

HANSARD
UNEDITED TRANSCRIPT
MONDAY, MARCH 16, 2020
YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

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YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**Monday, March 16, 2020****MEMBERS PRESENT**

Hon. Frederick Blake Jr, Hon. Paulie Chinna, Ms. Cleveland, Hon. Caroline Cochrane, Ms. Green, Mr. Jacobson, Mr. Johnson, Mr. Lafferty, Mr. Norn, Mr. O'Reilly, Ms. Semmler, Hon. R.J. Simpson, Mr. Rocky Simpson, Hon. Diane Thom, Hon. Shane Thompson, Hon. Caroline Wawzonek

The House met at 10:03 a.m.

Prayer

---Prayer

SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE (Hon. Frederick Blake Jr): Colleagues, thank you for being here today. We were scheduled for an extended adjournment on Friday of last week, and I know that we were all looking forward to returning to our constituencies over the weekend.

On Friday, I took the unusual step of recalling the House to sit today. This was not a decision that I made hastily, but with careful consideration following my discussions with the Executive Council and Members of the Legislative Assembly.

The situation we are currently facing with the COVID-19 virus is very fluid. Each and every day we learn more about this virus.

Colleagues, following the passage of an interim appropriation bill today, this House will adjourn until May 26th, or an earlier date to be determined later, to complete the review of the government's proposed budget and continue the work of this House. This recess will free up government resources and personnel to focus on preparing for and responding to the potential spread of COVID-19 to the Northwest Territories. It will also help ensure that we do not expose Members, staff, Pages, and interpreters to unnecessary risk. I remain steadfast in my belief that this is in the best interest of all residents of the Northwest Territories.

Now, Colleagues, it is my duty to advise the House that I have received the following message from the Commissioner of the Northwest Territories. It reads:

Dear Mr. Speaker, I wish to advise that I recommend to the Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories the passage of:

- Interim Appropriation Act (Operations Expenditures) 2020-2021

During the 2nd Session of the 19th Legislative Assembly. Yours Truly, Margret M. Thom, Commissioner.

Thank you, colleagues. Item 2, Ministers' statements. Honourable Premier.

Ministers' Statements

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 38-19(2): COVID-19 PREPAREDNESS

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the Members of this Assembly for taking the step of suspending its current sitting after today to allow Cabinet and the public service greater opportunity to prepare for the spread of the COVID-19 virus. Although there remains no reported cases in the NWT, our government continues to prepare for the impact of this pandemic. Hour to hour, we are monitoring the state of the COVID-19 situation as it continues to evolve. I want to share with this Assembly some of the actions and planning that is under way.

Our health system has been preparing over the last few months, as the concern over this new virus became known. This planning has included securing additional supplies and preparing staff and facilities to respond to an outbreak. Our health officials have also been working with our partners, including the Government of Canada and the Public Health Agency of Canada, to stay current with the most recent information and recommendations about this disease.

Of these discussions, our Chief Public Health Officer has been working tirelessly with her colleagues to provide the best available advice to officials and the public about how to identify and care for those infected and prevent the spread of this disease. One thing we know is that we can slow the spread of COVID-19 and mitigate its impact on our communities if everyone follows the advice of our Chief Public Health Officer and takes the necessary precautions to protect themselves and most importantly to safeguard those who may be more vulnerable, including our elders.

We are fortunate that our healthcare system has not yet had to face any confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the NWT, but we know that this virus is spreading and we all need to take personal steps to slow down the spread of this illness. By slowing the rate of infection, our health system will be better able to effectively respond to this pandemic.

On Friday, our Health and Social Services Minister thanked our many healthcare professionals for their dedication and service and, Mr. Speaker, on behalf of all of us here in this Assembly, and on behalf of the people of the Northwest Territories, I also want to thank them for their efforts to look after us all. We know their work will become more challenging as the COVID-19 virus continues to spread.

Over the weekend, we have also taken the extraordinary step of asking our healthcare professionals to avoid any unnecessary travel outside of the Northwest Territories. This will prevent exposure and help avoid the potential requirements for isolation and will require that the NWT health system can maintain as much operational readiness as possible to manage the spread of this disease.

Mr. Speaker, work to prepare for a COVID-19 pandemic in the Northwest Territories began even before the World Health Organization declared one. In addition to the measures our health system has put in place to identify, prevent, and control the spread of infectious disease, our government also has dedicated resources and procedures to manage emergencies.

Our Department of Municipal and Community Affairs includes the Emergency Management Organization established under the Emergency Management Act. Its role is, in part, to lead the Government of the Northwest Territories in the coordination of emergency management activities, support emergency management activities of local authorities, and coordinate and assist in the response of governments and public agencies. The head of the Emergency Management Office also chairs the Territorial Planning Committee, which works with community governments and other key partners to ensure readiness and to respond to emergencies.

Again, although we have yet to face a confirmed case of COVID-19 in the Northwest Territories, we have taken the proactive step of activating an Emergency Operations Centre under MACA's leadership, as of March 13, 2020, and work will continue to assist all communities in the Northwest Territories to help prevent or manage any COVID-19 outbreak.

Mr. Speaker, later this week, I will be convening a virtual meeting with community governments and Indigenous governments to share the latest information we have on our readiness and our plans. We will continue to meet regularly with them to work together to eliminate any gaps in our plans and to support our efforts.

