Members passed a motion with respect to the wildfire inquiry question and, of course, you know, we don't have to go through that debate in my preamble, Mr. Speaker, but the ask was would the Premier be willing to table the draft inquiry establishment order on the first day of session and hence, that's the question, would the Premier commit publicly to being able to clearly do that as requested by the Members of this House? Thank you.

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

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to once again publicly state that I will table the draft order as laid out in the motion. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 115-20(1): SUPPORT FOR MINERAL EXPLORATION AND EXTRACTION

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in my Member's statement, I talked about the serious need for us to reinvest in our mining economy and open it up to new degrees of exploration. So I'd like to ask the Minister responsible for Industry, Tourism and Investment will she ask -- or will she bring forward an FMB submission to double the Mining Incentive Program? Thank you.

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

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, first off I appreciate the Member's enthusiasm and support of the mineral resource sector. Right now we are undergoing a little bit of a different strategy at Cabinet, not one where I'm being asked to double numbers at the moment, but I am being asked to be creative in the priorities of this government. Thank you.

MR. TESTART: Thank you. I don't want to put a price on our mining industry but it's fundamental to our economy.

Mr. Speaker, another thing that we've heard is there's too much red tape. It's a very difficult regulatory process. Will the Minister commit to making regulatory improvements that will take small scale exploration projects out of the equation and create their own rules around it so we can get these projects off the ground sooner and they don't have to deal with as much regulatory red tape? Thank you.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this is something that we hear quite a bit about on both sides of the table here, and so one of the things that the Minister for Environment and Climate Change and I are doing is doing bilaterals together, both between ourselves and between our staff counterparts at the official levels as well, so that we can do this work in streamlining the regulatory processes the Member is talking about.

Another thing that we're doing is we do have a spot at the Mackenzie Valley operational dialogue tables where we are purposefully discussing right sizing policy for small projects, and we also have a space at the regional energy and resource tables, along Enercan, where we're having similar conversations. So this is definitely a priority, and I look forward to continuing this conversation with the Member and my colleagues. Thank you.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That's good news. I'd like to ask the Minister if she'll join my mission to MARS and get online map staking done by 2026 or earlier? Thank you.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I was reminded to slow down so my apologies to the interpreters.

Getting the MARS system and going on a journey to MARS with the Member is definitely a priority, and I look forward to continuing to find out if there are solutions to getting this done quicker. But I am also looking to make sure that it is done properly. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Final supplementary. Member from Range Lake.

MR. TESTART: Thank you. And thank you to the Minister. Very good answers today, all positive; I like that.

Mr. Speaker, finally, we have an infrastructure deficit. Mines need clean energy. We can't get it to them. What's the Minister's plan? Thank you.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And thank you to the Member. This is a huge topic that is right across industry, and one of the things that we hear is one of the biggest barriers when doing business and securing investment in our territory is our infrastructure deficit. That being said, it is still an opportunity for us to be able to work together on this side of the table and, luckily, myself and the Minister of Infrastructure have a very good working relationship and both share goals of economic prosperity for the territory. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of ITI. Oral questions. Member from Great Slave.

QUESTION 116-20(1):
DAYLIGHT SAVINGS TIME

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you to my colleagues. I've realized I've been too serious these days, so this is a little bit of fun for everyone.

The Minister of Justice released the daylight savings What We Heard report in 2023, early 2023, Mr. Speaker. We're sitting here a year later. So will the current Minister of Justice commit to moving the territory to permanent time in the life of the 20th Assembly? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. No one would like that more than me. I was really pushing for this in the last government. Unfortunately I can't make that commitment. There's a variety of reasons. It is unfortunately a much more labour intensive and much more complicated task than people might expect. There is not one entity that you go to and say, I want to get off daylight savings time; I want to stick with a permanent time. We have to reach out to, you know, Microsoft, Apple, Google, a number of these different companies. So maybe I can leave it at that. The Member might have more questions; I don't want to spoil all the fun at once. Thanks.

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I sure hope we can have fun for the next three and a half years.

Mr. Speaker, I understand it's technically a difficult ask. I understand that the Yukon had a bit of a difficult job implementing as well. So what I guess I would ask the Minister today is if he can't commit to full implementation happening in the 20th, can he at least look into what steps need to happen to get us there, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And the Member referenced the Yukon and, of course, the Yukon got rid of the time change a couple years ago. They intended to piggyback off British Columbia who announced that they were going to do the same. It turns out that they didn't go through with it but the Yukon had already committed themselves and so they had to go through it, and it showed the difficulties of a small jurisdiction in making that a reality. And so some of the things that I heard -- and they actually released a report that's quite interesting, you know, you had staff from the Yukon government on the phone with, you know, the 1-800 customer service number to companies like Microsoft trying to make this happen. So unless we have a big jurisdiction who is sort of leading the way and getting the attention of these companies, it is quite difficult and quite resource intensive. You know, I've been preaching about living within our means and ensuring that we are at least providing the basics before we do anything else. So the thing that needs to happen is Alberta needs to get on board. I know that they had a referendum and there wasn't clear support for getting rid of time change unlike here where I think it was 80 some percent, the biggest survey response in the history of the territory. But hopefully that happens. There has been some work done already to see what we would need to do, a number of technical changes. We've been engaging with officials from the Yukon to learn about the steps they had to take. So a lot of that work has already happened. I can share some information with the Member. Thank you.

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you to the Minister for that. So what I'm hearing is some work has occurred and he's willing to share that work with Members. That's fantastic. Can that work that is scoped include timelines from when Alberta drops the gauntlet to what it would look like here and in terms of how long it would take us to catch up with Alberta? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That might be a bit much. I'm not quite sure that we can provide that level of detail. We don't quite know what it would take. We would likely

piggyback with Alberta and, you know, make the changes at the same time. So while Alberta is contacting the airlines saying that they're getting rid of their time change, we could be part of those conversations. That would be my hope. So I'll see what we can -- what information we can put together, but I don't think it's going to be the level of detail to perhaps satisfy the Member. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Final supplementary. Member from Great Slave.

MS. REID: Mr. Speaker, I thought today was supposed to be fun. I can recognize that I might be coming across requesting a level of detail. I just want to have a general picture, Mr. Speaker, of how long implementation may occur in maybe months or years, Mr. Speaker; is that a possibility? Thank you.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have some reports, I have a briefing note, so we can put together the information from what we have and share it with the Member. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Justice. Oral questions. Member from Inuvik Boot Lake.

QUESTION 117-20(1):
GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHWEST
TERRITORIES POSITION VACANCIES

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Minister of Finance. Can the Minister tell me the current number of vacant positions across the GNWT?

MR. SPEAKER: Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm able to say that as of December 31st, 2023, we had 517 vacancies across the total GNWT. So that's approximately 8.6 or so of all of the funded positions, which is a total of just over 6,000. Thank you.

MR. RODGERS: Thank you. And thank you for the response. Mr. Speaker, how does the GNWT monitor and track this trend across government?

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there is a variety of different tracking mechanisms that are underway. Every department is responsible to manage all of their internal positions. Finance, through the human resources division, then elects and collates that information. Mr. Speaker, I would commend our annual public service report. It doesn't put vacancies in there, but it does put a fair bit of information that shows the ascensions, so the different hiring of employees, retention rates, retirement rates,

and certainly does give a good sense of what some of the movements are, and it does that actually broken down by the different departments so you can start to see areas where there are some divisions that are seeing higher turnovers versus others. Thank you.

MR. RODGERS: Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Minister of Finance for that answer. My question is, is there an annual financial value to these positions that are vacant and, if so, can the Minister give me that number, please?

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So, Mr. Speaker, I don't have it done by a financial number. Again, certainly, if there's -- we do track, as I've said, as of December of last year there was 517. You certainly could go in and take all of those and figure out what each one is worth. What I can say is that late in the end of the last Assembly and also the beginning of this one, I certainly have asked the Department of Finance to go and figure out and ensure, rather, that we are looking at positions that have been vacant for a long time. There can be times where an individual may be off with a duty to accommodate and out on education. You know, there's maternity and parental leaves. So there's a number of different reasons a position may be formally vacant in this system but the individual or the position has somebody coming back to it or that maybe have competitions that are ongoing. But we do want to make sure we're monitoring positions that are vacant for a long time where there's not an open competition, and those ones should be then removed from the system. That work has begun and will certainly continue. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Minister of Finance. Member from Inuvik Boot Lake. Final supplementary.

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thanks for that information. Mr. Speaker, can the Minister talk -- I guess that number of 517, how does that compare to previous years? Is it an average for those positions and are the positions tracked by regions, Mr. Speaker? Thank you.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Mr. Speaker, again, I want to ensure that we do track these positions and we track the hard to fill positions. They are done by region. I'm just trying to see if I was able to give the Member an example. Well, and so that December 31st date that I'm using, there was 108 vacancies in the Beaufort Delta. That's 12 percent of the region's funded -- or rather funded positions so you can note slightly higher than the overall total. So perhaps lightly different -- slightly more difficult to recruit. But, again, would have to look at the underlying reasons. It may well be that there

are some positions there in the Beaufort Delta that have been vacant for a long time, and we need to look either at more creative ways to fill those positions or to look at whether or not there are positions there that need to be cleaned up. Again, so happy to have that on the radar, and we'll certainly make sure that we are working to clean up positions that are not being properly filled. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Minister of Finance. Oral questions. Member from Frame Lake.

QUESTION 118-20(1):
PHARMACISTS' SCOPE OF PRACTICE

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I noted in my Member's statement earlier today, the previous health Minister committed a year ago to bring changes to the pharmacists' scope of practice for early in the life of the 20th Assembly. How much progress has the health department made since the previous Minister's commitment, and -- well, that's my first question, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Member from Frame Lake. Minister of Health and Social Services.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you to the Member for the question. An advisory committee has been established with the pharmacists appointed by the NWT Pharmaceutical Association to collaborate with the department officials. The advisory committee operates under clear terms of reference and reviews and advises on issues identified during the development and drafting instructions and regulations under the Health and Social Services Profession Act.

To date, this group has convened ten times to address this mandate. As well as through the work of bringing more professionals under the Health and Social Services Profession Act, the GNWT is committed to ensuring NWT residents have the confidence of health and social services system and the people caring for them by having clear rules in place for how professionals are licensed and maintain standards of care and competency. Clear standards for licensing, care, competency, complaints, discipline help increase the confidence that patients, practitioners, and partner organizations have in health and social services by improving safety and accountability. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you to the Minister for that answer. I do appreciate hearing that there's progress being made.

Mr. Speaker, what kind of scope is the department looking to give pharmacists here in the territory; is it comparable to jurisdictions on the higher end of the scale such as Saskatchewan, New Brunswick, and Alberta?

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the scope of practice being considered is in line with the scope of other jurisdictions. The work will hopefully align the Northwest Territories with best practice and establish standards with the rest of Canada provides practitioners and patients and an understanding of what's required and expected of professionals. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I'm very happy to hear that from the Minister. Mr. Speaker, will the Minister commit to a timeline of six months -- that being August 2024 -- to get these new regulations into force?

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the work required to bring regulations in is a minimum of two years. What we are projecting is a 2025 come-into-force date for the pharmacy regulations, and we are very pleased with the support and commitment of the pharmacists' working group with the department to move this work forward as quickly as possible. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Oral questions. Member from Sahtu.

QUESTION 119-20(1):
CLOSURE AND REMEDIATION OF THE
NORMAN WELLS OIL FIELD

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned in my Member's statement, my questions today is for the Minister of ITI and ECE.

A unique remediation opportunity is within our grasp. The Norman Wells oil field is creating revenues for the owners as we speak. Revenues that can fund Nortran, a trades training initiative. This is an ideal candidate for economic diversification. My first question to the Minister is the GNWT working with the community of Norman Wells Indigenous governments and industry to prepare for the closure of the Norman Wells oil field? Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Member from Sahtu. Is that question for ITI or ECC?

MR. McNEELY: ITI. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Minister of ITI.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the remediation of the Norman Wells oil field will be managed by the owner of that lease that's on that property, which is Imperial Oil Resources. However, what I can say is due to ongoing development in the planning process on that remediation, the Government of the Northwest Territories, while it doesn't have detailed information, is doing what it can in order to try and make sure that there is some synergy happening. Like the MLA said, this is Canada's longest operating onshore oil field which definitely is a legacy but one that has some opportunity to learn from from what is happening with the remediation of the diamond mines or the winding down of the diamond mines, I should say. And there's definitely some potential to be had. I can say that right now, ITI is working with Indigenous organizations, stakeholders, and businesses through its SEED funding to help networking processes with Imperial Oil and to ensure that they're doing what they can to support the local governments in order to ensure that there are relationships there for local contracts and also remediation opportunities. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thanks to the Minister for the replies. I guess I should have put training in there.

But my second question, can the Minister provide an update on the work the GNWT is doing with the federal government to explore the viability of the training remediation economy in the NWT? Mahsi.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, what I can say on the collaboration between ITI and the federal government, as well as with local communities, Mr. Speaker, is that ITI is doing what it can in order to support local businesses as far as business development. There's opportunity as well for also training through ECE as well for businesses to be able to prepare for the remediation that's ongoing.

What I can say, too, is that as a government, we're constantly advocating at the federal level for funding, for example, for labour market initiatives and investments and also strategic infrastructure investments as well through my counterpart colleagues here in order, really, to build a skilled workforce and make sure that we have the critical infrastructure to be able to move forward with the economy. Thank you.

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thanks to the Minister for that reply.

Carrying on to my next question, are any pilot programs to develop remediation labour force or business capacity planned to the principles of Nortran? Mahsi.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this is probably a little bit more of an ECE question and kind of a marriage between the two departments, which is so nice to be able to wear both hats. But as far as Aurora College is concerned with that date, they have informed us that they do have a funding agreement with CIRNAC to develop courses related to mining remediation. These courses are currently under development and while Aurora College is at an arm's length, I'm more than happy to follow up with any of the particular information with the chair of the board that Members might want. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Minister of ITI. Final supplementary. Member from Sahtu.

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My last question -- thank you to the opportunity -- has the department explored partnerships with training institutions like MTS, Mine Training Society, Aurora College, or the Olds College in Olds, Alberta, to provide labour force development in the Sahtu? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in addition to the program development that's currently underway with Aurora College that I just spoke of, what I think is best positioned to be inputted here in the response to this question is really promoting both apprenticeships and the SNAP program with students. And so, really, what this is about with the principles of Nortran that the Member is speaking of, it is about developing a skilled workforce and it's about making sure that our students or our youth know about these opportunities as well. And so what I would really like to put in a plug for is the ability to leverage one another in this room to create relationships between students and youth and employers. And so if anybody knows of any employers that are willing to take on apprenticeships and student apprentices, this is a great opportunity to work together to build a skilled workforce. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 120-20(1):
GIANT MINE REMEDIATION PROJECT
WORKFORCE

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And that's a great segue as my questions are also for the Minister of ECE around remediation workforce.

So my first question is what are ECE's objectives from having a staff person sit on the Giant Mine socio-economic working group? In other words, are we achieving what we're hoping to achieve by participating in that working group? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Sorry, Member, could you -- ECC or ECE? E, okay, thank you. Thank you, Member. Minister of Education, Culture and Employment.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this working group is responsible for implementing and coordinating activities to support the multi-year Giant Mine Remediation Project Socio-Economic Agreement, or strategy, and a staff member that we do have sitting on this group is a labour development and standards division staff member, and their role in this group is, I think, a very important one because they provide information on labour market information, training needs, and also employment standards perspectives. Thank you.

MS. MORGAN: Okay, thank you for that. So I'll go to a different aspect. So one of the needs identified by the working group, Giant Mine working group, was for a coordinated training hub in the North Slave region, which I understand the GNWT has been working with a third-party organization to establish. Will the training hub increase the amount of training available to Northerners for remediation work, or what is the hub expected to accomplish?

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Member's correct, ECE did partner with an external entity to develop the North Slave regional training hub. And the goal of this was really to provide and improve coordination between employment-related training and potential projects coming to the region. And so I can say to the Member though, in 2023, so last year, ECE shifted its focus to what's called a North Slave regional training partnership, and this was developed under the federal strategic partnership initiative in collaboration with the federal government. And this partnership was established to encourage collaboration between regional training partners and to provide leadership as well in identifying and responding to short and long-term market needs and potential within the market to make sure that we're prepared for what's coming and that we're responding with potential training

opportunities for Northerners in the region. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So I understood from that response that the main purpose is to coordinate existing training. Does the Minister believe that there are enough training opportunities for Northerners to be able to take jobs in the remediation economy to increase the percentage of Northerners that are actually in the workforce? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we have a tremendous amount of training opportunities and education opportunities for people here in the Northwest Territories. And I believe that, really, the response to this question is an all-of-government response where really it's about making sure that, A, people have access to this training; B, that people are prepared to enter into any kind of training that we are making available, and so I think that this is a coordinated response as far as making sure that people can put food on the table, that people have access to food, that students are going to school, and that it is a domino effect from there. And so I think that as Northerners, we all have a role to play in ensuring that people have access to this, and that includes us in this room making sure that we are putting information out there and connecting the residents that we serve with opportunity. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. Final supplementary. Member for Yellowknife North.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So the Minister mentioned a few minutes ago the SNAP program, the apprenticeship program. Has the SNAP program been able to link apprentices or students to work at the Giant Mine Remediation Project? Or what is the plan if not? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Mr. Speaker, I might add that might have been my influence from the 19th Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, I'm very excited about the SNAP program. The SNAP program has grown tremendously in the last number of years. What the SNAP program comes down to is employers willing to employ students and having the capacity to take students on in order to create those opportunities. So it's something that people are going to hear me talk about over the next four years, ad nauseam probably, in this House because I think it's such a tremendous opportunity, but it's really reliant on that relationship. While, you know, we are not

the -- ITI, sorry, is not the lead department on this relationship, really the lead entity on this is the federal government and they have contracted Parsons to kind of do the contracting work out at Giant Mine. It is really -- would need to be a relationship with them in order to, if they want, create that as part of their contracting requirement. But, really, I think the better way of going about this is making sure that employers know that this opportunity is available and that we want to support them in order to help create a skilled workforce of tomorrow. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. Oral questions. Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

QUESTION 121-20(1):
POLICIES AND FUTURE OF HOUSING
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as mentioned that we had set the four priorities a few weeks ago, and housing is one part of the top priorities for -- of the four. CMHC funding expires in 2038. My question to the Minister of Housing NWT is that what are their plans for the next 12 years as CMHC funding expires? Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Minister of Housing NWT.