We know that many communities and jurisdictions in Canada and throughout the world have made the decision to temporarily close schools as result of the pandemic. The Minister of Education, Culture and Employment has consulted with the Chief Public Health Officer on this and has received the advice today to close NWT schools until after Easter. Later today, the Minister will be convening a teleconference with all district education authorities to discuss this direction and how best to support school teachers, staff, and students as they return from spring break travel.

Mr. Speaker, as we prepare for this pandemic, the health and safety of our people is paramount. Every Government of the Northwest Territories department and agency has been tasked with identifying and planning for the continuation of essential services. If a large number of our employees are required to self-isolate to prevent the further spread of the virus, we know that government services may face a significant disruption. It is critical that key services remain supported, and we are taking the proper steps to deal with a scenario where we have dramatically fewer available employees.

All departments and agencies have been updating their business continuity plans, and later this week these plans will be finalized and validated with tabletop exercises to ensure potential gaps have been identified and can be addressed. We know that the work of our government touches upon the lives of the people we serve in important ways and that we need to make sure that there is as little disruption as possible should we find that many of our employees have to be isolated to care for themselves or others. Our planning will also consider how best to manage the NWT supply chain to

help ensure that residents and businesses continue to receive essential services.

Mr. Speaker, it is important to state again that the NWT has no reported cases of COVID-19 and that the risk of contracting the disease in the NWT remains low today. This does not mean that we can rest easy. We must be prepared to take preventative actions now.

In recent days, we have seen many jurisdictions implement new measures in response to having the virus already spreading within their borders. We have the ability to take measures sooner than others, to better manage the risk. This will mean some disruption in travel for residents coming home, who will need to self-isolate, and tourists, who will have to postpone their visits the NWT.

It is critically important that all residents of and visitors to the NWT take precautions and follow the advice of our Chief Public Health Officer. As our preparations continue, it is also critical that our community partners work with MACA's Emergency Operations Centre to ensure plans are in place and that every effort is made to minimize the risk and manage the impacts of this pandemic.

We are implementing the best approaches available to slow and manage the spread of COVID-19. While we must not panic, we do have to take precautions.

I want to thank all residents of the Northwest Territories for their understanding as we direct more of the work of our government to managing this issue, we and acknowledge that some of this effort will necessarily come at the expense of other priorities. However, protecting our most vulnerable from this pandemic is our most important priority, and we are working closely with our service providers to develop plans.

Mr. Speaker, we know that the consequences of this pandemic are already having an impact on our economy and that many of our residents and businesses will need support. These concerns have been raised with the Prime Minister, and I am very encouraged that there is clearly recognition that new federal programs and investments will be required to protect our economy. Additional options to provide support to our residents and businesses are being actively considered.

Information on the spread of this new virus and knowledge of how best to manage its impacts have been changing rapidly. That is why we are working closely with our partners from across all jurisdictions to stay up to date on the latest information. We will be providing daily reports and have set up a single portal for more information at www.gov.nt.ca, and click on the "corona virus" feature box. This website is being updated as new information becomes available.

Mr. Speaker, we recognize that people are concerned, but I want to remind everyone that we can all take practical steps to help slow the spread of COVID-19 in our communities. We will continue to update our residents, our communities, and Indigenous government partners, and I strongly urge everyone to check our website frequently and heed the advice of the Chief Public Health Officer and our Emergency Management Office as we work together to safeguard our friends, families and our elders. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Honourable Premier. Ministers' statements. Minister of Health and Social Services.

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 39-19(2):
COVID-19 UPDATE

HON. DIANE THOM: Mr. Speaker, I would like to provide Members and the public with an update on Northwest Territories efforts in containing the spread of COVID-19 and assure everyone that their health and safety is the number one priority of our government.

Currently, we have zero cases confirmed in the Northwest Territories. Our Chief Public Health Officer remains confident our residents are currently at a low risk of infection. We also know that, world-wide, roughly 80 percent of people infected get only mild symptoms.

We are working very hard to slow the spread of the infection and know that everyone has a stake in doing their part. We have been promoting good respiratory practices. That means that you and your family members should stay home if you are sick and keep your distance from elders and people who may have underlying conditions that make them vulnerable to infection. Wash your hands frequently, turn and cover your mouth when coughing or sneezing with your elbow, and make sure that they are two metres apart in all social situations. This way, we can slow the spread together.

Mr. Speaker, the Chief Public Health Officer is leading our public health response planning while the GNWT's Territorial Planning Committee is leading the broader, all-of-government emergency response planning. Our health system's Emergency Operations Centre has been activated. This allows us to coordinate rapid COVID-19 system planning and preparation. A Northwest Territories COVID-19 Pandemic Planning Guide and Checklist is guiding our system preparations. We currently have a sufficient stockpile of personal protective equipment for frontline workers and will continue to track this. Community health centres and hospitals are completing their planning and preparations, and testing kits are in every community.

Mr. Speaker, NWT health professionals are testing residents and visitors for COVID-19 who present flu-like symptoms and who have travelled outside the NWT recently, regardless of where they have travelled. This action permits us to take prompt action should a positive COVID-19 case be confirmed. We began this enhanced testing before coronavirus was declared a pandemic, and this is helping us.

The Chief Public Health Officer issues regular public health alerts to frontline health professionals. These alerts reinforce the need for heightened awareness and the use of best practices for communicable disease control at the local level. Frontline staff and management are also ensuring protections and protocols are in place for workers and others within health facilities to reduce the spread of the virus in those settings.

The Chief Public Health Officer has communicated to all NWT schools and daycares, advising on travel outside the Northwest Territories, planned international travel, and general advice to prevent infection. These letters were sent to parents and caregivers and are being updated.

Long-term care facilities have been provided information on precautions, protections, and protocols from the Chief Public Health Officer via our health authorities, to all healthcare facilities and healthcare professionals. This advice includes following usual flu-season-visitors' hand-washing protocols and staying away if sick.

The Chief Public Health Officer is also assessing all mass gatherings to determine if they should proceed. Most large indoor events have been cancelled, and non-essential travel and attendance at conferences by GNWT employees has been suspended.

Over the weekend, the Chief Public Health Officer issued new advice to our residents, in keeping with the latest guidance from the federal government. We are strongly advising all travellers who have arrived or are arriving from international destinations to now self-isolate for 14 days. These measures are necessary to combat the spread of COVID-19 in our communities.

Mr. Speaker, I know there is a lot of uncertainty and anxiety among us all. There is no denying that COVID-19 is a significant challenge around the world and in the Northwest Territories, but it is important to remember that, by following advice and working together, we can manage this together.

The Chief Public Health Officer and the department are committed to providing residents with up-to-date information and will advise the public when confirmed cases have been identified in the Northwest Territories. They are using every available means to communicate with residents, in all official languages, to provide the most current information so you know what is going on and what you need to do.

Mr. Speaker, Northerners are known for their strength, resiliency, and strong sense of family and community. I know that it is those qualities that we can draw on to keep our communities and our territory healthy. Staying informed and following the advice provided by our health officials will help us all manage this unprecedented situation together.

Mr. Speaker, I want to speak directly to all of our healthcare workers across our system. Thank you for your hard work and dedication in making sure we are in the best place possible to respond to COVID-19. I recognize that there are many challenges ahead and know that you will continue to serve our residents, as you always have, with professionalism, compassion, and commitment.

For more information on COVID-19, please refer to the Government of the Northwest Territories website. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Ministers' statements. Item 3, Members' statements. Member for Kam Lake.

Members' Statements

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON WORKING TOGETHER TO CONTAIN COVID-19

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I stand today to first thank Health and Social Services Department and authorities staff for the endless hours they have put in to protect the North from COVID-19. In addition, I would like to thank the other departments that have worked all weekend long to ensure that we have plans in place and continuity of service. Second, I would also like to thank northern businesses who are doing their part to keep Northerners safe while trying to keep businesses running as normally as possible.

I say "normal," Mr. Speaker, but these are not normal times. While businesses and public places have changed the way they operate, closed their doors, increased cleaning routines, and offered to help in any way possible, we as Northerners are being asked to do things a little differently than what we are used to. We are being asked to self-quarantine if we have been away or have flu-like symptoms; to buy only what we need and not stockpile, since stockpiling is a privilege not everyone can afford; to support friends in quarantine by staying away and making sure they have what they need; to check on our elderly and friends with compromised immune systems; and to self-police. While healthcare professionals are giving us the information we need to contain this pandemic and protect Northerners from it, they will be working flat out. This means that ensuring we are sharing accurate information, responsibly following quarantine direction, and supporting one another will be up to all Northerners.

Mr. Speaker, I have said before that the North is an incredible place. Following devastating events like deaths of loved ones, car accidents, house fires, and plane crashes, I have watched Northerners pull together and wrap themselves around one another like a warm blanket. I call it "muskoxing," where we take our most vulnerable and rally around them, protecting them until they are ready to stand with us. In essence, this is no different. Now is when we come together to inform ourselves with accurate information, support one another, and be thankful to be part of this northern family. Not only am I thankful to the incredible dedication of public servants and businesses, I am thankful to Northerners because protecting ourselves will require the diligence and collaboration of every single one of us. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Kam Lake. Members' statements. Member for Hay River South.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON COVID-19 AND SUPPORT FOR COMMUNITY MEMBERS

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is times like this when we reflect on what it means to be healthy and to be safe, what it means to move freely throughout our communities, to move freely throughout our country and throughout the world.

It is times like this that we reflect on the what-ifs and the should-haves. It is our responsibility to always do the right thing. It is our responsibility to help our family, friends, and neighbours in these trying times. Most importantly, with the COVID-19 pandemic, it is everyone's responsibility to listen to the advice of our NWT Chief Public Health Officer and healthcare professionals and act on their advice. At times, we take things too lightly. We sometimes underestimate the circumstances. Sometimes information received from the Internet may get confused with the truth or fact,

something we want to avoid with COVID-19 or any other potentially deadly virus.

Mr. Speaker, along with our healthcare professionals, I know that our Chief Public Health Officer is working diligently to keep the residents of the NWT as safe as possible. It is the healthcare professionals and support workers who are the front line in this battle against COVID-19. We must make certain that they are afforded the time and resources required to effectively and efficiently carry out their duties. They do not need the additional stress of public chaos or panic. What they do require is our calm and support.