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you to the Member for raising this issue. The Member is correct that the NWT social housing agreement signed in 1997 allocated \$21.2 million in annual operational funding to support the delivery of the Northwest Territories Public Housing Program. The funding has declined and is scheduled to be fully exhausted by 2038-2038.

Since 2019, Housing NWT has been able to mitigate these annual funding declines with funding supports provided under a new bilateral agreement with CMHC. The funding under this agreement is being used to offset the decline in CMHC funding up to 2027-2028. Housing NWT has been meeting with CMHC to discuss new or extending the bilateral agreement. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, going forward, as we mentioned that the policy of the housing corporation doesn't -- sorry, Housing NWT policies doesn't work for Indigenous governments. Going forward, though, can maybe -- or is the Minister planning on giving Indigenous governments more control of their housing during their term? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So Housing NWT is actively engaging with Indigenous governments and they're actively engaging through the NWT Housing forum. So they meet and then meet like annually discussing housing initiatives across the North. So Housing NWT's new mandate is to place a focus on collaboration with partners, including those Indigenous governments. Collaboration can take the form of intergovernmental agreements that outline priorities for both parties, but this collaboration can also be more informal.

We are pleased to see Indigenous governments take on an increasing role in housing and are pleased to see that the federal government is now flowing distinction-based funding to Indigenous governments.

All governments have a role to play in the housing crisis in the North. We recognize that there's no one size fits all solution, and each community and government has different needs, capacities, and aspirations. Only through collaboration and working in partnership will we be able to effectively address the North's housing crisis. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last year the housing Minister stated that she was advancing multi-year capital plans that involved delivery of 510 homes. Can the Minister of housing provide an update on this plan? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Thank you, again, to the Member. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So Housing NWT continues to advance a multi-year capital plan which includes the construction and repair of over 500 housing units. The scale of this work ranges from modernization and improvement projects for housing assets in the communities to new construction, including duplexes for seniors and a large multiunit residential building plan for Yellowknife. These 500 units include 100 new public housing units for the territory. Of these hundred units, all are either under construction or complete. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Housing NWT. Final supplementary. Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last year my colleagues and I brought up some -- the deplorable housing conditions. Has there been any progress addressing safety concerns in public housing making homes healthier to live in? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Mr. Speaker, Housing NWT routinely assesses the conditions of its

housing assets through a comprehensive unit condition rating. And these unit condition ratings are done every couple of years for each housing unit across the territory, and we have 2,900 units across the territory so a lot of unit condition ratings. Through this work, Housing NWT prioritizes the health and safety of housing units. Housing NWT's preventative maintenance program, which is administered by the local housing associations, also targets the safety of housing units. Tenants in the housing units are encouraged to contact their local housing association with concerns around the health and safety of their unit. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Housing NWT. Oral questions. Member from Monfwi.

QUESTION 122-20(1):
INCOME ASSISTANCE FOR PERSONS
WITH DISABILITIES

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, on August 8, 2023, the Government of the Northwest Territories announced improvements to income assistance program for seniors with disability. The GNWT provides benefits aligned with the Northern Market Basket Measure. So I just want to ask the Minister how does income assistance recognize the higher cost of living for families with more than two children? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Monfwi. Minister of Education, Culture and Employment.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I appreciated the Member referencing the press release from August. Unfortunately, the Education, Culture and Employment Income Assistance Program, which was slated to be brought into force before we began the 20th Assembly, has unfortunately not been brought into force yet and so those changes have not yet occurred. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What supports are provided to assist people with disabilities to complete the application to income assistance? Thank you.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, ECE employs what's called client navigators, and the client navigators work for income assistance and are responsible for providing that support to income assistance clients. And I can say that Behchoko does have a client navigator that is available to

residents and to provide them with support to complete forms and let them know what forms might be missing or what else is required. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For applicants that are denied support, can the Minister explain the appeal process? Thank you.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, clients who are denied would be able to work with their client navigator to be able to access the appeal process and would be able to access that right away. It is recommended that they do that immediately once they find out that they are denied. Sometimes it's something as simple as paperwork is missing from the client and the client navigator, again, can take residents through what information is missing and how they can rectify that together. And if that doesn't work out, they can go through the appeals process.

MR. SPEAKER: Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. Final supplementary. Member from Monfwi.

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Can the Minister commit to reviewing the rejections from income assistance for seniors with disabilities? Thank you.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, what I would say to that one is because there might be, you know, some things that I don't know about in my role here as Minister, I don't have eyes on to all the applications that do come through income assistance, but as always if there is an issue with any file with any income assistance client, I do recommend that they speak to their client navigator. If that doesn't work, of course I do receive emails from Members on a regular basis letting me know what has gone wrong or what support someone needs. And so absolutely, speak to either your client navigator or your MLA and we can look into it. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. Thank you, Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. Oral questions. Member from the Deh Cho.

QUESTION 123-20(1):
HEALTHY LIVING IN NORTHWEST
TERRITORIES COMMUNITIES

MRS. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are to the Minister of health. What is the Minister doing to engage local people to

support healthy living outcomes that are healthy living outcomes in the community? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Member from the Deh Cho. Minister of Health and Social Services.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I mean, I can -- we have health centres. We have staff within those health centres. We have community health representatives in the communities. There are -- we provide information. We work with -- in collaboration with Indigenous governments. You know, there's wellness departments in some communities. You know, there's mental health and addictions programs in all of the communities. I'm not clear on what the Member is asking. So I mean, if there's more detail that the Member can provide for me as to which areas that she's looking into, I'd be willing to provide that information. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MRS. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm looking for information on how mental wellness, mental wellness healthy outcomes. Like, support for people. And, that's okay.

Will the Minister commit to working with communities to support homegrown solutions for mental wellness outcomes, healthy mental wellness outcomes? Thank you.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Mr. Speaker, I just mentioned it. I mentioned it in this House. I mentioned it before I got here. I think one of the things that in order for us to be able to tackle the mental health issues that we all have stressed in this House is collaboration with our communities, collaboration with our Indigenous governments, collaboration with NGOs. You know, and I think that, for myself the direction has gone to the department. That is what the department is doing, and I'm committing here that we'll continue to do that work. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Oral questions. Member from the Deh Cho.

Member from Yellowknife Centre.

QUESTION 124-20(1): EXTENDED HEALTH BENEFITS

MR. HAWKINS: All right. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm excited to ask some questions regarding extended health benefits to the Minister of Health and Social Services just in case she's hoping someone else will take them.

Mr. Speaker, we all know the current Minister sat on the social development committee for four years, Mr. Speaker. And I have no doubt

she was a robust Member talking about policy and whatnot and how it affected Northerners. Mr. Speaker, the last Assembly shared its consultation regarding extended health benefits with committee and given the fact that over 700 people of the public wrote in and gave valuable input through the public engagement. So out of the 700 people or more who wrote in or expressed their points of view, how many of them suggested we should reduce health benefits to Northerners? Thank you.

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

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you for the Member for being able to have this conversation. And I was. I was a Member of the Standing Committee on Social Development, and we did make -- we did have lots of consultations on this. And what we -- we did reduce the costs. Like, with the changes that we've put in place, there are members of the -- residents of the Northwest Territories that had no access to any benefits will now be able to fall under the extended health benefits policy. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Actually, it's the opposite. The people wanted the expansion of the program, not reduction of the program. So therein lies the question, Mr. Speaker. How does the Minister of health explain such an aggressive policy that takes away coverage and forces Northerners to become co-pays in their own health care? Thank you.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the extended health benefits policy addresses gaps in some of the NWT residents. Like I mentioned that they did not have services. It's not taking away any benefits from anybody. The policy before, you had to fall under a specific disease. Senior benefits haven't changed. Extended -- NIHB, like, they all have their own programs. So this is just actually giving access to health care benefits for those residents who never had access before. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I go back to the similar question -- not the same question because that's against the rules, but I go back to a similar question because the Minister doesn't seem to want to answer the question. She's doing this but literally moving something with the other hand.

Mr. Speaker, how does the Minister explain such a policy that takes away opportunities from Northerners by making them co-pay? Did anyone say deny coverage from those who weren't covered?

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned before, this is not taking away benefits from anybody who was previously covered. In the previous policy, it was outdated and there were -- it was put in place where specific diseases and you had to have a specific disease to fall -- to be able to qualify for the program. Within that program, there was no -- like, it just -- it was a blanket so we didn't -- you know, and so this time what it's doing is people who are applying are going to be -- you know, if they make above the threshold, there's -- and that was part of the standing committee, that there's a sliding scale above the income threshold based on cost of living within the territories. That was a recommendation from the standing committee. That's being put into place in this policy.

Mr. Speaker, as for the four -- you know, for the prescription cost, that is if the person is making over, they're going to -- you know, if depending on how much their monthly costs for their medication is, then they may have to go at 4 percent. But if you're -- like, and the questions that I've asked even when we were doing this, and this was part of standing committee, if I'm -- we know that we may have adult children who live at home because affordability, and a household with parents, maybe they don't qualify for any benefits. It's not -- the people that they live with is not going to impact their threshold. So if they're going to school and they need access to health care and they don't fall within any of those other programs, they will be able to apply and qualify whereas before they wouldn't have had any access to dental service, any access to any pharmaceuticals, any access to supplies. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Minister for Health and Social Services. Final supplementary. Member from Yellowknife Centre.

MR. HAWKINS: Goodness, that was the longest response, Mr. Speaker. But thank you for the detail, and I'm sure Northerners appreciate it.

Mr. Speaker, my last question is this: When consultation went out and asked people their thoughts on the health benefits, Mr. Speaker, it did not present a policy change. So people didn't know, I guess, in some ways what they were agreeing with or knowing what they were going to get. Mr. Speaker, therein lies part of the problem and there is the question, Mr. Speaker. Would the Minister be willing to send the policy to the social development committee so they can have a look at it? Because we're about expanding benefits, not taking them away or making people pay because it just doesn't work, and it's not fair. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. LESA SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I will not hold up this policy any longer. The changes will be implemented on September 1st. You know, we will be monitoring the program and, you know, if there are people that are impacted, you know, with the changes that are made, I would suggest them come back. You know, there is appeal process going to be -- you know, within it and so that's -- you know, we can look at each case by case once the program rolls out September 1st. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 125-20(1): MEETING FUTURE ELECTRICITY NEEDS

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, mining is fundamental, and I want to ask the Minister of Infrastructure how we are changing our policy environment to better support the mining sector and get exploration back on track. Can the Minister give an update on the Taltson project as it is crucial to providing cheap, affordable, clean power to the Slave Geological Province. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Range Lake. Minister for Infrastructure.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to talk about the Taltson project. So the Taltson project is being developed by way of a steering committee that involves the GNWT as well as Indigenous governments who are traditional landholders in the watershed region. Steering committee has to meet and have the first -- does need to make a decision about the potential routing. With that decision, then we can move to finalizing a business case but that is the next decision that needs to be made. I certainly have been asking as to when that steering committee will be happening. I understand that that should be -- there should be the next steering committee in the month of March, and then that should allow us to proceed forward. Once we have that, we can also be making our applications for permitting and obviously that is a critical next step. But getting that decision on routing is the next part. Thank you.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the Minister. Can the Minister update the standing committee after that meeting has been completed and any updates around routing or any other decisions that have been made? Thank you.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would be very happy to come to standing committee as soon as that decision is made. With that we can also bring forward to them an update on the business case as that will assist in determining what that business case should be once we, of course, know the routing. Thank you.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course there's other forms of clean energy but often they aren't good enough for the Northwest Territories given our high need for quality energy. Is nuclear on the table and has -- I'll just ask the Minister that. Is nuclear energy on the table? Thank you.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Mr. Speaker, I think that's an excellent question for this House. It certainly traditionally hasn't been something that's been widely considered or widely discussed in the Northwest Territories. But the reality is we have over 20 different energy grids scattered across the territories. We're not linked into the North American energy infrastructure. And it may well be that the future of nuclear, as it's proving to develop and if it's proving to be safe, could well be a direction that the Northwest Territories wishes to go, that communities want to go. And so that certainly is a conversation that should be had publicly and should be had with regions and Indigenous governments and community governments. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Minister of Infrastructure. Final supplementary. Member from Range Lake.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there's a number of pilot projects for small modular reactors taking place in the southern provinces, Saskatchewan and Alberta in particular. Can the Minister commit to monitor the outcomes of those projects and report back to the House or to the standing committee? Thank you.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd be more than happy to report back. I can say certainly beginning in the last government, I had an opportunity to have some Saskatchewan Research Council folks meet with members of our government, senior officials. I'd like to follow up on that work myself. I do know the GNWT is a part of a federal, provincial, territorial SMI working group that's led by Enercan or Natural Resources Canada. So we do have our finger on the pulse of what's happening but, again, a bit of pressure never hurts to be making sure that we are at the forefront of those conversations as they may be relevant to a future here in the Northwest Territories. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Minister of Infrastructure. Oral questions. Member from Monfwi.

QUESTION 126-20(1):
INCOME ASSISTANCE FOR PERSONS
WITH DISABILITIES

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to go back to the first questions for Minister of ECE. I sent her an email earlier today so hopefully from there will consider changing a policy. But I don't feel like she answered the questions so I'm going to ask her the same questions but differently.

Mr. Speaker, what if a family has double or more the number of children than calculated in the Northern Market Basket Measure? How does the Minister consider the cost for more children in the family than are measured under the Northern Market Basket Measure? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Member from Monfwi. Minister of Education, Culture and Employment.

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I always like to do my best to answer questions, but I simply don't have the level of detail about how particular dollars are calculated for each family and how their children are calculated in that. I'd be really happy to get that information from the department and to be able to share that with the Member. So if the Member is willing to either do a written question in the House so that that can be shared widely or, if the Member would prefer, I can correspond by email in regards to the finer details of that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will do that.

MR. SPEAKER: Please do the questions, folks. Member from Tu Nedhe-Willideh.

QUESTION 127-20(1):
POLICIES AND FUTURE OF HOUSING
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just want to follow up with a couple more questions to the Minister of housing. Just moving forward, though, before 2038 what are the Housing NWT's plans for their public housing assets and public housing debts? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Tu Nedhe-Willideh. Minister of Housing NWT.

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there was two questions to that question. So the first question was on assets that the Northwest Territories -- or the Housing NWT holds and what the plans are for those homes, if I'm not mistaken.

From what I understand, we have over 300 homes that are 50 years and older, so Housing NWT is doing a review on those homes. And we also have many homes that are 30 years and older, so another -- we need to do another review on that.

In terms of the second question, I don't have that detail right now, but I can provide the Member information offline as well. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. EDJERICON: (audio) anyway. Thank you. I was going to tease a little bit but thank you to the Minister for her answer.

Going forward, after -- as you know the 20th Assembly is going to be going through some fiscal constraints, etcetera. Can the Minister share with the House maybe as to how they're going to deal with their overall structure and maybe even staff and that kind of thing, so I just want to have an idea on that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A very general question and open-ended as well. What are we doing as Housing NWT realizing that one of the priority number one for this 20th Assembly is the affordability, suitability, and accessibility of housing. I think it's the 20th's responsibility to make sure that housing continues to be a priority of this government. And what we're going to do as Housing NWT to respond to this priority is some work that is being done and being done on the mandate and delivering that mandate to the House. So, again, we have to look at things. We have to analyze things. We have over a hundred staff with Housing NWT. We have 22 maybe local housing associations, organizations. So a lot of work being done at the local level. Like I mentioned, the housing units and the state of housing units, especially those that are 50 years and older, so a lot of concerns in that. Plus a declining fund with CMHC and the continued collaboration with our Indigenous governments. So a lot of work that's ongoing. And we hope to continue this work and continue these discussions so Housing NWT can be successful. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. EDJERICON: Mr. Speaker, thank you. And thank you to the Minister for her response. I guess while I'm thinking about it, the 20th Assembly has -- have priorities and housing is part of that. Going forward, though, in the next

prior to 2038, if an Indigenous government wants to come forward to make application to CIRNAC, etcetera, how can we work with them in partnership to help guide them to make application for housing for their communities and homeownership repairs? Thank you.

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Mr. Speaker, one of the great things of the 19th Assembly is it came up with the strategic renewal plan, and there's 42 initiatives with that strategic renewal, and the NWT Housing forum and the partnerships with Indigenous governments was introduced at the time and it continues to this day. So through the work of the NWT Housing forum and the Council of Leaders, NWT Housing -- or Housing NWT staff have these conversations on a daily basis with Indigenous governments. So I think the work continues. The discussions continue. We all want to see success for Housing NWT throughout the North, and we want to add more homes, and we also want to maintain the homes that we have in our current stock. So there's a lot of promise, and I hope to continue that work. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Housing NWT. Final supplementary. Member from Tu Nedhe-Willideh.

MR. EDJERICON: Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Minister. Going forward, can the housing corporation -- sorry, Housing NWT work with Indigenous governments to undertake projects in their community rather than have it tendered out in Yellowknife, and the communities are looking for work. They want to train their own people and that kind of thing. And that could probably be done through a partnership agreement or universal partnership agreement. Is that something the Minister could look at? Thank you.

HON. LUCY KUPTANA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That's something I can look at. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Minister of Housing NWT. Colleagues, time for oral questions is up. Oral questions. Written questions. Member from Range Lake.

Written Questions

WRITTEN QUESTION 2-20(1): GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES PUBLIC SECTOR POSITIONS

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Since 2019-2020, the consolidated Government of the Northwest Territories public sector grew by 1,391 positions, or 27.3 percent

for a total employee complement of 6,482. As the Minister of Finance noted in Restoring Balance: A Fiscal Sustainability Plan for the 20th Legislative Assembly, "when the public sector grows, associated costs such as employee benefits, pension, dental, health insurance, other ancillary supports like IT hardware and maintenance, office space, etc. also increase."

My questions to the Minister of Finance are:

1. Can the Minister provide the total money value of all job positions added to the Government of the Northwest Territories public service since 2019-2020;
2. Can the Minister provide a regional breakdown of all job positions added to the Government of the Northwest Territories public service since 2019-2020;
3. Can the Minister provide the vacancy rate of all job positions added to the Government of the Northwest Territories public service since 2019-2020 by fiscal year;
4. Can the Minister provide the total money value of all vacant job positions added to the Government of the Northwest Territories public service since 2019-2020; and
5. Can the Minister provide the approximate length of time job positions added to the Government of the Northwest Territories public service since 2019-2020 have been vacant by fiscal year?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member. Your question will be added to the orders of the day.

Written questions. Returns to written questions. Replies to the Commissioner's address. Petitions. Member from Great Slave.

Petitions

PETITION 1-20(1):
CEASEFIRE AND END TO CANADIAN
SUPPORT FOR THE PLAUSIBLE
GENOCIDE IN GAZA

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to present a petition dealing with the matter of a ceasefire and end to Canadian support for the plausible genocide in Gaza.

Mr. Speaker, the petition contains a total of 905 signatures with 295 being handwritten and 610 electronic signatures collected on change.org. Of those signatures, 645 are from Northwest Territories residents, including 276 handwritten signatures and 369 electronic signatures.

And, Mr. Speaker, the petitioners request the Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories to request the Premier of the Northwest Territories, due to the vested interest the Northwest Territories has in universal human rights, international humanitarian law, and the Genocide Convention, to call upon the Canadian government to:

- Fully uphold its obligations to the Genocide Convention;
- Effectively call for a permanent ceasefire in Gaza;
- Fully fund organizations, including UNRWA, that will assist in the necessary lifesaving humanitarian efforts; and,
- End Canadian sale of arms and military goods to Israel until it fully complies with the Genocide Convention and international humanitarian law.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member. Petitions. Mr. Clerk.

Tabling of documents. Minister of Education, Culture and Employment.

Tabling of Documents

TABLED DOCUMENT 47-20(1):
2022-2023 ANNUAL REPORT ON OFFICIAL
LANGUAGES

TABLED DOCUMENT 48-20(1):
AURORA COLLEGE ANNUAL REPORT
2022-2023

HON. CAITLIN CLEVELAND: Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following two documents: 2022-2023 Annual Report on Official Languages; and, Aurora College Annual Report 2022-2023. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. Tabling of documents. Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs.

TABLED DOCUMENT 49-20(1):
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES AND
NUNAVUT LOTTERIES OPERATIONS
ANNUAL REPORT 2022-2023

HON. VINCE McKAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table the following document: The Northwest Territories and Nunavut Lotteries Operations Annual Report 2022-2023. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs. Tabling of documents. Notices of motion. Member from Yellowknife North.

Notices of Motion

MOTION 22-20(1):
EXTENDED ADJOURNMENT OF THE
HOUSE TO MAY 23, 2024

MS. MORGAN: Mr. Speaker, I give notice that on Thursday, February 29th, 2024, I will move the following motion:

I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Hay River North, that notwithstanding Rule 2.1, when this House adjourns on Thursday, February 29th, 2024, it shall be adjourned until Thursday, May 23rd, 2024;

And further, that at any time prior to May 23rd, 2024, if the Speaker is satisfied, after consultation with the 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, the Speaker may give notice and thereupon the House shall meet at the time stated in such notice and shall transact its business as it had been duly adjourned to that time.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Yellowknife North. Notices of motion. Member from Great Slave.

MOTION 23-20(1):
CALL TO UPHOLD HUMAN RIGHTS IN
GAZA

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I give notice that on Thursday, February 29th, 2024, I will move the following motion:

Now therefore I move, seconded by the Member for Yellowknife North, that this Legislative Assembly condemn all acts of anti-semitism and anti-palestinian racism in our territory;

And further, that this Legislative Assembly calls upon the Premier to write a letter to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, Minister of Foreign Affairs Melanie Joly, and permanent representative of Canada to the United Nations Bob Rae, that will call upon the Canadian government to:

- Call for an immediate and effective ceasefire and halt to violence by both Israel and Hamas;
- Advocate for the immediate release of all hostages;
- Advocate for, and provide funds for, unhindered access for humanitarian aid for all those in need in Gaza; and,
- Take all actions necessary to fully uphold its obligations under the Genocide Convention.

And furthermore, that the Northwest Territories Member of Parliament Michael McLeod receive a copy of this letter;

And furthermore, that the Government of the Northwest Territories provide a response to this motion within 120 days.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member from Great Slave. Notices of motion. Motions. Notices of motion for the first reading of bills. First reading of bills. Member from Range Lake.

First Reading of Bills

BILL 3:
CARBON TAX REPEAL ACT

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I wish to present to the House Bill 3, Carbon Tax Repeal Act, to be read for the first time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

First reading of bills. Minister of Finance.

BILL 5:
SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION ACT
(INFRASTRUCTURE EXPENDITURES), NO.
3, 2023-2024

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Mr. Speaker, I wish to present to the House Bill 5, Supplementary Appropriation Act, (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 3, 2023-2024, to be read for the first time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Pursuant to Rule 8.2(3), Bill 5 is deemed to have been read for the first time and is ready for second reading.

First reading of bills. Second reading of bills.
Minister of Finance.

Second Reading of Bills

BILL 5:
SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION ACT
(INFRASTRUCTURE EXPENDITURES), NO.
3, 2023-2024,
CARRIED

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Hay River North, that Bill 5, Supplementary Appropriation Act, (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 3, 2023-2024, be read for the second time.

This bill makes supplementary appropriations for infrastructure expenditures of the Government of the Northwest Territories for the 2023-2024 fiscal year. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? Abstentions? Motion is passed.

---Carried

Second reading of bills. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters. Minister's Statement 4-20(1), Minister's Statement 5-20(1), Minister's Statement 17-20(1), Minister's Statement 24-20(1), Tabled Document 29-20(1), with the Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh in the chair.

Before we go, by the authority given to me as Speaker under Rule 2.2(4), I hereby authorize the House to sit beyond the daily hours of adjournment to consider the business of the House. Thank you.

Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Calling the committee to order. What is the wish of committee? I'm going to go to Member from Inuvik Boot Lake.

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, the committee wishes to deal with Tabled

Document 29-20(1), Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 4, 2023-2024. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Committee, we'll proceed with the first item but before we do that, we'll take a short recess. 20 minutes.

---SHORT RECESS

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Ready to go. We got quorum. Order. Mr. Hawkins. Order. Learning from her, former -- okay, thank you.

I now call Committee of the Whole to order. Before proceedings begin today, I will ask that everybody please make an effort to slow down when speaking for the benefit of our interpreters.

Committee has agreed to resume consideration of Tabled Document 29-20(1), Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 4, 2023-2024. Would the Minister like to bring witnesses into the chambers?

Sergeant-at-arms, please escort the witnesses -- oh, sorry. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

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

For the record, I'd like to get the Minister to please introduce your witnesses.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, back again beside me on my left is deputy minister Bill MacKay, and on my right deputy secretary to the financial management board Mr. Terence Courtoreille.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Committee, we will resume where we left off yesterday with consideration of the Department of Environment and Climate Change on page 4. I would like to remind Members that we will go through the estimates by activity. Please keep your questions to the activity under consideration.

Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 4, 2023-2024, Department of Environment and Climate Change, environmental management monitoring and climate change not previously authorized,

\$939,000. Is there any questions? Member from YK Centre.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And, of course, before I begin my questions, I'll note that being first in the cue and then the power goes out, and I won't say that's suspicious or incidental. Ah, the government will do anything to deny questions, so.

But no, on a serious note, Mr. Chairman, under this section we have water surveillance and we have climate change preparedness. And I'm wondering if the Minister can flesh out both of those two categories as in what the public would see and how they'd be reported for -- and that's specifically more for the wastewater surveillance. The second piece being, of course, the climate change preparedness, what would the public actually see in this activity? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to Minister Wawzonek.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So, Mr. Chair, we are -- in an effort to actually answer questions, I'm not clear we were asking what in the wastewater surveillance and what in the second item go public facing? Like, as in what the programs and services are? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from YK Centre.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We have two-line activities. One says wastewater surveillance. So what does the public actually see and know about this, and how does it get reported? It's -- these are powerful words but they're kind of generic. So, you know, somebody would say well, what does that mean and how is it reported? So what information do they gather, where do we find out about what these mean? And setting aside it's federal money, which is nil, in other words nil to the cost to the Northwest Territories, people are often curious of these types of things as just generic headings. So thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'll go to Minister Wawzonek.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So there's two positions under the wastewater surveillance funding. This was -- is an interdepartmental initiative, so it involves work across multiple departments. The first of the positions funded through these dollars is an environment laboratory technologist which is responsible for doing a daily analysis of wastewater samples. The second is a molecular microbiologist. This is an individual who can support and liaise with the Office of the

Chief Public Health Officer and with Taiga lab, and that responsibility is to develop and refine protocols that can help detect virus in wastewaters. This, you might recall, started during COVID-19 when there was a realization that this was an avenue by which viruses can be detected in wastewater. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from YK Centre.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. With respect to the two positions, are they currently staffed? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to Minister Wawzonek.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Yes. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Member of YK Centre.

MR. HAWKINS: I may not have heard the answer because I was writing my next question down. So -- in fairness. So the climate change preparedness for the North, is there any type of public reporting of this particular initiative? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to Minister Wawzonek.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Firstly, those two positions are staffed and -- just to follow up. But then with respect to climate change preparedness, public reporting, Mr. Chair, I believe there would be. There is -- sorry, I'm just trying to see that one. So there's the pan-territorial adaption partnership which runs over this fiscal year. And, yes, as far as what kind of reporting is under that, I don't have the detail here, Mr. Chair. I can certainly ensure that we provide it to the public.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): YK Centre Member.

MR. HAWKINS: Any chance they could provide it to the Members? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'll go to Minister Wawzonek.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So just to be clear, both the flood and the geological mapping are public, and they can -- they're already being made public. With respect to, again if this is about the evaluation of the effectiveness, I will confirm that there is public reporting or that there is some form of evaluation metrics and if so confirmed, I will certainly provide it to the House. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from YK Centre.

MR. HAWKINS: No, that will be fine. I mean, as I pointed out earlier, some of these are generic headings and from time to time you get people curious on what they actually are. Thank you. No question.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from Range Lake. Member of Range Lake.

MR. TESTART: So thank you, Mr. Chair. The wastewater monitoring -- or Wastewater Surveillance Program is, I believe, related to COVID-19 funding. So are we discontinuing this program after that funding sunsets? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to Minister Wawzonek.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The positions may not be sunseting. But with respect to what will happen, the funding itself is going to be sunseting at the end of this fiscal. Thank you.

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

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

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Any further Member -- questions from the Members? Okay, I don't see any. We'll continue on. Thank you.

Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 4, 2023-2024, Department of Environment and Climate Change, environmental management and monitoring and climate change, not previously authorized for \$939,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Continue on to Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 4, 2023-2024, Department of Environment and Climate Change, wildlife and forest management, not previously authorized \$27,813,000. Questions. I have Member from YK Centre.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I see that there's \$24 million plus earmarked for the fire suppression. This is supplementary funding. Is the -- so this is on top of what's also been provided earlier. Can the Minister start the -- this round of questioning off with clarifying how much to date has been allocated for the -- I'm assuming last year's firefighting season? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to Minister Wawzonek.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So, Mr. Chair, we are looking at total projected expenditures for the year will be at just over \$121 million. And that's anticipated expenditures. So in terms of the base budget, that comes in at around just 21.7, just over \$21.7 million. In August, you may recall there was a request for a supplementary appropriation at \$75 million. So that leaves -- with the projected expenditures of 121, that leaves the projected shortfall of 24.3, which brings us here. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from YK Centre.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you. My understanding is the Government of the Northwest Territories has already received a -- we'll call it interim or partial payment, which is unusual, if I understand it, being accelerated so quick. That was probably based on the assessment or assumption that it would be quite expensive coming this firefighting process. Could the Minister confirm how much has been received to date and how much are we anticipating? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to Minister Wawzonek.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So we certainly have received an advance under the -- I was going to say the DFA; I hope I've got the acronym correctly but -- I don't have that in front of me. That, though, goes to MACA. That's more on the recovery side as opposed to on -- the recovery and a response as opposed to the firefighting. The firefighting we may see some recoveries. There's a division as between firefighting generally versus firefighting as it applies to a community for which the federal government would provide some supports. But we've received \$84 million to date, again as an estimate, advance on the recovery side. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from YK Centre.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you. So just to be clear, whether just for me or potentially others, this \$24 million is anticipated -- or sorry, is going to be used for the cost to fire -- fighting the fire, but the money received to date isn't applied directly to that overall cost?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Minister Wawzonek.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. There are some very, very detailed breakdown charts of all of the efforts, both in terms of recovery costing as well as the firefighting. I think there may be some firefighting associated here but -- or sorry, some firefighting that's under the MACA envelope. But this portion under ECC, this is exclusively with respect to fire suppression. And the fire suppression will include both community fires activities as well as wildfires away and outside of communities. So this is entirely for that. It is not the recovery amounts or the response amounts that would relate to, for example, evacuations or people returning to their communities. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from YK Centre.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, my next question with respect to this activity and sort of and beyond, because I think it's all related, is when can we expect a reasonable reconciliation time on this cost? So in other words, an assessment to breakdown and some transparency on when the cost will sort of be fully aggregated for the expense of last year's, and that includes the whole process? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to Minister Wawzonek.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, that would certainly be in the public accounts. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to Member from YK Centre.

MR. HAWKINS: Well, it's my understanding that some of these reconciliations and costs, in other words knowing exactly what it costs and then submission of the final portion of our application to get some money back from Canada, there will be an assessment and accounting of those costs. So is the Minister saying that it's fully been costed out -- or costed, paid for, and reconciled and submitted for the transparency of our public accounts, or is it still being worked on? I'm asking when can that -- when would that be available? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to Minister Wawzonek.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So I mean, again, certainly the public accounts do provide that type of accounting. This is -- this supplementary appropriation is really just seeking to make up the amount that we at this point have available to us knowing the actuals to date. I mean, there may well be,

and I expect that there indeed probably are, still some amounts to be -- that will still be coming in to communities and then through communities to MACA from communities and community firefighting efforts up to ECC. So the total fire suppression, total firefighting budgets, and reconciliations of that, are not in front of me right now. I only have here the amounts that are with respect to the shortfall on the actuals -- or on the projected amounts known to date for fire suppression. So, again, public accounts is a good place to start. There's likely to be, I'd expect, in the course of the various reviews and efforts probably a lot more information that can also come out through that process. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from YK Centre.

MR. HAWKINS: No, it's -- I don't have a further question. I've kind of asked it twice. But, really, I mean, when they're looking for more money, I mean, people do wonder where the money's going, what's it paying for, and how are we balancing it out in the bigger picture. It's not directly connected to the overall costs but it certainly -- it's like saying, you know, one part of the government isn't part of the other. So it's just -- there are a lot of people still wondering how much is it costing and how much do we keep paying. That's the -- that's ultimately the issue. So it is a comment. I'm not sure the Minister wants to comment; she doesn't have to. It's not implied that she has to. But, you know, you just -- people are concerned about how much keeps going out to pay for this. And it's not that they don't think that the bills are real, but I think it's more a question of like oh my goodness, how expensive does this keep getting?. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Does the Minister want to respond?

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I mean, again, Mr. Chair, the supplementary estimate process is one where we do main estimates as one part of the budgeting cycle, and then when there are additional unforeseen costs that arise throughout the fiscal year you would come back to the House for a supplementary appropriation. And I would think that the example of a bad fire season is often used as an example of when the government comes forward to say that they need an additional appropriation. This is exactly that situation. That's why the government came back in August, and that's why we've come back again now bringing forward the projected expenditures at the first opportunity to put before the Assembly what the expected costs of the fire suppression season were. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Is there any further questions from Members? I'm going to go to from Great Slave.

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would like it if the Minister or her witnesses could provide a little bit more detail on what additional funding the Bilateral Water Management Agreement needed with Alberta-Northwest Territories? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to Minister Wawzonek.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So this is money that is coming in under the requirement -- or to fulfill the requirements under the Alberta-Northwest Territories Bilateral Water Management Agreement. It's a cost shared agreement between the two, and it's meant to provide water management support for the Mackenzie River Basin. That's an agreement that was signed back in 2015. It commits both governments to cooperate in terms of the management of water resources, facilitate the monitoring of the water. Obviously, it moves across the border fluidly, and reporting of upstream effects that may occur, if there's been any sort of pollution. And this is an amount that's being appropriated because -- as an offset from the Government of Alberta. Thank you.

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

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Chair. And thank you to the Minister. I'm curious if this additional expense had anything to do with the -- let's call it a dustup with Alberta around oil sands in the last fiscal year? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to Minister Wawzonek.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. No, it doesn't. That was a good example of the bilateral agreement. Perhaps initially not quite an action as intended but then brought back into the front of mind and being utilized thereafter hopefully as intended. No, this sup appropriation reflects the fact that money can be carried over, and in this point there's some unspent funding that's being -- that gets held over but can be brought forward, and that's the situation that we find ourselves in, and that money is being brought forward. Thank you.