Mr. Speaker, the more support we provide to the healthcare professionals by not interfering in the work they are doing or generating unwanted fear, the earlier the action plan they have developed will be in place and the safer we will all be. We know the best-laid plans can change, and we must expect and welcome that change without criticism. Everything is moving quickly and being done in the best interests of our health.

Together, let us confront the situation the world is facing. Let us show respect, support, and applaud those on the front lines, the scientists, the medical officers, the doctors, the nurses, and all the support staff, something we never do enough and should do more of.

Mr. Speaker, I will not have questions for the Minister for health, as we need her out working and consulting with her department to ensure plans are in place to keep the NWT residents free from COVID-19. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON COVID-19 AND SUPPORT FOR TOURISM

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The coronavirus pandemic is swiftly moving and unpredictable. A little more than a month ago, I spoke about the effect of coronavirus on tourism in the NWT, based on the Chinese government directive to halt group travel. Now, travel by almost everyone in the northern hemisphere to almost anywhere in the world is not advised by public health officials. Of course, that includes travel to and from the NWT from outside of Canada. New arrivals will be asked to self-quarantine for two weeks.

Mr. Speaker, visitors are listening to the call to stay home. They have cancelled hotels and car rentals, especially in Yellowknife. Meanwhile there is less to do here as festival planners heed the call of social distancing and cancel their events. We are looking at significant losses to non-profits, such as the Snowking Festival and the Long John Jamboree, and to businesses of all sizes because of this disruption. There are indirect effects as well; a loss of business for day-tour operators, restaurants, and stores. Given what we know about this public health emergency, things are going to get worse before they get better.

Mr. Speaker, some tourism operators in the NWT are waving the white flag. They are worried whether their businesses will also become casualties of the pandemic. The chair of NWT Tourism is asking government for help. Among his requests is stimulus funding to help the tourism industry once the pandemic is over, support for employers

with staff using immigration programs to earn permanent residency status, and support for seasonal workers who earn most of their income in the summer.

Mr. Speaker, when I last raised this issue, a month ago, the Minister of Industry Tourism and Investment said it would be fall before she had a clear picture of the season. It is clear now that that response is totally inadequate. Last year, the NWT earned \$210 million in tourism revenue, with about a third of that coming from aurora tourism. Assistance to tour operators and efforts to market the NWT as a destination will have to kick in much sooner. I will have questions for the Premier. Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Yellowknife Centre. Members' statements. Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON COVID-19 AND WHAT IT MEANS TO SELF-ISOLATE

MS. SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Friday, I asked about what the plan is for our families and teachers returning to Inuvik after they've been out of the country, and we've gotten a lot of information over the weekend and from our Minister and from our Premier today. Thankfully, we do not have any confirmed cases in the NWT, but, like the Premier stated, it's not a matter of if it hits; it's a matter of when it hits. Already, we're starting to hear a lot of people who are nervous and scared.

One of the things that I've been wanting to talk about is what it means to self-isolate. It means to stay home and, if you go outside, be by yourself. It means to avoid having visitors or visiting anybody. You can have people drop off or deliver things that you may need. It means to keep your distance in your home if you have somebody in your home who is under self-isolation. This is very important. I will have questions later for the Minister to ensure that our elders and those who do not have Internet are being provided with all the information paper form and in the proper language, if needed, as well as providing information packages to the community and Indigenous governments to have the most current and recent information to provide their residents because, in the small communities, that's who people turn to.

Another question that has come up over and over again, and it was nice about the education part, so we know that the schools are closed, but what about the daycares? We have concerns from my community about the daycares. Mr. Speaker, March and April is Jamboree season, also, in my region, and we are happy to get together after a long, dark winter. There are many events every evening over the next few weeks with 200 to 300 who will be gathering. Who is talking to these event coordinators, and has the Chief Public Health Officer reached out to them, and what is the recommendation for these events? I'll be heading home tomorrow to be in my community for my community and, in order for me to provide up-to-date and accurate information, MLAs need each department involved updating us with pertinent information daily, even if it says "no changes today." Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes. Members' statements. Member for Nunakput.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
NUNAKPUT HIGH WIND AND POWER OUTAGES

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This weekend, starting Saturday night, 10:00 o'clock, I got a call: winds are hitting at 108 kilometres in my home community of Tuktoyaktuk, and we had a blow of the same weather up in Sachs Harbour. I put a note yesterday, I was so happy that the power was back on in my home community of Tuktoyaktuk and in Sachs Harbour, too; it was restored yesterday. Even waiting for the weather to improve and the delays that we had, we all pulled together through as a community, and a big thank you to my mayor, Erwin Elias. A special thank you to our Minister responsible for the NWT Power Corporation, Mr. Thompson; staff Richard Cockney who drove out to the plant from the community at 100-kilometre winds with a snowmobile to try to get the plant up and running for the community. Thank you, Richard, and Mason, and the line crew, when they did arrive into the community. I'd also like to thank Meeka Steen for text messages.

I'd like to thank the DEA chair, Darlene Gruben, who I called at 1:30 in the morning to see if we could get the school opened up, which they gladly did, and they were starting to help people at the Mangilaluk School starting at 8:00 in the morning. Thank you, Ephraim Warren, the principal; Audrey Walker, for cooking for the people. The EGT workers who opened up the runway; Gus Gruben, Kenny Lucas, and Doug Saunders, for getting the runway open, and thank Fraser Pingo at Alkak Air for the work that you did yesterday.

I'd also like to thank Mr. Marius Driscoll of Tuktoyaktuk Stanton; the Hamlet of Tuktoyaktuk staff; Davey Krengnektak, Wayne Cockney, and Bruce Noksana. I'd like to thank, for free transportation, Tuk Taxi, Eileen Jacobson, who provided rides to the community, and also Steen Services, Joanne Edwards-Steen, who gave free rides, as well, to and from the shelter. They needed, the community, the rides to get them to the emergency shelters. Also, a thank you to Noe Cockney, Mr. Speaker, our elders Roy Cockney, David Noksana, and the family members who helped in any way. Thank you for all they've done for our community, working together in a crisis that needed the school, anyone involved.

Together, they did this outstanding job. They cooked for over 200 people, Mr. Speaker, and I really want to thank them for keeping them fed and warm. They enjoyed each other's company, because I saw it on Facebook live. I'm really proud of all of them, the community pulling together for the safety of our people, especially with the time that is coming in front of us. I also want to thank my wife because, at 10:00 at night, I never slept until 6:00 Sunday, so we were up for 20-plus hours. I thank the Minister again for all the hard work he's done. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
COVID-19 RESPONSE PLANS IN THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

MR. NORN: Marsi cho, Mr. Speaker. I want to briefly address our government's

response to the COVID-19 pandemic. We've seen a lot of good information from our Minister of Health and Social Services and the Chief Public Health Officer. They've been working really hard, lately, and I want to say thank you for that. However, I believe that is still a need for more preparatory work. My main worry right now, Mr. Speaker, is for our small communities. Many of our small communities don't have the resources, services, or capacity if the pandemic gets into the NWT.

Mr. Speaker, today we will be looking at passing our interim appropriation that is necessary to have a functioning government in these trying times. This will really test our resolve, but, as some of the other Members have mentioned, we are a really strong collection of communities and we will get through this. We are being told to practice social distancing, we need to keep our vulnerable populations in mind. We still need to be compassionate, though, and help each other out while using common sense and best practices while doing so. I recently had a constituent who had a great idea to get care packages out for our elders and those with mobility restrictions if this crisis does carry out for a longer period of time, and I thought that was a great idea.

I also want to address the issue of communications to some of our elders and those who don't use cell phones, computers, and the like, and social media, because we need to get the message out there for people in the Indigenous languages, so I'm hoping we can address that today. I know that a lot of our elders listen to community radio, CKLB, and they are really are dependent on it to get their news. Some of them are still not sure what's going on, and we need to really reach out to them and let them know that we care and we're doing something to assist them.

That being said, we are really strong as a territory, a network of communities. We've got through other scourges and other scares like this in the past, because we worked together, we communicated with each other, and this is no different. Marsi Cho, Mr. Speaker. I will have some questions for the Minister of Health and Social Services later on. Marsi cho.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Tu Nedhe-Willideh. Members' statements. Member for Frame Lake.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON FIVE-YEAR REVIEW OF THE MACKENZIE VALLEY RESOURCE MANAGEMENT ACT

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. I will confess, on the weekend, I was scrambling to try to find something to talk about today, and I have to go back to do my regular job as an MLA and hold the government accountable. One of the promises of devolution was that GNWT and it's peoples would have a made-in-the-North approach to resource development decisions and we would do things better than the federal government.

Currently, the Minister of Lands coordinates and signs off on full government responses to reports from the independent Mackenzie Valley Environmental Impact Review Board. Our Minister of Environment and Natural Resources is responsible for signing Class A water licences. There is a section in the devolution agreement, 3.18, that requires a

five-year review of the delegated authority to the GNWT under the Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act. The parties to the devolution agreement are to negotiate terms for the review of the delegated authority to GNWT. This may include a review by an independent third party mutually agreeable to everyone. This process was supposed to start on April 1, 2019.

GNWT has a mixed track record in terms of our performance with its delegated authority under the MVRMA, and I will give some examples:

- Cameron Hills and Cantung went into receivership under GNWT's watch without full and liquid financial security in place;
- The mandatory financial security provisions under the Commissioner's Land Act are to be replaced with discretionary measures under the Public Land Act.
- In an unprecedented move, a water licence amendment for Diavik was sent back to the Wek'eezhii Land and Water Board after the company wrote twice to the Minister after the closure of the public hearing;
- The infrastructure project manager on the Tlicho All-Season Road wrote to the Minister of Lands during the consult to modify process, stating that there would be no project if the review board's recommended measures were adopted;
- The review boards severely criticized GNWT's whole-of-government approach on the Tlicho All-Season Road environment assessment; and
- GNWT's project assessment policy continue to state that "technical advice and evidence provided to boards is in line with Cabinet direction."

While it's true GNWT has continued to learn and grow, we can and should be doing a much better job, Mr. Speaker, and I'll have questions later today for the Minister of Executive and Indigenous Affairs. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. Member for Frame Lake. Members' statements. Member for Yellowknife North.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON COVID-19 AND CAPACITY TO ADDRESS PANDEMIC

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the COVID-19 pandemic progresses, I think it's important to situate ourselves in the global context. We have seen what being unprepared looks like. We have seen the data from Italy, China, South Korea, the United States, and other jurisdictions in Canada. I think we all recognize that, in the Northwest Territories, we are fortunate that we are seeing this pandemic reach us last; however, we also recognize we are one of the most vulnerable jurisdictions.