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

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

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Any further questions? I'll go to the Member from Sahtu.

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I wanted to ask the Minister the questions on the cross-border water monitoring. I see later on in the department requests that we're going to be dealing with the marine training society -- or the Marine Transportation Services on additional funds. This is a result of the low waters that we're probably running into a deficit with that MTS service.

Is there discussions as part of the bilateral on the monitoring of the Mackenzie River Water Basin and making it known during these bilateral discussions that your management of the water levels, particularly in the site C Bennett Dam area on the release of water is really affecting the downstream services of this government and communities? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to Minister Wawzonek.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I'm happy to commit and take that back to my colleague. The details of the agreement itself and whether or not it involves site C or the extent to which it does, I don't have that detail and I don't know that my team here does either. But I expect that the Minister responsible would probably be happy to follow up, and we can add that in our follow-up letters. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from the Sahtu.

MR. McNEELY: Thank you. No further questions there, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Is there any further questions? Don't see any. Okay, I'm going to continue on.

Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 4, 2023-2024, Department of Environment and Climate Change, wildfire and forest management, not previously authorized \$27,813,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Okay, thank you. Moving on, Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 2, 2023-2024, Department of Environment and Climate Change, total department, not previously authorized \$28,752,000. Is there any

questions? Don't see any. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Anyway, I'm going to continue on.

Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 4, 2023-2024, Department of Environment and Climate Change, total department, not previously authorized \$28,752,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Okay, thank you. I'm going to continue on.

Committee, we will now consider the Department of Executive and Indigenous Affairs on page 5.

Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 4, 2023-2024, Department of Executive and Indigenous Affairs, directorate, not previously authorized \$2,241,000. Is there any questions? No questions. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 4, 2023-2024, Department of Executive and Indigenous Affairs, total department, not previously authorized \$2,241,000. Is there any questions? Don't see any hands up. I'm going to continue on. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

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

Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 4, 2023-2024, expenditure of finance directorate, not previously authorized \$6 million. Is there any questions? I'm going to go to the Member from Range Lake.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I know that this substantiation is to provide funding for the NWT Evacuation Travel Support Program. I have several -- it's becoming more than several -- constituents who have yet to be paid or reimbursed for their travel expenses.

Is this funding adequate to cover the -- I know the Minister's department is maintaining a list of those who have applied to the program. So is this -- is this fully funded now? Have we

assessed everyone's needs and is this going to cover what we need to pay out? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So, Mr. Chair, to date we've had 6,336 folks apply under the income disruption; 9,515 under the travel support. And of those, quite a number, 4,800, are processed for payment under the first. 8,712 under the second. Some are ineligible so there may be duplicate applications. They maybe hadn't met the specific qualifications under each program. But at this point, there shouldn't -- we're not expecting that there should be a significant number of any new applications. There's still about 230 -- about just under 250 that are still in process or being reviewed further. But that certainly -- with that small number, we shouldn't be requiring anything further to support that. Thank you.

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

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So how much have we paid out total of the Travel support program, not the employment disruption fund but the Travel support program, how much have we paid out to date? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: \$6,061,850, Mr. Chair.

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

MR. TESTART: So just -- so the total expenditure's going to be just over \$12 million, is that accurate? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I think -- and I just want to make -- I'll double check this, that I have this accurately, but I think no, it's \$6 million roughly or just over \$6 million is for the travel. We maintained the employment disruption from internal funds and so the total expenses on both will come in at just around \$9 million. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'll go back to the Member from Range Lake.

MR. TESTART: Okay, now I'm confused. So the Travel support program is \$6 million, then. Okay, I see a nodding of heads. Yeah, nothing further. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Is there any further questions? Okay, I'm going to go to Member for Frame Lake.

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm just wondering, so the total -- well, I mean, we can ask about the \$6 million but also the total appropriation. Is there indications that the feds are going to be coming back to the territorial government with support for this due to it being related to a natural disaster?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, there's a chance. There's a chance they would support the travel support, not the income disruption. So income disruption wouldn't, as far as we understand, qualify under the financial assistance arrangement which is really meant to support the emergency piece. So, again, so yes, that \$3.6 million was a decision made early in the fire season to try to support folks who had been subject to multiple evacuations. The Travel support program came a little bit later in the fire season. Again, we made the request; we've put it in. I believe it will be going in formally with the MACA application but at this point no formal confirmation, and we're not necessarily going to count on it. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go back to the Member from Frame Lake.

Member from Monfwi, did you -- you had your hand up earlier? Okay.

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Yes, I'm just asking about this \$6 million that's not, you know, previously not authorized. I just wanted to know, I know this is not enough because when the evacuation happened it created a lot of chaos, especially for Indigenous government, because a lot of our people went out and I know a lot of them spent their own money because they were -- because there was no plan in place. GNWT did not have an appropriate plan in place to help these evacuees. So I just wanted to know from this or if any of the Indigenous government are going to be reimbursed for the money that they spent to their members living in Yellowknife? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Okay. Just so I'm clear, it's in reference to the supplementary estimates of \$2,241,000. So I

guess she meant the \$6 million. I'm going to go to the Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So, Mr. Chair, again, I -- what I have here in front of me is with requests -- the requests for a supplementary appropriation related explicitly and exclusively to the Northwest Territories Travel support program. I don't have in front of me an entire accounting or budgeting for all departments with respect to events related to the wildfire season, nor do I have in front of me, nor would I in the course of a supplementary appropriation, have full details that are expected to come out in the course of the independent third-party review that I know is already underway and has been the subject of much discussion here. So this program was opened up in response to a situation and a circumstance of evacuation that the territory had never seen before, was stood up very quickly. It was stood up very quickly when people were themselves already under evacuation knowing that there would have to be a supplementary appropriation to help support it but it was an effort to try to see that some funding could be made available in addition to having available supports for accommodation and flights and air and food at the evacuation centres. So this was a very limited specific benefit paid to all eligible residents regardless of the community that they were in, and that is really the parameters of what we are requesting to have here. Thank you.

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

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: I know this is a fourth supplementary. We're still doing budget, you know. So I just wanted to ask the Minister can the Minister give us a rough estimate of how much money was spent to forest fire and to evacuation? It must be over \$300 million, or close to \$400 million? That's the question. Give us a rough estimate. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I don't -- I'm happy to come back perhaps tomorrow if there's questions on the floor regarding the total estimated or projected costs related to both the emergency response as well as to the fire response. I'm hesitant to give rough estimates when I don't have that information before me. I don't want to contribute to the conversation in a way that won't advance it with accurate numbers. So, again, I hear the Member asking. As I said, I'll go back and make sure that we have those numbers put together. Numbers can -- values

do still continue to come in. There's still work being done to put that together on the part of all departments that were involved. We do certainly have those preliminary estimates but, again, I'm here only with respect to the items that are in the supplementary estimates. So one of the prior items, we did discuss the fire suppression budgets. We have that number available. Again, the \$121 million on which we were seeking an additional 24, but with respect to the full evacuation costs that is something much bigger. We had to wait for Red Cross to provide their invoices, the Government of Alberta to provide their invoices. So, again, I want to contribute to the conversation publicly in a way that is accurate, and that's not information I have here. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Okay, thank you. Before I go back to Member from Monfwi, on page 6 of your document under directorate, that's the line item we're talking about. So if we could stick to that, and we'll continue on. So I'm going to go back to the Member from Monfwi.

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: The reason I ask is that because we are still approving budget, and this is the fourth supplementary estimate that we're doing. So is this ever going to stop? Are we still going to be continuing onto the next fiscal year too? Or, like, I don't know. That's why I'm asking. Like, because this is our fourth supplementary budget, and we're still approving it. So it's just more of a comment. So thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Maybe that was a comment, I'll just continue on. Did you want to respond to it, Minister of Finance?

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I did want to respond because I can appreciate the frustration of seeing sups come back. Four sups in a budget cycle actually is pretty standard. And what I was going to suggest is perhaps I can -- and if it's of interest to the public we could certainly table it, but we could give the budget cycle showing roughly when the sups happen. You know, there's department cutoffs of when they have to put those requests in but then to get the four in is actually very common. This would be the cutoff time for the fourth one prior to the end of the fiscal year. So, again, you know, to the extent that that might help understanding the budgeting process, I'd actually be quite happy to put that out, as I said, as a tabled document or as a letter that can be part of our responses here. Thanks.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Okay, thank you. Continuing on, does the Member from Monfwi have any more comments? Okay.

Any more further questions? I'm going to continue on. Is there -- I'm going to go to the Member from the Deh Cho.

MRS. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Would the Minister be able to give me a breakdown by community how this money is spent for them by community for...

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to Minister of Finance for the question.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I can give the dates and approximate durations for each community that -- over the course of the summer and when they were evacuated. Now, whether that correlates to who applied, I don't know. So let me take that back and I'll -- I can provide this document. I mean, I can't really read out the chart here in an easy way, but I can provide that to committee and see if we do have a breakdown. I expect that that probably has been tracked to the extent that we could. I just want to go back and confirm what kind of data I do have. Thank you.

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

MRS. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Chair. That would be information that's just for community how much was spent in each community? thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Go to Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So I mean, again, if it's with respect to the \$6 million that's before committee here, I believe under the evacuation travel support, one of the eligibility requirements did involve listing your place of residence and so in that sense we will be able to, I believe, break down this \$6 million by residence on that basis. If it's with respect to the total fire suppression and total evacuation costs by community, that may be a bit more challenged in that I don't know to what extent there will be -- you know, some fire suppression efforts that would involve by fire as opposed to by affected community and similarly evacuation supports that would be involving, you know, bigger costs for Health and Social Services moving patients which, again, I don't know that it would break down by the community of the patient. So depending on the nature of this ask, that may be a really big one but -- that I'll have to take back and see where I can get and provide that. Again, it may be the kind of thing that comes out over the course of some of the review efforts that are happening. Thank you.

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

MRS. YAKELEYA: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I will be wanting that information later on, that big information; however, for now I just wanted the ones -- like, this is Evacuation Travel Support Program, so I'm assuming this money is used for, say, people that got evacuated from Hay River to wherever they needed to, and the people that got evacuated from Enterprise wherever they needed to go and the money that is -- that's what I'm assuming this -- and people from Behchoko having to come to Yellowknife or Yellowknife having to take off south, that's what I'm assuming this money is for. So just by community, what's the breakdown. That's all I'm looking for right now. But the other bigger one you talked about for the medical and everybody getting sent south, yeah, we're going to want to know that information later on. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. The Minister, did you want to respond?

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thanks, Mr. Chair. So the evacuation travel support was only -- was quite narrow actually in its application. It was -- so only four -- there was \$400 available by vehicle for folks who had been evacuated and were able to stay within the territory and stay at evacuation centres within the territory. Up to \$750 per vehicle for those who had to travel south upon evacuation. And, you know and, again, I can certainly go through some of the rationale behind that with respect to the availabilities of accommodations and food at centres and flights. And I'm well aware that not everyone was able to make -- avail themselves of those -- the free services that were available. But this was really just meant as a gap filling exercise and not a complete gap filling exercise. So, again, I'll look into what information I can break it down further by the 9,500 residents -- 9,515, and exactly who applied from where. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Members, time has run up. Is there any further questions? I'm going to go to the Member from the Mackenzie Delta.

MR. NERYSOO: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just have one question in regards to the travel support program. There was patients from my region would have been misplaced and were located in Calgary about a week later. Would they qualify for this program, or is it still active? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So the travel support was really just for people who were not able to access the flights that were made available for people. Those who drove a vehicle, then, by -- drove their own vehicles received this. So if it was an individual who was a patient, if they were evacuated by Health and Social Services or another associated agency or -- then they likely wouldn't qualify. But I'd be happy to follow up directly with the Member just to see if -- you know, if there's anything else that can be provided to support those residents. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go back to the Member from Mackenzie Delta.

MR. NERYSOO: Okay, thank you, Mr. Chair. Yeah, that information would be helpful in addressing this with constituents who were placed on medical travel and ended up in Calgary or elsewhere. That information will be helpful. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Okay, thank you. Is there any further comments from the Member from Mackenzie Delta? No, okay, thank you. Mahsi. Is there any further questions? Don't see any.

Okay, I'm going to go to Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 4, 2023-2024, Department of Finance, directorate, not previously authorized \$6 million. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 4, 2023-2024, Department of Finance, Office of the Comptroller General, not previously authorized \$26 million. Is there any questions? I'm going to go to the Member from Range Lake.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, the \$18 million related to public debt, what is the reason for the increase in expenditure? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So this is required to meet debt servicing or, colloquially, the interest costs on debt. So a couple of different reasons have contributed to this being higher than what was projected in the original budget. One is there's a component under the Deh Cho Bridge Bond for CPI and, of course, CPI has remained fairly volatile and much higher than what many experts across Canada continue to predict. So

that bond, as a result, has been paying out much higher than what we might have projected and certainly would have hoped. Notwithstanding, in addition to that, there is a much higher amount of short-term debt being used as a result of having to carry the initial costs for the low water events both -- for example, with NTPC, there was additional funding with the impacts on MTS, evacuations, the wildfire suppression costs, some of which we're seeing here. Some of that before it was covered, for example the \$84 million before we got that in from the federal government, the Government of the Northwest Territories was covering those costs and so that is contributing to a significantly higher short-term debt amount than what we would have otherwise had. That requires paying interest on that much higher amount, and so that brings us to where we are now. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go back to the Member from Range Lake.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Chair. And this is related to fiscal year 2023-2024? I'm seeing nodding of heads.

So the next question is on medical travel benefits provided to the public service. It's \$8 million. Can we get some additional explanation on this increase?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'll go to the Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, it's not an increase per se to the benefit itself. Just to be clear. It's an increase to the amount that's required to cover the medical travel benefits. So medical travel assistance, it's a benefit that a number of corporations and companies and businesses provide to employees. It's one that the Government of the Northwest Territories provides to our employees, to public servants. It is part of the collective agreement with the Union of Northern Workers as well as with NWTTA and is provided as well for excluded employees, senior managers. As such, when there are increases in the number of medical travel -- I was going to say medical travel events, or in the nature of what it is, then the costs go up. It's a demand driven exercise, and in this case those -- that demand has been much higher than anticipated. Thank you.

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

MR. TESTART: Thank you. So is this -- and is this meeting trends? Like, trends over the last couple fiscal years, or is this kind of an

unanticipated increase -- yes, unanticipated usage rate that has resulted in the need for a supplementary appropriation? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, we certainly do have the trends tracked since 2019-2020. I can share that with the Members if that's of interest.

There is a significant growth in the last couple of years, and I would say that that does track with what's being seen, I believe, over in the Department of Health and Social Services as well. One of the most significant impacts we've seen has been as a result of dental appointments which post-COVID -- so, again, looking at the last two years and it's post-COVID -- is the dental services in communities and regions have not been reestablished, and that has been 450 percent increase for that type of travel. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go back to the Member for Range Lake.

MR. TESTART: My colleague from Boot Lake just said we could build a very nice dental clinic for \$8 million. So there's clearly a problem here. How -- it's not this Minister's job to solve it but when you're assessing these kind of applications in terms of an overall fiscal sustainability, does the department have a perspective that we need to solve this at a fundamental level rather than just throw more money into the medical travel program? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Yes. I'd be -- Mr. Chair, to be fair, the Member's asking a bit more detail than that and to be clear, so with respect to the benefit to employees, it's part of the collective agreement. We're expected to comply with our obligations under the collective agreement. But as I noted, it's a trend that we're seeing in medical travel and health and social services as well. And so, yes, absolutely, there is work underway between the Department of Health and Social Services and Finance to find a path forward on medical travel generally, the types of appointments, where people are going, the repeat appointments, nature of the appointments, the length of the appointments. And given what I have said here about dental services, that is definitely at the top of the list of things that there needs to be a better path forward on. Thank you.

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

MR. TESTART: Yeah, thank you, Mr. Chair. So, like, I know it's a coming page but with the medical travel increases in the health department, it's \$13,616,000. So this is a -- inclusive of both of those numbers, is this driven by that 450 percent in dental, like the majority of this funding? And before I turn it over to the Minister, I just want to point out that I think the clock started late for me. So I might be owed a few minutes, but I'm happy to go on the list again if I run out of time. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Okay, I'm going to the Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. There is certainly some nuances that are different as between the two. I mean, we also look at the number of public servants and if there's obviously an increase in public servants, that can also drive it. There's cost of airfares that have increased. Again, some expectations of getting back to having more regular dental clinics and clinicians in communities and just things that are not unfolding as we would have predicted or hoped. But, you know, yes, to some degree the dental costs are driving both with those nuances considered. So, again, that's where I say I think that's -- it's -- the good news is that with two years of this now, we can certainly look at it and say we need to find a better solution, and that might be some low hanging fruit. Thank you.

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

MR. TESTART: So, again, I don't want to jump too far ahead, and I note the time, but I'm just -- the difference between the benefit provided to the public service and the benefit provided to the public is significant. Oh, I see I have more time now. So what -- if you'll indulge me, like what is the -- I can only imagine there's more members of the general public accessing medical travel than public servants. So why do we have a difference in the numbers? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Go to the Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So, Mr. Chair, there's -- again, this portion is really an obligation under the collective agreement. Other companies and businesses, corporations, you know, the mineral resource sector, a lot of those companies, a whole host of companies in town, other levels of government, in general also provide benefits to their employees. The

degree to which they're getting benefits, the type of benefits, I'm not privy to. Whether those individuals might have partial payment through public medical travel and then offset by others, again there's going to be some complex differences. But to kind of compare it simply to the general public, I would shy away from that. This is an obligation under the collective agreement to ensure that we have a public service that's getting benefits that align with other employers to make sure that we are a competitive employer, to make sure that we can recruit and retain employees. That's what this one is. And I have no doubt that I'll get some more questions when we hit the health and social services sector. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Just to the Member, I added two minutes and 30 seconds. I'll go to the Member from Range Lake.

MR. TESTART: And I'm eternally grateful, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, does the Minister anticipate the total costs for medical travel to decrease after September 1st when the extended health benefits are changed? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Minister Wawzonek.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Mr. Chair, that is not an analysis that I necessarily have in front of me with respect to this supplementary appropriation. I'm happy to take that question away and have our folks in Finance give it some thought. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go back to the Member from Range Lake.

MR. TESTART: Much appreciated. No further questions. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): To the Member from YK North.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So I wanted to start first with just noting that this overall request of \$26 million for this item is the highest second only to wildfire-related expenses, so I think it's significant. The \$18 million supplementary that's requested for payment on our debt, I appreciate the explanation given earlier by the Minister as to why costs have gone up. Can the Minister give some perspective as to how much of an increase this is over what we had budgeted to be spent on paying interest on debt or paying off debt? So how much is the \$18 million adding to in terms of how much we're paying on our debt-related expenditures this fiscal year?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So I can certainly say the budgeted amount, first under the Deh Cho Bridge, was \$9,021,000. The bond we have it's projected -- predicted to be \$2 million. And short-term debt is \$6.141 million. So that's the budget. And, of course, we're now asking for \$18 million more so you can do probably some fairly simple math on that one. The biggest single impact here is coming from short-term debt where we're now projecting that that's going to hit a \$20 million interest rate -- or a level of interest required. So, again, that's the one where there's been some significant number of items that are being carried by short-term debt. And I went through a number of them before, so I won't repeat them. I'll pause and see if there's another question on it. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from YK North.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. And I appreciate that I'm putting the Minister on the spot here, but would the Minister be able to comment on -- like, is this the most that we've been spending on debt historically? You know, like, just to put this in historical perspective, is this significant that the amount that we've paid on debt-related expenditures over the past year?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I can say, you know, probably, but that's again, as I said, not really the kind of answer I would like to give to the House or to inform the public. Our debt levels certainly are high. When we capped the capital estimates two fiscals ago, that significantly impacted the growth on the debt but then the sheer volume of impacts over this last summer has sort of undercut that otherwise positive story in that our short-term -- that was capping the total anticipated -- or projections of what we would need in terms of debt to fund capital, but then we had these huge increases unexpectedly over the summer increases the short-term. That's kind of like having like a -- you know -- yes, it's the short term that's really showing the significant growth. So I can quite easily, I think, go back and confirm that this is the single biggest number, but I just want to go back and confirm that. I know -- sorry, and I should also just remember that whenever interest rates have gone up -- and they've been high now longer than, again, the economists

seem to be saying they will be. That obviously impacts us as well. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go back to the Member from YK North.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So I just wanted us to sort of have that in our minds and have that in perspective. But I'll just go on briefly to the second item in there about the medical travel benefits.

I thank the Member for Range Lake for asking many of these questions but I just wanted to follow up with one question about what are we -- what steps are we taking to actually re-establish dental services in the regions so that hopefully some of these medical travel costs could go down going forward?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, that is going to be a key question in order to resolve this both for ourselves and the department of health. I don't have a detail of that operational plan in front of me but I, again, will certainly ensure that between myself and my colleague that we will have that ready and start to communicate that to Members and to the public. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go back to the Member from YK North.

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

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Any further questions? Okay, I'll continue on here.

Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 4, 2023-2024, Department of Finance, Office of the Comptroller General, not previously authorized \$26 million. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Moving on, Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 4, 2023-2024, Department of Finance, total department, not previously authorized \$32 million. Is there any questions? Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Committee, we'll now consider the Department of Health and Social Services on page 7 to 9.

Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 4, 2023-2024, Department of Health and Social Services, administrative and support services, not previously authorized \$1,499,000. Is there any questions? I'm going to go to the Member from Great Slave.

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The first item, providing funding for HRHSSA collective agreement, I recognize we're speaking to -- about one of these items, but perhaps with the chair's indulgence, I'll ask my question, which is this line item shows up in -- or sorry, this line item shows up in multiple functions within Health and Social Services. Could the Minister please clarify why that is?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you. I believe, Mr. Chair -- and as I'm speaking, I'm sure a lot of people are going to start typing at me, but that it's reflective of where different employees -- this is correct. It is reflective of where the different employees provide their function within Health and Social Services or Hay River Health and Social Services. So whatever activity the individuals fall under is where the salaries get attached. So that's why you're seeing it pop up because it's a -- it was a collective agreement for the entirety of Hay River Health and Social Services but, again, it gets broken down by the divisions in which the individual employees find themselves.

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

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I expected that would be the answer, but I just wanted to make sure. Thank you so much.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Is there any further questions?

I'll go to the Member again from Range Lake.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So I note under the agreements, some of these contributions seem very low. \$4,000, Canadian chronic disease surveillance system agreement. \$4,000 for epidemiology support for substance use agreements. I'm not sure what you can do with that. So I'm assuming this is multi-year agreements that are just kind of paying out. It just seems quite -- or a very limited amount of contributions. So could the Minister just explain how this money is flowing and if there's a larger pot that we're not seeing. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'll move to the Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes, Mr. Chair, that is something that is worth highlighting as we're going through this. So this is administrative and support services. And so, yes, the agreements themselves are much larger and they include a larger sum, you know, for -- you know, for example, to actually go and do a frontline operation. But under the administrative part, it is just the portion that is allowed to be used for administrative functions. But yet, for instance, the northern wellness agreement sees a small amount here, but you will see it come back under a much larger portion under the programming function. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to the Member from Range Lake.

MR. TESTART: Thank you. Nothing further.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Any further comments -- questions? I'm going to go to the Member from Yellowknife North, YK North.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So, first, about the collective agreement with the Hay River Health and Social Services Authority, can the Minister confirm whether all additional salary and benefits that were negotiated as part of this agreement, the new agreement, have been costed out or whether there are elements in these agreements that are yet to be costed?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Minister Wawzonek.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, let me put that one over to the deputy minister, please.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'll go to Minister MacKay.

MR. BILL MacKAY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So this agreement is retroactive pay, so it pays out the retroactive salary at 1.5 percent per year for those two years. And then the department is going to come forward with costing for those other elements because those are all forward looking. So they'll have an idea of how much those other benefits will cost when they come back for the term of the collective agreement as a whole. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to the Member for YK North.

MS. MORGAN: Okay, so just to confirm that all costs that are retroactive have been included in these estimates that are coming forward for sups and that any forward-looking benefits wouldn't -- could be captured in the main budget going forward? There wouldn't be any benefits that need to be covered between now

and -- between now and our approving the budget for the next fiscal year?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So I think I do understand the question. So the sup here is only because the collective agreement was overdue in terms of being reached. So there was an amount owing under the collective agreement. Once it was finalized, that falls under this fiscal year. Only it wasn't built into the budgeting for the fiscal year because it was still being concluded. Now that that agreement's been concluded, we can bring it forward to the Assembly to reflect what the 2023-2024 total amounts would be. That collective agreement as it applies going forward will form part of the budget of Health and Social Services going forward which will be part of the main estimates that we'll see in May and June for 2024-2025. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from YK North.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. So moving on to the agreements with the federal government, various agreements around health funding. Can the Minister clarify whether any of these agreements have resulted in carryover from previous years' funding being unspent?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I'm -- I suspect some. I mean, there's obviously quite a list of agreements here included and so some would and some wouldn't and the breakdown of that, again, I don't necessarily have that in front of me here but I could endeavour to get that. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. YK North Member.

MS. MORGAN: Is there an explanation for why even -- okay. So the first line item that is the largest amount, Canada-Northwest Territories Agreement to Work Together to Improve Health Care for Canadians, so why is this coming forward as a supplementary amount that wasn't planned for that is -- is it being -- something that's being done ahead of schedule, or can the Minister provide an explanation for why this is coming forward as a sup?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. For this one, and I believe for several of the others, the agreements were either signed for the first time or renewed after the time when the business planning process had been completed. And so in such cases where there's an expected or a change coming to an agreement, if it's being renewed or if it's obviously again a new agreement that comes after the business plan cycle while materials that are before the House for approval as part of the formal budgeting process, then it would come forward as a sup. That is, yes, dealing with a supplementary appropriation, that is one of the definitions of when the management board secretariat would then receive that request and recommend that it be approved because it precisely meets that definition of when a department should bring forward supplementary appropriation. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go back to the Member from YK North.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Final line of questioning here. Are these agreements public, or could they be made public so that we can all better understand, you know, what has been the amount of federal funding for each of these pockets over the years, what's being carried forward, what -- you know, what aspects are ending, what are the new agreements? Are any of the details around these agreements public or can they be public? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So the agreements themselves are agreements with the federal government so the degree to which the agreement itself can be made public would be subject to what is in the specific clauses of the agreement, and they're federal government agreements that we are signing on to. So I anticipate that the agreement document itself probably has a clause in it that does not make it a public document. All that said, in terms of, as I said, you know, what numbers are subject to -- which ones are new agreements, which ones had carryovers, there certainly is some that can -- some details that can be provided in that regard. Details, for example, of what was agreed to between Canada and the Northwest Territories can be detailed. You know, what were the purposes of them, that can be detailed. And I can perhaps suggest that we sit down with the Member just to make sure that that is more clear. And I suspect my colleague from Health and Social Services would be in a position to support that. We certainly want to make clear to the public

when we are benefitting from these additional dollars and what those dollars are meant to represent. It's just not necessarily the agreement itself. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Was there another question? Okay, no further questions. Any further questions from committee? Okay, I don't see any. Oh sorry, I'm going to go to the Member from Great Slave.

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Chair. And thank you for the indulgence. It's a very quick question. I heard when another Member was asking about the collective agreement that one of the witnesses said it's retroactive for five years. However, I just want to clarify the collective agreement is for five years but it should be retroactive for three fiscal years, is that correct, from 2021-2022 on? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes, it's not entirely going back five years. I don't recall just off the top of my head if it's going back two years or going back three. But -- okay, here we are. So it's covering 2021-2022 through to 2025-2026. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from Great Slave, is there a further question?

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So the collective agreement covers five years but the sup covers retroactive pay for three, am I right? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister of Finance.

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

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Is there any further questions? Okay. Any more questions? If not, I'll continue on. Thank you.

I'm going to read out again Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 4, 2023-2024, Department of Health and Social Services, administrative and support services, not previously authorized \$1,499,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Moving on, Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 4, 2023-2024, Department of Health and Social Services, health and social service programs, not previously authorized \$25,525,000. Is there any

questions? I'll now go to the Member from Range Lake.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, the funding for diagnostic laboratory services, chemotherapy drugs, radiology services, what do these increases represent? Is that more client usage, or is that replacement of equipment? Can the Minister provide more substantiation. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Go to the Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So these are demand -- this is demand driven as I understand it. So I can start one at a time.

We've got the referred diagnostic laboratory services. That is a funding shortfall to the laboratory services that we are under contract. So we send materials for testing to Dynalife Medical Labs, and it's a multi-year contract. They're set fees. If our usage goes up, then we have to pay more.

Under chemotherapy drugs, similarly, Mr. Chair, if we wind up having a greater uptake or greater usage of those -- or a need, then the costing will, again, go up.

And similarly, radiology services, we have an external contract with an entity that provides those services and, again, it's on an if-and-when basis. If usage goes up then, again, we are in a situation where we are required under that contract to pay more. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from Great Slave -- oh sorry, Range Lake.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So I thank you for that explanation; that's satisfactory.

Okay, let's talk about agency nurses. So this is 2 million -- 2. -- just over \$2.3 million. So what's the total amount that's going to be expended on agency nurse contracts? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: So the total amount requested in this supplementary appropriation is \$2.34 million for shortfalls here in terms of the staffing. It's -- yes, the projected -- that's the amount that we're requiring at this time. But the total anticipated cost for agency nurses this fiscal is \$5.5 million. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Member from Range Lake.

MR. TESTART: Thank you. The media stands corrected because I think there's a news -- well, there was a news article recently of \$5.2 million. That's what the public is -- and my constituents have seen and have brought it forward. So a \$5.2 million expenditure is barely equivalent to 42 nursing positions at staff wages. So how many agency nurses are we getting from \$5.5 million? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, if there -- I mean, difficult to make a guesstimate of that. Different nurses have different -- fall within the pay scale at different rates. There is different overtime amounts, different enhancements, you know, again, so. I can give you -- there's a, you know, total number of scheduled hours that an agency nurse might work. I can try to break that down. But, again, breaking it down by what that does by hour, you know, again, different nurses come in at different hourly rates. So, you know, I'm not -- this is a discussion broadly about the fact that agency nurses are being utilized in the Northwest Territories and elsewhere in Canada. It is all over the news right now. It is an agreement that we have with the UNW to use agency nurses only when available. And the difficult challenge we put ourselves in, and I don't mean to steal the Minister of health's thunder on this one, but if you don't have the nurses there and then there's staffing is short and services close, that is difficult on morale. It's difficult for the public. But, of course, to keep things open, we're either relying on our own nurses to cut short on their time off, on their leave time, or we're bringing in agency nurses. It is a quagmire, and I acknowledge that, but at this point we really just looking for supplementary appropriation to cover the costs for the current fiscal year for being in that exact quagmire. The forward-looking challenge is a much bigger one. Thank you.

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

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Chair. And I'd hazard a guess that the health Minister's probably only too happy to let the finance Minister sub in for questions here. But she's welcome to entertain this discussion as well; I'm sure we'd appreciate it.

So the issue, I think -- and I'm hearing this from nurses in my riding that, like -- so this is a morale issue in addition just because

they're -- the prevalence of agency nurses. So can we get the Minister to commit to a very clear cost analysis of that \$5.5 million that tells us exactly -- like, the equivalent position -- staff positions that it is. I appreciate they don't work the same way as full-time health personnel in the system; they do work differently. So can the Minister just commit to giving us an accurate staffing numbers, how many bodies are coming through this contract that's equivalent to the staffing -- the staffing numbers that we currently employ in the health system and getting real costs to those numbers. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, this is a longer one. And I certainly don't want to hold up any of the other commitments that we're making that I think can benefit Members, particularly at this stage of the Assembly as we're learning about departments and supplementary appropriations. I don't want to hold those commitments up. The commitment to better understand the drive on agency nurses, the usage of agency nurses, for example what departments are using more, what regions might be using more, what times of year they might be getting used, those are questions that I do want to be seeking answers to and myself and the Minister of health are actively working with the two departments to have a health sustainability discussion, and agency nurses, as well as dental travel, are both pretty hot topics.

So I will commit that I want to get more of a detailed analysis to the Member. I just -- as far as coming up with, you know, dollar for persons, I'm not sure that that will be the question to be asked in terms of understanding what's driving agency nurse use and how we can avoid it and get away from it. I think we all share the desire to have less agency nurses and more resident nurses. So long answer, and I know -- I've already told that I'm not going to make a commitment, but the commitment I'm making is that we want to actually find a way to not have as many agency nurses. Thank you.

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

MR. TESTART: One is too many. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I think that that's the sentiment I'm hearing from health professionals in my riding. And what they're looking for is accurate numbers and cost analysis. So in their words, we have been successful and we're seeing how we can compare if we've been successful in recruiting and training nurses. And these

questions are not kind of to -- yeah, I guess we could put a spin on it and say, like, we're excoriating the department for relying on agency nurses and privatizing our health care system, which is probably more exciting for question period than it is for Committee of the Whole. So I won't do that. But what I will say is we need some transparency around this so the public knows where their money's going, and they're getting good value for money. And our hardworking health care professionals can see that as well. That's what they're asking for. So I think the Minister's made a commitment, and I'll -- I appreciate that.