Over the coming months, I'm sure we will hear the term "flatten the curve" multiple times. This refers to making sure that we can slow the pandemic to allow our healthcare system to respond. However, I would like to think about this more as a wave, Mr. Speaker. It's a wave that can potentially come crashing down on a healthcare system.

We have seen in Italy nurses who have tested positive for COVID-19 treating others. We have seen in the United States. Today, New York closed all its bars, its restaurants, its gymnasiums. It is banning public gatherings, Mr. Speaker. We are seeing the experts project an economic recession similar to 2008.

Nunavut's Baffin Island Mine has told its workers not to attend. It is likely we will see the same with our mines in due course. I think it's important that we all recognize this is not a normal state of affairs. There have been many jokes about the run on toilet paper and people not getting toilet paper, but we're also seeing a global run on medical supplies, including oxygen and ventilators.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's very important to recognize that we, the territorial government, do not have the resources to respond to a pandemic. Ultimately, we must be coordinating daily and working with the federal government to make sure that our healthcare system maintains capacity and builds capacity to address this pandemic.

Once again, I want to assure everyone to follow the advice of our public health officer and our professionals. It is important that we all remember the basic things like practising social distancing, washing your hands. This will take an entire territorial effort to make sure we can make sure that wave does not come crashing down on our healthcare system. I will have questions for the Premier in making sure that we are in connection with our federal government, and that Canada gets this pandemic right. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON COMMUNITY IMPACTS OF COVID-19

MR. LAFFERTY: Masi, Mr. Speaker. [Translation] We know that this is a very serious illness, the COVID-19. Even though it's not here yet, but it will eventually be here, so at this time what we're talking about, there are a lot of people who are tourists. Some people are overseas. Some people are coming from overseas. They still continue. When you talk about self-isolation, once they come here, will they be self-isolated. Not only that but, Mr. Speaker, we're talking about the elders. We want our elders to be really well taken care of, like in my community for the last two weeks, there's been two weeks off. The school has been shut down; not shut down, but spring break. The parents, once they go to Edmonton or wherever, once they get back, will they be self-isolated? Are we prepared for it? Now, we are hearing that they are going to shut the school down for a while. What about the seniors' homes? We want to make sure that our elders are well taken care of.

Mr. Speaker, not only that, but we have some mines in our community. We have three major diamond mines, and also a lot of our people who are working at the mine. They are at the mine for two weeks, and also home for two weeks. There are all kinds of mixtures of people, like Baffin Island Mine in Nunavut. This time, in Baffin Island, that mine is shut down, but our mines in our area are still running. It's something we should look into, Mr. Speaker.

The way to look at it, this COVID-19, before we get this epidemic, let's prepare ourselves and be proactive instead of reactive. Let's put a plan in place. At this time, there is no COVID-19 here now, and if we get the COVID-19, let's not do something.

Mr. Speaker, I'm just talking about the elders and also the kids who are in school, once the teachers come back from two weeks of holiday; and I also talk about the people who work in the mines. To me, I'm very concerned. A lot of my people or my constituents are phoning me on behalf of that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [Translation ends]

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Monfwi. Members' statements. Item 4, returns to oral questions. Item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery. Item 6, acknowledgements. Item 7, Oral questions. Member for Nunakput.

Oral Questions

QUESTION 211-19(2):

LINE REPAIRS AND POWER LIMITERS IN NUNAKPUT DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have questions today for the Minister responsible for the NWT Power Corporation on being proactive and not reactive, Mr. Speaker, in supporting our communities' action plan with regard to safety of lines, power lines that are in the communities that need to be redone before this COVID-19 our communities. Because I really worry about, if a blizzard hits and a lineman being sick and come to attend to our community, how do we fix that, Mr. Speaker? Will the Minister commit today to make sure that all the Nunakput communities, the line crews go in and then start working and making sure that the lines are properly fixed and ready for the next blizzard? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Nunakput. Minister responsible for the Northwest Territories Power Corporation.

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, I'd like to thank my colleague from Nunakput for actually phoning and working with me this past weekend to help his residents. He was very diligent in working for his residents. In regard to his concern, our staff have been out there working hard to make sure we had proper power installed, getting it back in place, and that we're also working to ensure it doesn't happen again, but with weather, we can't predict it. We are working with it, and there is a strategic plan moving forward to work with all residents of the Northwest Territories to ensure these things don't happen again.

MR. JACOBSON: I want to thank the Minister for that. In regard to the power limiters, no. Power limiters in our communities right now through this COVID-19 state of emergency in regard to our communities. Would the Minister commit today that we shut down all power limiters until we get through to May/June for our residents so they don't have to worry about it?

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: I apologize to my colleagues. I'm going to read this. It's going to be a little bit longer, but I just want to get the information out there.

The Power Corporation recognizes many of our customers will be facing financial impacts by the effects of the COVID-19 virus. We will adjust our policy on load limiters and disconnect as follows:

- customers experiencing financial hardship and who are having difficulties in paying their power bills, NTPC will provide customers with the option to further bill payment or enter into a flexible payment plan without penalty; and
- NTPC will not, I repeat, will not disconnect any customers. NTPC will limit customers who are in arrears but will adjust the approach to acknowledge that the current challenge exists.