Can the Minister tell me how much of this sup -- or the \$2.3 billion, or the global total of 5.5, how much has that been to pay union dues to the UNW for the use of agency nurses? Because I understand that's a component of these contracts. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The total amount for -- everyone's pointing at my computer, Mr. Chair. Just -- \$69,766, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Okay. Thank you. I'm going to go to Member from Range Lake.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Chair. That's arising from this supplementary appropriation or the \$5.5 million total? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): I'll go to Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: That is on the total, Mr. Chair. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Member of Range Lake.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, much. Yeah, I think we just go back to, like it's much like the medical travel discussion we've had. Like, there's an issue here we need to solve because this is just going to end up costing the taxpayer more and more as time goes on, not less and less. And there's an additional cost to staff morale and productivity within the health care system that needs to be looked at as well. And I know the health Minister is here listening, finance Minister's here. I am confident we are going to move forward as an Assembly on this and look at health care sustainability as we move into budgets that are not primarily in term of supply and are actually operational budgets. So I look forward to what's coming in May and June when we get a real picture of what measures are being put in place to control the use of

agency nurses and hopefully to ban them in the future. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Your time is up. I'm going to move on. Is there any further questions? Don't see any, I'm going to continue on now. Supplementary estimates -- oh sorry, I'm going to go to the Member from YK North.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So I will start with just one question about the agency nurse budget. And so was anything allocated for agency nurse contracts in the main budget for 2023-2024, or is this all coming forward in supplementary requests?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Go to the Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. There's this component here, and then the remainder of that 5.5 that I had mentioned is coming from a reallocation. The Stanton Legacy Building hasn't come online as anticipated, and so some of what had been allocated to that was able to be moved for -- to put towards this. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. YK North Member.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I guess what I'm getting at is did we not budget for any agency nurses in the 2023-2024 budget? And if so, was there an assumption that we would not need any? Leading to the question, how could we have been so far off in our assumption or prediction that we expected we would need none, and we ended up needing \$5.5 million worth. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to the Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I mean, as of right now, or at least as of February 20th, I understand there were only seven agency nurses employed. So the number can vary fairly significantly. And obviously it's certainly hoped for reasons already described to not require any. In order to offset the need for agency nurses with vacancies within the department, those staffing dollars, when a position is vacant, can then be utilized to deal with the vacancy, namely, by bringing in an agency nurse. It's not supposed to be a long-term solution. So obviously if they're fully staff or more fully staffed, then you don't need to have an agency nurse. But it's not a budget item. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from YK North.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So moving on to child and family supports, which we see an increase in \$1.187 million over expected budget this year. What is the source of some of the increased costs more than was anticipated for 2023-2024?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So, Mr. Chair, I will just need a moment here to see -- well, one of the sources for the increases, Mr. Chair, is an increase to the foster care rates that's being implemented. There's also -- actually, I think that's probably it. That's probably it, Mr. Chair. If I'm incorrect, I will -- oh, and then, of course, there's an increased number of placements as well, which is then driving that further given the increase to the rates. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I want to go to the Member for YK North.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So that is disheartening to hear that there are increased rates of children in foster care. I just want to confirm -- and this is sort of a running theme of my mine throughout these deliberations, but confirm that going forward budgets will be adjusted accordingly based on the new foster care rates so that we don't have to keep coming back for supplementary estimates?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I want to go to the Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. And, Mr. Chair, I first just wanted to note I was misreading the change and the increase to the rates is coming in in March of the -- well, of this year, but this is really just attributable to the fact of there being an increase in overall costs in the program and the increase in individuals who are relying on that. But, you know, as far as how the budgeting process works, when -- if there are -- for example, when there's an increase in the contracted rate, that is the kind of item that a department may bring through the forced growth process because it's an unavoidable increased cost. So that would then find the change in the ongoing budget of the department would be affected through that process if approved at the financial management board as opposed to a discretionary change. Or if there's a demonstrated or proven increase in numbers and usage, one that can't be mitigated, one that can't be resolved otherwise through some other change in the system or process, then, again, that too may be an instance where a department might bring that request forward

into the forced growth process and then we would see the change in the main estimates. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from YK North.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So moving on to the Yellowknife shelter and sobering program, so there's a request for almost \$2 million in supplementary funds. Can the Minister tell us what was the total cost of operating these facilities this past fiscal year, so whatever the budgeted amount was plus this supplementary almost \$2 million?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The annual operation funding requirements with this are looked at at around \$2.5 million for -- and, yes -- sorry, for 2022-2023 projected for 2023-2024 to be -- I'm sorry, I think I said my numbers backward, Mr. Chair. \$5.2 million for 2022-2023 and projected \$5.1 million for 2023-2024. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from YK North.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. And so unless we have plans to put an RFP and do something different to actually get a non-profit provider to take over this facility, will the additional \$2 million be put into the main budget for 2024-2025 instead of year by year assuming that maybe this year an NGO will take it over?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I don't -- I do believe that NTHSSA is likely to be running the program for 2024-2025 and then obviously the beginning of that business planning has only begun, we're only at the point of a mandate, and then developing the budget to support it, but this would then be one of those items that, with a commitment to continue to run it knowing that the last two years' budgeting is as I've described, that would be the kind of circumstance where the department would be expected to bring forward an adjustment to their budget to accommodate this cost. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from YK North.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. And a quick note on -- so the upcoming YK Wellness and Recovery Centre that we talked about yesterday in our capital expenditures that is scheduled to be opened around 2026 I believe

we established yesterday, I just wanted to note that if the government is hoping that we would be able to get a non-profit or a non-government agency to run this kind of facility, I would strongly advise that we start now in planning and finding those partnerships because I fear we'll be unsuccessful if we leave it up to, you know, even within a year of planning to open the centre and then start looking around for someone to run it. As we've seen, it's challenging, and so I would urge us, if we're looking to save costs and have effective partnerships going forward in running those facilities, to start early, start now.

Finally, on this section, so the costs around the Inuvik Hospital provision of security, dietary, laundry, etcetera, service contracts, how -- what are the reasons why -- it looks like they were at least a million dollar over budget. Was there monitoring of these expenses to control costs, or what were the reasons why these contracts came in so much over budget?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So these are contract-specific up to the Inuvik Regional Hospital and the Arctic Family Centre and the Inuvik Public Health Office, so all Beaufort Delta related. And there are two specific contracts at issue. In both cases, those contracts saw increases as a result of some inflationary pressures that were being experienced. So, you know, again, not perhaps dissimilar to some of the challenges being felt in other areas of both the government and the private sector that just with -- whether between labour market shortages, increased inflation, increased expenses for insurance, or increased, you know, fuel costs, so on and so forth, all of that came in significantly higher and that is what has led to this item. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from from YK North.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. And I realize my time is almost up. So just wanted to emphasize how important it is to me anyway that going forward we do our best to be realistic about what we think things are actually going to cost. I know there's some things we can't anticipate, but especially looking at past patterns, if things are consistently coming in over budget I would much rather see us have a realistic main budget than be sort of pressured or have this -- see these things come forward later in sup estimates because it definitely skews our idea of what things actually cost. Thank you very much.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. We're going to -- any further questions? Okay.

Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 4, 2023-2024, Department of Health and Social Services, Health and Social Services programs, not previously authorized \$25,525,000. Okay, I see Mr. Testart.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Chair. And thank you for allowing me a second time to speak. So I -- apologies if I missed anything, but the \$1.187 million for in-territory child and family supports, can the Minister just explain that a bit more? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yeah, thank you, Mr. Chair. I don't think I did do a very good job of explaining that one earlier, if I may.

So there's variability here coming in in part with the Child and Family Services Act that was revised as well as the federal Act respecting First Nations, Inuit, and Metis children, youth and families, and with that there's been changes that result to the associated costs. So that has impacted where this is at. Some elements of this line item or this activity area are experiencing a surplus, but others are looking at the increases in foster care rates that are changing. Even before we get to the March 1st date that I had mentioned, there are some increases, and there's an increased costs to the amount that's being spent in this -- in that for that regard, thank you.

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

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So this represents an increase to kind of program commitments, not an increase in children in care? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I'm inclined to get back to the Members. I'm looking at the material I have in front of me and this is not -- I don't obviously have the programming area specifics, and I don't want to misstate what exactly is being increased so I don't want to also conflate the fact that bound up in here is the fact that there's an end coming change on March 1st. So I'd like to take that one back and just make sure I can get a better explanation than what I have done so far of exactly what this is for. Thank you.

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

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Chair. And, again, forgive me if I've missed -- overlooked this or have misheard this, but the change to March 1st -- in March 1st, what is that change? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. On March 1st there will be increased foster care rates coming in determined after historically similar to looking at CPI. So with CPI being high, the rates go up. Thank you.

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

MR. TESTART: Which is reflected -- thank you, Mr. Chair. And is that reflected in these numbers, or is that an additional cost that will have to come up? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: It's not reflected in these numbers, which I think -- or it will be a number that we have to come up with going forward. But, again, this is -- the information I'm looking at, Mr. Chair, just to be clear, I just am not entirely sure that I'm explaining it very well, and I'd like to just make sure that I have that accurately. But there is a change that's coming on March 1st. Thank you.

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

MR. TESTART: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chair. So, yeah, I appreciate that. I would just like to know -- get a better sense of how this is impacting foster care and children in care in the Northwest Territories. So one of them is the Minister going to provide kind of a written response to committee? Or if she could just explain how and when we'll get the information back to us. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to the Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Sure, thank you, Mr. Chair. There's obviously been a number of items where I've offered to return back to committee. Some will certainly take longer than others. Others I expect we can get back fairly quickly. It's been my practice, if possible, that given that they would be

responses here on the floor that we would make it -- you know, we'll give it as a document or a letter that can be tabled in the House so that it could form part of the public record. Thank you.

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

MR. TESTART: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I mean, I do feel for the Minister because she's not responsible for Health and Social Services so perhaps when these substantiations are coming forward, Members are going to -- are bound to have more program-specific questions, that the responsible departments can provide a bit more detail to the Minister at the table. So they can answer these questions directly before we vote on the financial item. That's just a general comment. Nothing further. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Continuing on. Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 4, 2023-2024, Department of Health and Social Services, health and social services programs, not previously authorized \$25,525,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): We're going to take a short break, and we'll be back shortly. Thank you.

---SHORT RECESS

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Order. We're going to continue now. We're going to resume. Anyway, I'm going to read out Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures) -- order.

Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 4, 2023-2024, Department of Health and Social Services, long term and continuing care services, not previously authorized \$5,666,000. Is there any questions? None. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 4, 2023-2024, Department of Health and Social Services, out of the territory services, not previously authorized \$16,085,000. Is there any questions? I'm going to go to the Member from Great Slave.

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Chair. My question is about the adult out-of-territory supportive living services. I was wondering if the Minister could speak to whether or not that is due to increased users I suppose, or is it because of

increased cost to the government from the services rendered? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Go to Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So it is -- it is as a result of an increased overall number of days in the facilities. And so in that sense, the amount of use that is being seen that's driving up an anticipated extra expense here. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Great Slave.

MS. REID: I'm sorry to ask the Minister this; I can probably look it up quickly as well. But could she please tell me how much prior to the sup in 2023-2024 we have spent on facility-based addictions treatment on top of this \$1.843 million?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'll go to the Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So let me start by saying there's actually a projected shortfall of \$2.843 million. Some of it is -- can otherwise be funded internally. The actuals are for -- it's for, rather, yes, the total expenses are estimated at around 4.9 or just over \$4.9 million.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'll go to the Member of Great Slave.

Okay, thank you. I was going to back up here. I'm going to go back and read out that previous Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 4, 2023-2024, Department of Health and Social Services, long term and continuing care services, not previously authorized \$5,660,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Any further comments? Continuing on.

Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 4, 2023-2024, Department of Health and Social Services, out-of-territory services, not previously authorized \$16,085,000. Does committee agree? Sorry, is there questions? Oh sorry, I'm going to go to the Member again from Great Slave. YK North, I'm sorry.

MS. MORGAN: Thanks. So we're still on out-of-territory services, right? Okay.

On the adult out-of-territory supportive living services, can the Minister give us any insights on how much expenses have increased over

the past seven, eight years, or so over time in this area?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So looking at actuals over the last several years, if you go back to sort of 2016-2017, they were just under -- or just around \$19.5 million, and it varies over time year by year - 21.5, 24, 26. Hitting up in the last couple of years after COVID, it significantly increased, 2022-2023, there were \$35.2 million. 2023-2024, we're now projecting to get up to \$42.3 million as an estimate at this point but obviously we're getting fairly close to the end of the fiscal year. In terms of, you know, if -- well, actually I'll stop there and let the Member ask her own questions. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from YK North.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you very much. And given that expenses have increased so dramatically over the past seven, eight years from the \$19.5 million to, you know, more than double that today, so just a note that I think it's worth this government revisiting some analysis around the cost and benefits of providing more in-territory supportive living services for adults, both given costs but also the benefits of keeping families together, keeping people living in NWT. So just wanted to flag that as a note related to that item.

But moving on to facility-based addictions treatment, I have a question about how does HSS enter into contracts with certain facilities. Are these multiyear contracts? Are they renegotiated every year? And, like, what criteria do we use to decide which southern facilities for addictions treatment we have contracts with on any given year?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Go to Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, so a majority of the facilities that the department's in contact with do go through the request for proposal process, so part of the public procurement process. There's certainly a mix of different types of contracts for different types of services with different agencies across the Department of Health and Social Services, but it does go through a public procurement process in general. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from YK North.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Are these RFPs issued every single year, or how often?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Go to Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, so, I mean, there's -- certainly there's the specific items that are here on the supplementary appropriation request. But, yes, there's different contracts that come due at different times. So, for instance, facility-based addictions treatment, we'll be having -- we'll see an RFP go out in 2024 and then for -- that would be expected to begin for the following fiscal year. But I know that there's a fairly lengthy list of contracts that are administered by Health and Social Services and could perhaps convey to my colleague that that information could be provided as part of an information or a bring forward request. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from YK North.

MS. MORGAN: That would be great. And that is something that I will follow up with the department.

Just finally, is part of the increase in costs that have led to this supplementary request just due to -- is it due to increased number of people going for out-of-territory facility-based addictions treatment or just increase in the cost of sending the same number of people to those facilities?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'll go to the Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I happen to know that the Health and Social Services has actually done a fair bit of work on this of late, and while I again not necessarily -- I don't have it in front of me here but I would suggest we could give that information -- there's a high number of first-time users and a reducing number of repeat users. So, you know, different factors are coming in here in terms of what might be causing this particular -- these particular increases. There certainly is also an increase in the rates being charged for the time spent at the facilities. So between an increase in patient use and that, those are driving the costs. But, again, there's also been an analysis to show that it's not necessarily repeats. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. We'll go to the Member of YK North.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thanks for that. So I'll leave that for now. I think these

are good areas to follow up in -- to follow up on both to make sure that we have appropriate contracts with the facilities in the south, that we're getting good value for money, that, you know, there's appropriate oversight, and that people are getting the services they need, and to look more into these patterns of do we have more people signing up for -- than before and why. Anyway, I found this useful for now and will definitely follow up. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Members, before he move on to the next Speaker, I just wanted to remind everybody to wait for their mic lights before speaking and to end your statement with a thank you. This will have -- this will make things much easier for the technical staff and those watching on -- our proceedings on television.

Next I got up is the Member from the Sahtu region.

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. My colleague,

Yellowknife North, asked the question of how many contracts there for out of the territory treatment services. If I can get that information as well. That was my only question there. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'll go to the Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. In 2023-2024, the department had contracts with five southern facilities - three in Calgary, one in Naniamo, and one in Toronto. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'll go to the Member from the Sahtu.

Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 4, 2023-2024, Department of Health and Social Services, out-of-territory services, not previously authorized \$16,085,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Moving on. Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 4, 2023-2024, Department of Health and Social Services, supplementary health benefits, and not previously authorized \$5,616,000. Is there any questions? Seeing none. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Supplementary estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 4, 2023-2024, Department of Health and Social Services total department,

not previously authorized \$54,385,000. Is there questions? None. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Committee, we will now consider the Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment on page 10.

Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 4, 2023-2024, Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment, economic diversification and business support, not previously authorized \$1,308,000. Is there any questions? I'm going to go to the Member from YK Centre.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I'm wondering if the Minister can elaborate -- it says, for example, \$308,000. Can she elaborate to what specifically that is. I mean, I can read it says NWT film and media sector, but is it to -- is it treated as a grant? Is it treated as to backfill something? Is it a position? Is it that type of -- so we'll start with that. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'll go to the Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So this funding helps support the next five years of the Film and Media Strategy Action Plan from 2021 through until 2026. That action plan has a number of different initiatives designed to support both short and long-term advancement of the film and media sector, and this component -- I mean, it includes everything from advertising and promotion to contract and salaries, travel, and training. This is a portion that was submitted as an expression of interest to CanNor back in November of 2022, and an agreement was signed with CanNor. This is the portion for the current fiscal year. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go back to the Member from YK Centre.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Can the Minister provide that detail to committee?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Yes, before I go to the Minister, just remind Members to say thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Mr. Chair, I'm sure that the Department of ITI would be happy to provide a briefing on their film strategy. I think they've seen some successes with it. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'll go to the Member of YK Centre.

MR. HAWKINS: Yes. Well, I don't want to take it on behalf of committee but I'm sure we won't refuse if they offer. The other thing on this section is can I get some breakdown as to further understanding as what the \$1 million is targeted to? Now, I see it's attached to provide funding for businesses impacted by the 2023 fire. Can we get some breakdown, further elaboration as to how that's intended or directed? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So this is part of a funding program that ITI rolled out in support of small business -- small, medium sized businesses following the wildfire seasons. There was a total relief of \$2 million. This portion appropriates -- or is a requesting to appropriate an amount that came in from CanNor. It provided support to help cover fixed costs, which would include things, for instance, like rents or, you know, utilities, items and the like, and that went through an approval process with ITI. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I want to go to the Member from YK Centre.

MR. HAWKINS: Just confirming this is new money, not replacement of some sort. That was a question.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. We'll go to the Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. It was -- this is a new \$1 million that came in from CanNor to support the wildfire relief efforts for businesses. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'll go to the Member from YK Centre.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just to confirm, is this new money for people to apply for, or is the application process closed and this is an opportunity to backfill some outstanding applications?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. The Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I don't know if the process is -- if it's formally closed or not. I know that there were -- there was a suggestion that each region had individuals that were accepting applications. And I don't know if it was time limited per se, but it was -- there were eligibility

elements to it that were under -- that's right, there was an additional SEED directive. So if individuals wanted to have a look back at the SEED directive, that would provide the full eligibility requirements as they apply from those who may have been affected in the summer. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'll go to the Member from YK Centre.

MR. HAWKINS: Can I get some confirmation from the department it's not an overspent program and we're looking at ways to sort of help fill some gaps. It's similar to the original question, but it sounds like they're still taking applications but if there's no money, why are we taking applications. So I just need some clarity. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'll go to the Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So, Mr. Chair, I am just trying to confirm if there was -- I believe under the SEED directive it would be -- sorry, it's a SEED directive, and it's still open and available until March 31st of this year. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'll go to the Member from YK Centre.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you. So we're still taking money, but we don't have any money in the program? Or sorry, we're still taking applications, but we don't have money in the program; is that currently correct at this very moment?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I want to go to the Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. This is the appropriation of the federal dollars. So any time the federal government signs an agreement or provides funding to the Government of the Northwest Territories, we still have to come forward even if we are, you know, open to signing the agreement, we still have to come forward to the Legislative Assembly to actually appropriate that money so that it can then go to the department. I mean, it goes back to the earlier conversation about short-term debt. Until the money gets appropriated in, you know, we have to come here formally and make an adjustment to the main estimates to say the federal government has come forward with funding, it needs to be formally appropriated on the floor. That's what this process is. So this is federal dollars that came from CanNor to supplement the SEED directive. This is an attempt to have the House approve that funding so that it can go to the SEED directive that was specifically

stood up in support of businesses after the wildfires. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from YK Centre.

MR. HAWKINS: So just a -- and I understand that. I just -- it sounds like at one way that there's money already committed to this initiative and this is just backfilling it in some way. And so that's why I'm curious on how the process is working specifically to this because if people are interested in -- sorry, I wouldn't use interest. I'd say if people still need support and if the program is still open or not open, if it's receiving money or it's spent or they're backfilling or overspent, that's the type of clarification I'm trying to (audio). So if there's still room for applications, I think I sort of heard that, and I also think I sort of heard that one needs to apply through SEED. If I'm incorrect, the Minister's certainly welcome to fix that. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: There we go. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I've lost my train of thought with all the physical activity there. But so it is a SEED program. There's a SEED directive that was issued back in the summer. The SEED directive provides details on eligibility and application process. I believe the application form is online if I'm not mistaken. And that application and that SEED directive is effective until March 31st of this year. This is the first chance given the election for us to come forward and seek a supplementary appropriation for funding that would have been received from CanNor. The Department of ITI went to CanNor during the wildfire evacuations to seek their support to enhance the funding that would be available under this envelope. They were successful. This is where that brings us to today. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to the Member from YK Centre.

MR. HAWKINS: No, I'm okay, Mr. Chairman. I just was just trying to follow the money. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Is there any further questions from Members? I don't see none, I'm going to -- Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 4, 2023-2024, Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment, economic diversification and business support, not previously authorized \$1,308,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Supplementary estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 4, 2023-2024, Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment, mineral and petroleum resources, not previously authorized \$127,000. Is there any questions? None. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 4, 2023-2024, Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment, total department, not previously authorized \$1,435,000. Is there any questions? Don't see any, does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Committee, we will now consider the Department of Infrastructure on page 11.

Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 4, 2023-2024, Department of Infrastructure, assets management, not previously authorized \$6,128,000. Is there any questions? So I'm going to go to the Member from Great Slave.

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Can the Minister please tell committee how much is partially offset by CIRNAC? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'll go to the Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. At this stage, there's \$3 million that's coming from CIRNAC to support phase one of this work. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Go to the Member of Great Slave.

MS. REID: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Any further questions? None. I'll read it out again.

Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 4, 2023-2024, Department of Infrastructure, assets and management, not previously authorized \$6,128,000. I didn't see you. Member from YK North.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So this is the harbour restoration. My understanding is that this work has been the first phase of harbour restoration, which implies more phases to come in the future. Is there an estimate of what upcoming costs will be for future phases of this project? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Go to Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So phase one is opening up really what was a bit of an emergency level or emergency sized channel for first year. That would help get the barge traffic moving again. So it's been many years that there has not been an adequate level of support for the harbour. Back in 2012, Public Works and Services of Canada was actually providing a lot more support so that their own kibscar facility vessels could actually maneuver as well as Department of Fisheries and Oceans. That stopped, and then as a result, the harbour built back up. So it became a bit of an emergency, and that was what was phase one. But phase two is to remove remaining build-up materials over four years in order to support the longevity of the harbour. The total project estimate at this time that I have is just other \$13 million with some additional supports anticipated by CIRNAC. But, you know, again, at this point, for 2024-2025, we'll see what -- where that may land us. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'll go to the Member from YK North.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just to wrap up on that one, I just want to emphasize how important I think it is to plan ahead and ensure we have proper funding to do these projects when they need to be done and not wait until something is in an emergency state before we, you know, try to fix it and we're always behind the 8 ball and usually things cost more at that point and have become more dire. So I'm hopeful in the case of this project that we will get ahead of it and plan ahead and do what needs to be done to ensure the harbour is restored. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'll take that as a comment. I'm going to continue on. Is there any further questions? Member from the Sahtu.

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. And thanks to my colleague there from Yellowknife North for asking the same questions here. I'm living downstream so I'm a little bit behind. So I'm glad my colleague's raising the same questions. I am concern is very important to the sailing seasons coming up. And I'm extremely glad that there's a multiyear program in place here to continue dredging and restoration of the harbour. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I take that as a comment. Any further questions? Don't see none, I'll continue on.

Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 4, 2023-2024, Department of Infrastructure, assets management not previously authorized \$6,128,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Supplementary estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 4, 2023-2024, Department of Infrastructure, programs and services not previously authorized \$22,527,000. Is there any questions? Seeing none. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Okay, I'm going to go to the Member from YK North.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So just on the Marine Transportation Services, obviously this is kind of an eyepopping number here, \$14.4 million deficit or even more deficit than was already expected. I understand that this is due to a low water year. But can the Minister give us some assurance that there will be steps taken to avoid these levels of deficit in the future.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I happen to have it on authority that the Minister of Infrastructure is trying to arrange a briefing on MTS for committee and probably well deserved. It's certainly -- yes, the low water was certainly an impact, but that certainly isn't the only challenge that MTS has seen. They have struggled to find their footing since the end of NTCF for NTCL, so it is certainly not one that I want to minimize the ease by which there can be a path forward to sort of a more fiscally sustainable way. There's -- the forest fires also had an impact because, of course, the head office and main facilities for MTS are located in Hay River, and they were subject to the evacuations and, indeed, right at a critical time. That also impacted what occurred in the last year. So a number of different reasons and a number of different events.

I can say that with respect to 2024, it is expected or at least hoped that there's been some strategic planning around the loads, around the harbour restoration, and that with that, that should support a season that does not see this kind of need late in the season for support. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member for YK North.

MS. MORGAN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So I appreciate that information the Minister was able to give, and I look forward to more indepth discussion at our committee meeting. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from Sahtu.

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. This is more of a comment than a question. Having experience and I realize I could realize this amount here for the simple fact that there's many challenges that we've seen and probably will see in the future. Just to give you an idea here, we were expecting freight, but it didn't arrive. Everybody got evacuated out. The point of contact was -- on behalf of MTS ended up down south. So anyways, operations carried on. And to give you an idea of the many challenges facing this company here, similar challenges are faced by the other barge carrier operating out of Fort Nelson with an office there in Fort Simpson. So having sent -- sent some freight and picked up some freight from Cooper Barging, we finally seen that company arrive in the Sahtu in August only to find out that they had forced an 82-year-old captain with the proper certifications to take out a retirement in Manitoba to operate the boat so they're in compliance with the regulations. So that's just some information as to the challenge in the past, and we're probably going to see more challenges in the future. So I can realize the deficit in this amount there. Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'll take that as a comment. Going to continue on. Member from Inuvik Boot Lake.

MR. RODGERS: Mr. Chair, my question -- sorry. Thank you, Mr. Chair. My question is, can the Minister provide the total business loss for MTS for the year 2023-2024?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going go to the Finance Minister.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, just trying to make sure I'm -- see if perhaps -- don't know that any of us have that right at the tip of our fingers, Mr. Chair. I just want to -- again, I mean, the fact that there's \$14 million -- \$14.4 million here is what is required at this point to bring it back. But I -- yes, I mean that -- so that -- I mean -- maybe I'm not -- maybe I'm not -- sorry, maybe I'm misunderstanding the question, Mr. Chair. So obviously compared to what the projected budget was, the projected deficit at this point is \$14.4 million. So is the question something other than that 14.4? Sorry, thank you.

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

MR. RODGERS: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chair. And sorry, I should have phrased that question a little better. Obviously, we're looking for the \$14.4 million. Is that the total loss for MTS this year, or is that in addition to -- is that an additional business loss for MTS this year?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes. Thank you. Sorry, that is -- that is the business loss. So MTS operates with a revolving fund and it gives flexibility to continue to run its operations without, you know -- yes, it gives it some flexibility within to run operations from within that revolving fund. Any losses to the revolving fund have to get covered. This reflects those losses. Thank you.

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

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Chair. And just a comment, perhaps it's time that the department as a government, we look at moving MTS to Inuvik or Tuktoyaktuk where perhaps that loss can turn into a profit. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you for your comment. I'm going to continue on. Any further questions? I'm going to go to the Member from Frame Lake.

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So I'd like to ask for a little bit more detail about the funds which are being reallocated under a low carbon economy leadership fund. Can the Minister describe the programs that fall under that, that \$8 million funding.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'll go to the Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. There's a fairly, I think, lengthy area of things that fall under this. So some of this is the GHG grant program, the commercial industrial greenhouse gas grant program are included within. Arctic Energy Alliance gets a significant amount of funding from the department through this allocation. Active carbon -- active forestry carbon sequestration is under this, which is something administered by the Department of Environment and Climate Change. And energy retrofits on ferries comes under this one as well. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from Frame Lake.

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So can the Minister just kind of describe the low carbon economy leadership fund itself kind of holistically; what it is, the time period that it extends through, and -- yeah, I'll start with that. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): To the Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So this comes in under the framework of -- from Environment and Climate Change Canada, the pan-Canadian framework on clean growth and climate change is meant to support different regions across Canada meeting GHG reduction targets, the 2016 Paris Agreement reduction targets. So these different funds are negotiated with all jurisdictions to provide funding towards that goal and specifically towards the goal of having projects that will help either generate economic growth that is under a clean growth envelope and/or projects that help reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'll go to the Member of Frame Lake.

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Does the fund have time constraints on it? Is it something that we receive money for every year, or is it coming to an end at some point? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'll go to the Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So the original agreement came into effect in August of 2018 under which there was expected \$31.2 million over the course of four years. There was a brief extension of that agreement which took us into 2023-2024, and that's being reflected here. I can say that the Department of Infrastructure is currently engaged with Environment and Climate Change Canada towards determining what the next form of funding might look like. And to my latest estimate, or my latest information up to today -- or up to a couple of days ago anyways, was that we had not yet finalized an agreement for 2024-2025 but nor had any other jurisdictions in Canada. Thank you.

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

MR. MORSE: So, you know, it's kind of stating the obvious, I suppose, that the next fiscal year is really just a month away. Does the Minister

expect that this funding is going to be secured before that time?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: That was an excellent question, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, that certainly obviously doesn't relate to the sup, and I'm speaking at this point really with the Department of Infrastructure hat on. It's been brought to my attention that it's a concern at this point. This is an area where we provide a significant amount of funding to the -- you know, exactly as was asked earlier, Arctic Energy Alliance for instance, as well as other initiatives. So, you know, at this point we are still expecting that some new tranche of funding will be negotiated but, again, at this moment in time I don't have that. So, yes, am I worried? I will certainly be following up. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from Frame Lake.

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. And I know there's lots of people in our community who access the programs that Arctic Energy Alliance has put in place under this funding and would be concerned to hear that it might be -- that there's difficulties obtaining funding to keep it going. So I would appreciate if the Minister would keep us in the loop about that.

Just back to the funding itself, the total was -- I believe the Minister said \$31.2 million. So have we managed to spend the entirety of that amount within the required time under the funding agreement?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So some of these programs are application-based which -- so it depends on the amount of applications received and also can depend upon when work is done, which would then affect when the money is disbursed. So as far as -- just to ensure -- and also I'm sorry, I should also note that some of the individual areas where the funding is allocated are -- do permit to have carryovers. So I will need to just double check to see if, in fact, it is all expended. It looks that it has been, Mr. Chair. And if I am incorrect in that, I will certainly correct that at the earliest opportunity. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from Frame Lake.

MR. MORSE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes, I would appreciate hearing back from the

Minister. And just I guess the clarification I'd like is if it hasn't been fully spent, the question of course is are we going to have the opportunity to spend it, or does the funding simply lapse on April 1st? Thank you, Mr. Chair. I think that's going to be a question for the future. It's probably not one the Minister can answer now. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Take that as a comment. I'm going to move on to Member from Great Slave.

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate the Minister's offer and/or commitment to meet with committee around Marine Transportation Services. Quickly, can she speak to, since this isn't her portfolio, if whether the department is working with ECC on water level monitoring and projections for the coming year? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Go to Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I do believe that the Department of Infrastructure and ECC do work together in terms of having hydrologists. In fact, I'm certain they do. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Okay. Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from Great Slave.

MS. REID: I'll wait for the briefing. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Any further comments? Questions? Okay, thank you. I'm going to continue on.

Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 4, 2023-2024, Department of Infrastructure, programs and services, not previously authorized \$22,527,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 4, 2023-2024, Department of Infrastructure, total department, not previously authorized \$28,655,000. Is there any questions? Seeing none. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Committee, we will now consider the Department of Justice on page 12.

Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 4, 2023-2024, Department

of Justice, community justice, not previously authorized \$524,000. Is there any questions? I don't see no questions. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Moving on. Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 4, 2023-2024, Department of Justice, policing services, not previously authorized \$841,000. Is there any questions? I'll go to the Member from Range Lake.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, can the Minister explain what this funding is for. Is it for staff positions, training programs? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So the First Nations-Inuit Policing Program Framework Agreement is a titles by the federal government and somewhat -- doesn't necessarily relate clearly. It provides funding for RCMP officer positions. In this case, it funds five RCMP officer positions. The agreement provides a different ratio of funding as between the GNWT and the federal government where under this agreement it is at a better ratio. It comes in at 52 percent to 48 percent Public Safety Canada and then GNWT. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): I'm going to go to the Member from Range Lake.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Chair. And is this part of the police services contract or a separate program? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So it's a separate agreement but it will then be otherwise subject to, you know, the other provisions. I mean, for instance, of when the RCMP negotiated their collective agreement, these RCMP officers are subject to that but this is separate -- a separate agreement from the usual -- or from the other funding agreement that we have for RCMP positions. Thank you.

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

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Chair. And where are these -- do we know where these

officers are located, or is that a G-division question? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So the -- I believe the new positions that we are going to have coming in -- sorry, let me just take -- actually, let hand it to Mr. Courtoreille, please.

MR. TERENCE COURTOREILLE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So in 2023-2024, there will be nine positions added as part of this program. Those positions would be located in Aklavik, Dettah, Fort Good Hope, Fort McPherson, Fort Simpson, two in Fort Smith, and one at the K'atlodeeche First Nation, and one in Whati. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you, Mr. Courtoreille. I'll go to the Member from Range Lake.

MR. TESTART: Thank you. That's more than I expected. I doubt you'll be able to answer this, but the Dettah -- I don't think there's a Dettah detachment. So that's probably a Yellowknife-based position that's there to service Dettah? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I think so.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go back to Member of Range Lake.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Is this kind of a one-time funding program, or is this something we can make further application to or expand upon given our -- I know we're over-policed per capita but it still seems like -- well, the residents that I speak to still have public safety concerns, significant ones. So this is an additional way to bolster our police services contract without expending our limited resources. It would be preferable to just paying more money. So is there more opportunity to expand this funding source so we can further expand our range of -- or our police presence in the community? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I do have some hopefully anticipated -- hopefully good news that in 2024-2025, we are expecting we will see in the main estimates an additional four positions coming under this program. Thank you.

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

MR. TESTART: Thank you. That's good news. I look forward to that and will have more to say then. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Nothing further.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from the Sahtu.

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. We all know there's an increasing drug crisis out in our communities and therefore requires more and more policing services and collaboration with concerned citizens and leaders. Is there further funding coming -- as you had mentioned there's four positions. Is there more funding in the area of joint Indigenous governments collaboration for policing strategy developments? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So under the First Nations Policing Framework Agreement, there's not -- there's a desire, if possible, to recruit Indigenous police officers. But aside from that, this particular funding agreement doesn't necessarily speak to alternative forms of policing or alternative community supports. It's outside the scope of the supplementary appropriation but I'd suggest the Member might be interested in looking at what's happening in Fort Liard right now where I think there is a community policing initiative underway. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Sahtu Member.

MR. McNEELY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. My other question is there -- is there a G-division agreement outside of this policing servicing? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes, there is another agreement that provides for RCMP services in the Northwest Territories. The single biggest difference is the cost ratio is 70/30 in favour of GNWT paying 70 percent and Public Service Canada 30. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go back to the Member from the Sahtu.

MR. McNEELY: Mr. Chair, I have no further questions. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to Member from Inuvik Boot Lake.

MR. RODGERS: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I'll be quick. I appreciate we're just about there.

Just for my colleague from Mackenzie Delta who is not here, and I know he'd probably have this question, would selection of where these officers go, and I assume that's done through G-division. I'm not sure if GNWT has any input into that, but there is no policing services in Tsiigehtchic and I'm sure he would bring that up as my colleague across the way reminded me. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, it is my understanding that the RCMP do the analysis and make the final determination on where officers should be located and what the operational needs are for those officers in those communities. For example, the example earlier of there being an officer based nominally in Yellowknife but assigned technically to Dettah or N'dilo. That said, Mr. Chair, I would note that there are community policing, again outside the scope of the supplementary appropriation, but there are community policing priorities that are issued every year that are prepared with the community and RCMP and the Department of Justice, and that may be somewhere that the Member or his colleague may want to start on that topic. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from Inuvik Boot Lake. No further -- Member from YK Centre.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just wanted to follow up ever so briefly on that. It looks like we're missing a -- the Minister may have said it, but we got Aklavik, Dettah, Fort Good Hope, two in Fort Smith, one KDFN, one for Whati, and one for Fort McPherson. That gives us eight. Did we miss one, or is it actually eight members? That's the first question.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. We'll go to Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: I just quickly counted, Mr. Chair. I've got two in Smith, one in Simpson, one in McPherson, one in Fort Good Hope, one in Dettah/N'dilo, one in Aklavik, and I think I missed one in Whati. And I came to nine. Okay. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to YK Centre.

MR. HAWKINS: Our scribbles on the House, Mr. Chairman, that didn't have the one with Fort Simpson. Now we all reconcile is nine on this and we're all on the same page.