Our limited policy will be adjusted as follows:

- If people haven't gone in and set up payment plans in the communities with smart meters, our load limit policy will be changed from 15 minutes on / 15 minutes off to 15 minutes on / 5 minutes off to ensure the homes are safe and kept warm;
- In communities that have manual meters, consumers may exceed the 15 amps usage will continue to have their powers undisturbed until the meter is manually reset. The meters can be reset by the customers; and
- If COVID-19 is identified in the community, all limiters, and I repeat, all limiters, will be removed until the pandemic declaration is over.

MR. JACOBSON: I'm encouraged to hear that. You know, it's coming. I'm really worried about our communities, our elders, people who we represent in our communities, because we know all of them. I really think that we really should think about this, from now until June, take all limiters off. The Minister could make that happen. Would the Minister commit to me today to getting that done?

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: I can't make that commitment. The commitment we've made is we'll reach out and work with these individuals to come up with payment plans. If they've fallen in payment plans, limiters will not be installed. If people don't come up with payment plans, then we will install the new process of 15 minutes on / 5 minutes off, and then, for people who don't have smart meters, that have 15 amps, then they would have to reset manually. We are working with the residents; however, we also have to be diligent in us moving forward so I think this is a good option.

MR. SPEAKER: Final supplementary, Member for Nunakput.

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The payment plans, I guess, for all our riding of Nunakput would have to go through Inuvik because we don't have any Power Corporation offices and that would be basically for the whole Delta. Would the Minister provide numbers for the people for our ridings of the whole Beaufort Delta in regard to if they're in arrears with the power corporation, to make sure that his staff know in Inuvik that the payment plan will be signed, and they don't have to worry about it, so the limiters will be not put on? That's the worst thing that we need, because it's still cold weather back in the Delta and we don't need this. Would the Minister commit today to making sure that happens?

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: I'm willing to work with all colleagues to get this information out there in the Beaufort-Delta. He's explained that it's through Inuvik. We will make sure numbers are given to his constituents who are in arrears, are having these challenges, and as well as other Members should they wish this information. I will make sure we get that information to him as soon as the end of this day. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Oral questions. Member for Yellowknife Centre.

QUESTION 212-19(2):
IMPACT OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON TOURISM

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Premier. A month is obviously a long time in the life of the coronavirus outbreak. It has now become a pandemic and there are more cases in Europe than China. Can the Minister update us now on the impact of the coronavirus health crisis on the tourism industry in the NWT? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Yellowknife Centre. Honourable Premier.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't have current statistics on where, exactly, the tourism industry is within the Northwest Territories; however, it doesn't take very much research to look outside our doors and see that the numbers are going down. There are two things that are happening. One, the numbers are going down, and the public is concerned that we still have tourists on our streets. I'd like to first of all say that all tourists have been asked to self-isolate when they come into Canada. We have brought up the concerns to the federal government in talking about international travel. It's really hard to self-isolate when people come into the NWT for one or two days. It is something that we're working on with the federal government and it will impact the tourism sector within the Northwest Territories and throughout Canada, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

MS. GREEN: I appreciate that response. The ITI Minister previously committed to more robust data collection about impacts. That's important, but it doesn't seem like the highest priority right now. My question is: what can the Premier do to support tourism operators who have had to cancel tours and lay off staff through this spring and summer?

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: We are concerned about our economy. We're concerned about all businesses in the NWT, including the tourism industry. Right now, at this time, like I said, we're waiting for the federal government. They are in charge of travel airlines. We are asking for them to actually confirm how they will ensure that our residents are safe with the amount of tourists, which does imply that we're asking them to support not having travellers come to the Northwest Territories internationally, as well.

It's already impacting. We've already got letters from the tourist industry. We've got letters from airlines. We've got letters from the business communities already. The economy is going to hurt. What I can say is that we have brought those concerns to the federal government. Concerns have been voiced from every jurisdiction across Canada.

Our federal government is looking for changes; they're looking at programs such as making adjustments to the EI that might be able to help people. At this time, all I can say is the federal government is aware of our concerns. They know that we're looking for some kind of economic stimulus, some kind of economic benefit for us, and they have promised to get back to us and they've promised to take the considerations of the whole territories into consideration.

MS. GREEN: I appreciate that answer. I see that the onus is really on the federal government to come up with some kind of contingency fund to assist not only tourism operators but also sectors of the economy that are currently hurting. What kind of responsibility does the GNWT have in this circumstance other than connecting with the federal government to come up with those contingency plans?

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: For businesses that are a little bit worried or need some extra assistance, they can contact our Department of ITI for assistance. We do have the Business Development Program that might be able to assist them in some long-term plans. We're looking at bumping up; we're working. Right now, the priority is on health and safety. I have to put that. Right now, we're scrambling to figure out how we're going to take care of our residents, our long-term care, our most vulnerable in society. At the same time, we're looking at the economic detriments, so we're looking at increase, probably, in Income Support, people on Income Support. Again, we're advocating to the federal government for EI. We're looking at tools and resources that will be able to help our industry. It's a day-to-day battle that we're facing right now, an hour-to-hour battle. Our officials, all of our Ministers, myself, we're all getting updated regularly every single day. Things are changing every day. All I can say is the federal government does know our needs and we're trying to work as best we can with our limited resources.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Honourable Premier. Final supplementary, Member for Yellowknife Centre.