If the Minister could just elaborate a little clearly -- further that is, the \$841,000 is for the 2023-2024 budget, if that represents five, and just to reaffirm the ratio of 52 to 48; I'm assuming we pay the 48? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I think I said five earlier so that may have been the source of some confusion. There are these nine. This is what this appropriation is for. This is required for the Department of Justice to fund the positions. This is our 48 percent. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you, I'm going to go to the Member from YK Centre.

MR. HAWKINS: It's okay. No, thank you, I think I understood it now. It's this \$841,000 is intended to pay our 48 percent of the overall funding for that fiscal year for the nine new members. And I'm seeing a nod. That's fine, okay.

That said, are these permanent positions, just to clarify moving forward? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: That's correct, Mr. Chair. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from YK Centre.

MR. HAWKINS: Are they currently staffed or anticipated to be staffed? I know it's this year fiscal money, but I also am aware it's very difficult to get boots on the ground in that industry considering the shortage, so I'm curious if they're actually in the position or are they anticipated to be funded for this fiscal year?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I can't say for sure. RCMP themselves do the recruiting out -- they are responsible for training obviously -- I shouldn't say obviously. They are responsible for the training. That does not happen here in the territory. And for then recruiting and for then determining the placement of officers. So I can't say for sure. We can try to find that out. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from YK Centre.

MR. HAWKINS: Okay. So these are permanent moving forward positions, and the Minister said she'd get back to us with respect to if they're currently staffed or not staffed in that sense.

The other aspect of questioning here is if we're staffing nine new positions, that's great. That said, how many have been requested? And I assume these are the nine that are proved moving forward. So how many in total have been requested? And obviously the difference is the number that weren't -- that aren't being funded. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'll go to the Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I'm, again, not aware of there being a denial but I certainly can't say that for sure as the supplementary appropriation comes forward for the one that are approved. So I don't have any information here on the sup as to things that weren't -- that aren't being put forward for a request. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from YK Centre.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. For the approval process, it would be nice to know because, I mean, the government brings forward what they decide to accept to fund but, you know, there's no input on the Members with respect to these types of things. So in other words, if the RCMP institution said we need, for example 18, and the government said we'll fund nine through partnership obviously, all we know is the nine that has been funded, and you're not hearing from the Members or input from the Members saying no, no, no, we would like to see the 18 because, for example, there might be more needed based on the needs prescribed by the RCMP, not Members. Again, Members aren't in this position of staffing or pointing out where RCMP people should go. But, you know, be excited to hear that those needs are being met. I mean, we are well aware of what happened today, or most of us are aware of what happened today in Tsiigehtchic, and we can understand the strain of the resources, you know, be it the support services in the regional centres. So that's why it's kind of nice to know what their request was and are we meeting their needs as well, which are the people of the Northwest Territories. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. That's probably an excellent question to raise during the business planning process when you'd have the Department of Justice in front of you there defending their decisions in terms of their annual appropriations and annual business plans. And I'll certainly convey to the Minister that that may be a question that they should be anticipating. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go back to YK Centre Member.

MR. HAWKINS: Is there any reason why the Minister of Justice couldn't answer that today considering he's literally a very good folded paper plane throws' away? I mean, I could, you know -- I mean, he's right in front of me. Is there any reason he couldn't answer that question?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): I think at this time we're just going to continue on with the questioning to the Minister on the subject line item. I'm going to go back to YK Centre. Do you have a question for the Minister of Finance? Thank you.

MR. HAWKINS: I think my question was is can she provide that information, then, if she's not willing to pass it on to the Minister? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): I'm going to go to the Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Yes, Mr. Chair, we'll certainly look into it and seeing if we can find out from the Department of Justice what the history of this ask is and whether or not there was any denials. Mr. Chair, it is a supplementary appropriation request, so I am trying -- having been admonished many times to stay within the boundaries of what the parameters are by the Speaker and now by yourself, I'm simply trying to think to the boundaries of the supplementary appropriation requests. But I made quite a lengthy number of commitments to give additional departmental operational information to Members, and I certainly can add this one in to determine whether or not there were any requests for more officers that were not agreed to by the Government of the Northwest Territories. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'll go back to YK Centre to the line item. Thank you.

MR. HAWKINS: I'll gladly accept that update. Thank you.

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

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I know lately we've been hearing lots from small communities. We know there's lots of addictions and lots of crime happening in many of the small communities. And I know that a lot of these communities do not have a detachment. Even in my region, Gameti and Wekweeti, they really need -- they want a detachment, and they've been talking about it for quite some time. I just want to know how did these community get -- got selected for -- to have nine positions allocated? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Yes, Members, just say thank you at the end so our tech people know.

I'm going to go to Minister of Finance. Thank you.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Again, it is the RCMP that determine the policing standards and that put forward their policing plans that then go to Department of Justice. They are the ones that would be driving the determination of need that then gets put forward for funding appropriations. Thank you.

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

MRS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Yes, well thank you. Thank you for that information. It's good to know because I think -- it's good information to know because I think now we know where to go if we're going to be -- to add two positions in one of the two communities that don't have a police detachment.

I just -- another one too is that -- okay, for next fiscal year, I think somebody did mention that if this is a one-time funding, is it a continuous funding for this program?

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, so in December of 2023, it was a nine-year agreement that was fully executed. So, you know, in that sense, can I say it's permanent I suppose not. It is nine years, though. So that's far into the future and certainly creates an expectation that -- and that includes these positions for -- the nine positions for 2023-2024 and the four additional ones for 2024-2025. Thank you.

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you. I'm going to go back to the Member from Monfwi. Any further questions? I don't see anything, any hands up.

Okay, Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 4, 2023-2024, Department

of Justice, justice policing services, not previously authorized \$841,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 4, 2023-2024, Department of Justice, total department, not previously authorized \$1,365,000. Is there any questions? Don't see no hands. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Committee, we will now consider Department of Municipal and Community Affairs on page 13.

Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 4, 2023-2024, Department of Municipal and Community Affairs, directorate, not previously authorized \$55,153,000. Is there any questions? There's a question. I'm going to go to the Member -- must be getting tired. From Great Slave.

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Chair. You'll learn my region eventually; it's fine.

Could the Minister please provide more detail about what this funding is comparative to the -- I assume it was the evacuations for flooding and fire? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. That assumptions is correct. There's an amount here reflecting the 2022 flood as well as an amount here reflecting the 2023 wildfires. They, just to be clear, don't include necessarily -- or they don't include the firefighting suppression costs that would have been incurred by ECC, which is part of a separate request we've seen. But this is for the emergency amounts that were incurred under, as I said, both 2022 and 2023 for those two events in MACA. Thank you.

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

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Could the Minister please delineate those two amounts for those two years of 2022 being flood and 2023 being fire? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'll go to Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So, Mr. Chair, in 2022, the -- well, the -- actually, these aren't the detailed I have

right in front of me here. Let me see, if I could just have a moment.

Sorry, so we're looking at breaking the amount down here that's before you, Mr. Chair. \$475,000 is the request that's still remaining under the 2022 flood. There's been a number of previous budgetary requests. I should back up for a moment and note that the department isn't -- they're not appropriate as a base budget in order to do disaster response and recovery because obviously historical, you know, events vary wildly. That's the nature of a disaster and of an emergency. So they're base-funded to support emergency response in terms of organizing the emergency work but not necessarily to respond to the individual event.

So as I was saying \$475,000 is helping to clean up what was remaining from 2022. 2023 wildfires, right now the request is at 45 -- 54,678,000 -- I'm getting tired too. 54 million -- \$54.6 million. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Okay. Thank you, I'm going to go back to the Member from Great Slave.

MS. REID: Thank you, Mr. Chair. And this is pretty -- an insignificant detail but when folks look at this in the public, it helps. So it's my understanding, then, that the emergency management organization sits on the directorate and that's what this funding is for? Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Yes, I believe that's correct. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'll go back to the Member of Great Slave.

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

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Any further question? Okay, thank you.

Continuing on, Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 4, 2023-2024, Department of Municipal and Community Affairs, directorate, not previously authorized \$55,153,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 4, 2023-2024, Department of Municipal and Community Affairs, total department, not previously authorized \$55,153,000. Is there any questions? Seeing no hands. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. Members, there is a schedule on page 14 to 16 that details that supplementary reserve impact. This schedule is not a voteable item and is included as information only. Are there any questions on the schedule? I'm going to go to Member from Range Lake.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, is the government compliant with its own Fiscal Responsibility Policy after -- sorry.

Okay, is the GNWT currently compliant with its own Fiscal Responsibility Policy after the impact of these supplementary appropriations given that the reserve is in significant deficit? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I mean, in this exact moment we are compliant, but depending on where the final numbers come in at the end of the fiscal year and all reconciliations and accountings are complete, if we are running a deficit there could become -- you do a complete calculation in terms of the available balance for the -- to provide for the 50 percent of capital funding. If the deficit becomes too significant, there is a risk that we would be offside of that in terms of not meeting the 50 percent. However, within that policy, there is a two-year timeline within which, if there is an occasion where we come offside of one of the provisions, not only that of providing for 50 percent capital but including if we were, for example, to go over on the percentage of interest, which we are not, but if there is one of those events that occur, that we have a two line -- two-year timeline within which to put ourselves back in compliance. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go back to the Member from Range Lake.

MR. TESTART: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chair. So are there any lessons learned about how the GNWT approaches the supplementary reserve given the volatility related to spending due to increased instances of natural disaster? Do we know -- I mean, all the -- everything -- we're thinking about this upcoming fire season, and presumably flood and perhaps famine and plague, it is going to be bad, so -- yeah, it's positively biblical. So if we're -- we know this is coming, are we adjusting how we budget our supplementary reserves to take into account that so we're not in the situation where we're significantly depleting the supplementary reserve which, of

course, has an impact on how the government manages its debt and infrastructure spending as well? And with the changes that have been recently announced, that's going to be even more of a delicate subject with 100 percent of funding having to come from operational surpluses. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'll now go to the Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Well, that's a dark note on which to end the evening, Mr. Chair. So we don't -- the supplementary reserve is a tool by which the budgeting process is meant to look at having some additional funding available for the emergent expenses. You know, more like the contracts that get signed off cycle and for which there may be a contribution component, you know, things that emerge, opportunities that come up where the department might need to, you know, expend funds beyond, you know, the deficit of the MTS for instance. It's really not meant as an emergency fund per se. So I'm conscious of the point being made that this is speaking to whether or not we have the fiscal capacity to plan for an emergency response, and I would agree that there needs to be fiscal capacity to deal with an emergency response. I can say back with COVID, we did increase the sup reserve significantly during COVID because of the extraordinary nature of that and the known -- the fact that it was known going into that second year that there would be those overages, but while it may well be that this coming summer season is biblical, it may well be that it's not quite such a tone and that it may be something lesser. So, again, the sup reserve is meant to be the tool. It's not meant to be something that departments can count on. It's not meant to encourage departments to come back. It's -- it really is supposed to reflect our fiscal capacity. And it hasn't increased since 2019-2020 when it went from 20 to 35 because our capacity hasn't increased, which, again, is not to say that we wouldn't necessarily need more fiscal capacity in the form of an operating surplus from which we could draw emergencies. So that -- we were projecting \$178 million in an operating surplus back at the beginning of the 2023-2024 season. Obviously that gotten eaten up over the course of the summer, but that's where we found that cushion was within that kind of fiscal planning. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go back to the Member from Range Lake.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Well, luckily, the night is always darkest before the dawn. So I'm hoping that we can, you know,

move forward from tough times into brighter ones. But I think maybe the Minister can do the public a service as well because I think during the evac circumstances, there was a lot of discussion around like depleting the operational surplus which left the government broke, for lack of a better word, and so can we draw a distinction between the supplementary reserve and the operational surplus and why they are relevant to one another but not intrinsically linked or the same thing? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Yes, I'm going to go to Minister of Finance. Thank you.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. And thank you for that question. So the supplementary reserve is something in the operations budget that gives \$35 million available for those unexpected things that come through as part of the supplementary appropriations process. And as I mentioned earlier, there are roughly four supplementary appropriations processes that go on through the year. So it's fully expected that we will have sups or supplementary appropriations. That's normal. Not everything happens neatly in, you know, say in advance of the February budget cycle. But at the same time, you want to make an effort as a government to plan these things out so that we aren't having to come back. So keeping it at \$35 million over the last few years, again barring the COVID event, is meant to reflect, you know, that this isn't meant to just be a slush fund. It should be something that has -- and it does have specific parameters in the financial administration manual about when the departments can come back.

The operating surplus in the main estimates, that is where we budget an amount that allows a surplus not as an overall surplus. There's still the department -- or the Government of the Northwest Territories is still running a debt, but it gives us the ability to pay for the capital plan, so -- and part of what we're hoping to do now is actually use that budget in a way that we can spend 100 percent of our dollars to pay for our capital plan rather than 50 percent, which is what's in the Fiscal Responsibility Policy.

When we went into the summer season and expended all the money that we had to support the wildfires, that came from the operating surplus. That's where that money was kind of coming out of. And we are now looking at, having gone through that, puts us either at zero or at a slight bit of a deficit. Pretty common for governments to run deficit budgets overall. We just typically hadn't done that. That's not normally how we do it. But that is quite common that governments obviously can run deficit budgets. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Thank you. I'm going to go to the Member from Range Lake. Is there any further questions in.

MR. TESTART: Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's been a pleasure engaging with the witnesses. Nothing further.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Is there any further questions? Seeing no further questions. As this is not a voteable item, we will continue on.

Committee, do you agree that you have concluded consideration of Tabled Document 29-20(1), Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 4, 2023-2024? I'd like to call on Member from Inuvik Boot Lake.

MR. RODGERS: Mr. Chair, I move that the chair rise and report progress. No, no, no, not yet -- sorry if I did that out. Apologies. Apologies. Apologies. Withdraw, withdraw, withdraw. Apologies, I thought I did the committee motion outside of -- Mr. Chair, apologies.

COMMITTEE MOTION 3-20(1):
CONCURRENCE MOTION - TABLED
DOCUMENT 29-20(1): SUPPLEMENTARY
ESTIMATES (OPERATIONS
EXPENDITURES), NO. 4, 2023-2024,
CARRIED

I move that consideration of Tabled Document 29-20(1), Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 4, 2023-2024, be now concluded and that the Tabled Document 29-20(1) be reported and recommended as ready for further consideration in formal session through the form of an appropriation bill. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Edjericon): Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried. Tabled Document 29-20(1) will be reported as ready for consideration in the formal session through the form of an appropriation bill.

---Carried

Thank you, Minister, and thank you to the witnesses for appearing before us, and thank you to all the Members for participating in this process. Thank you. Go to Inuvik Boot Lake.

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

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

---Carried

I will now rise and report progress.

Report of Committee of the Whole

MR. EDJERICON: Mr. Speaker, your committee has been considering Tabled Document 29-20(1) and would like to report progress and passed one motion and that consideration of Tabled Document 29-20(1) is concluded, and the House concurred on those estimates and that an appropriation bill to be based thereon be introduced without delay. And, Mr. Speaker, I move that the report of the Committee of the Whole be concurred with. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Do I have a seconder for the report of the Committee of the Whole? Member from Yellowknife South. The motion is in order and non-debatable. All those in favour? All those opposed? All those abstaining? Motion has been carried and the report of Committee of the Whole has been concurred with. Good job, Minister of Finance.

Third reading of bills. Minister of Finance.

Third Reading of Bills

BILL 5:
SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION ACT,
INFRASTRUCTURE EXPENDITURES, NO. 3,
2023-2024,
CARRIED

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Mr. Speaker, I thought I was done for the day.

Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Hay River North, that Bill 5, Supplementary Appropriation Act, Infrastructure Expenditures, No. 3, 2023-2024, be read for the third time. Mr. Speaker, I request a recorded vote. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The Minister has requested a recorded vote. All those in favour, please stand.

RECORDED VOTE

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland): The Member for Yellowknife South. The Member for Kam Lake. The Member for Hay River North. The Member for Hay River South. The Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes. The Member for Nunakput. The Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh. The Member for Sahtu. The

Member for Yellowknife Centre. The Member for Range Lake. The Member for Inuvik Boot Lake. The Member for Monfwi. The Member for Frame Lake. The Member for Great Slave. The Member for Yellowknife North. The Member for Thebacha.

MR. SPEAKER: All those abstaining, please stand.

The results of the recorded vote are 16 in favour, zero opposed, and zero abstaining. The motion is carried, and Bill 5 has had its third reading.

---Carried

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

Orders of the Day

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Orders of the day for Wednesday, February 28th, 2024, at 1:30 p.m.

1. Prayer
2. Ministers' Statements
3. Members' Statements
4. Returns to Oral Questions
 - Oral Question 62-20(1): Consultation with Members of the Legislative Assembly on Policies and Strategies
5. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery
6. Acknowledgements
7. Oral Questions
8. Written Questions
9. Returns to Written Questions
10. Replies to the Commissioner's Address
11. Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills
12. Reports of Standing and Special Committees
13. Petitions
14. Tabling of Documents
15. Notices of Motion
16. Motions
 - Motion 20-20(1): Affirming Housing as a Human Right

- Motion 21-20(1): Taking Action to Address Housing as Human Right
17. Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills
 - ” 18. First Reading of Bills
 19. Second Reading of Bills
 - Bill 3: Carbon Tax Repeal Act
 20. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters
 - Minister's Statement 4-20(1): 2023 Wildfire Season Review and Planning for the 2024 Season
 - Minister's Statement 5-20(1): Emergency Management Preparation
 - Minister's Statement 17-20(1): Reaching Average \$10 a day Child Care in the NWT
 - Minister's Statement 24-20(1): Health Human Resources Recruitment and Retention
 21. Report of Committee of the Whole
 22. Third Reading of Bills
 23. Orders of the Day

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. This House stands adjourned until Wednesday, February 28th, 2024, at 1:30 p.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 7:55 p.m.