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the Premier for that. I appreciate that the focus is on health and safety, but I think that there are people and businesses who are stressed about their livelihood because, the businesses they own or the businesses they work for, they don't necessarily have generous sick times or contingency plans to keep people going while they have to be off work for circumstances that are beyond their control. I would really urge the Premier to task the ITI staff with a recovery plan, to use those federal resources when they come through, to see if there is anything that can be repurposed in our budget that would help people to continue with their livelihoods. What I'm concerned about is that we will have the health crisis, and then we'll go into an economic crisis because of the health crisis. Can the Minister assure me that that kind of planning will take place? Thank you,

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: The Member is correct. Once the health crisis is done, whether we end up with a huge incidence of a number of residents with COVID-19 or not, this is going to impact our businesses in the Northwest Territories. It's not only the tourism business; it's all businesses that we are worried about at this point. We are working diligently within our departments and across jurisdictions with the federal government to come up with an economic plan. At this point, though, it would be

irresponsible for us to just start bailing out one or two businesses, because my instinct is telling me that more businesses will be impacted by this, so we need to make sure that we plan fully and that we have a comprehensive plan as we move forward. That is my commitment, that we're on this now and, as soon as we have some more information, we will be sharing that with the public and the business community. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Honourable Premier. Oral questions. Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes.

QUESTION 213-19(2):
COVID-19 PANDEMIC CLOSURES

MS. SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Minister of Health and Social Services. What has been done about daycares and day homes? Should they close, and what is the recommendation? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes. Minister of Health and Social Services.

HON. DIANE THOM: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Right now, our Chief Public Health Officer is busy. We're reaching out to the child development centres and to the elders' facilities. The Chief Public Health Officer is not currently advising closure of day homes or daycares. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. SEMMLER: Another question I have is: has someone reached out to the jamboree committees in the region about going ahead with their jamborees? If so, what was the recommendation, and if not, are they going to?

HON. DIANE THOM: Our Chief Public Health Officer has reached out to events coming up, and we do recommend that, for the next three months, all mass gatherings consider rescheduling or postponing.

MS. SEMMLER: I am just following up again. Is there a plan in place for essential healthcare staff? With the recommendation of schools being closed, is there a plan in place to have somewhere for these children to be if their parents are mandated in to work?

HON. DIANE THOM: As we sit in session, our Chief Public Health Officer is reaching out. There will be some announcements that will be made today that will impact everybody; parents, families, departments, everyone. We are currently working on a plan to reach out to the public.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Oral questions. Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes.

MS. SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just would like the Minister to ensure that this information is on our local radio stations and commit that paper copies are being made available to those communities and to elders and to anyone who needs them who doesn't have access. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. DIANE THOM: Communication is very important, especially at this time. Our

department is reaching out to work with translators as a response to the Member from Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh on the weekend. We are looking at recognizing the official languages to ensure that all Northerners have the most up-to-date information. We are working with translators to record public service announcements on COVID-19 that we have played on CKLB, CBC Radio, and other community radio stations. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 214-19(2):
ECONOMIC EFFECTS OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions, I think, will be for the Premier. The Prime Minister of Canada stated that no one should have to worry about paying rent, buying groceries, or finding childcare. I recommend that should also include not going without electricity in our northern communities, whether it's for five minutes, 10 minutes, or the day, during this time, and I would hope that the Minister responsible for the Power Corporation would stand up and take a stand on that. Also, we shouldn't be evicting people from their houses.

The Prime Minister also stated that the federal government is preparing a significant fiscal stimulus package in the coming days to help Canadians and businesses hit hardest by the coronavirus outbreak. The question I have is: when will the Premier know what types of additional resources the federal government will make available to the NWT to address financial issues that small businesses will face due to COVID-19? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Hay River South. Honourable Premier.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Finance has a call with the federal Finance Minister this afternoon, actually, to find out that information. We do know that the federal government has put aside a billion dollars already for health issues that there may be with COVID-19. However, our portion of that monies is just under \$600,000, if I remember correctly, and I have already said that that is not enough. We're dealing with the health issues, what he's looking at giving us now, and when the economy comes, my instinct is telling me that my first words will be, "That is not enough." Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: This government has a number of projects that will ultimately be impacted by COVID-19. These projects may be delayed for a number of reasons that include shortage of workers due to self-isolation, shortage of supplies from southern Canada, and other related reasons. Can the Premier or the Minister of Finance confirm how various departments will help small businesses address current government projects that may experience delays due to COVID-19?

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: I have already given direction to all of our departments to look at how we can support all of our residents in the Northwest Territories, including our business partners. ITI and Infrastructure are looking at how we can do the procurement, make sure that people are paid timely during this crisis, et cetera. All departments are looking at the influx of additional costs that are going to come. People

who are going to be laid off of work will be impacting our systems, so income support is on that. We have asked for every department to now do tabletop exercises to see how they will react if people get sick and we have a public outcry for services.

Again, we don't know until the federal government comes down and allocates what the economic support will be to the Northwest Territories. We do know that there will be a downturn in our economy. We know that there is a downturn in the economy happening across Canada, so we are trying to plan not only about the financial rest tuition of businesses; we are also trying to plan currently about how we keep our supply chain open. Those are questions that we're asking now. Again, looking at the economic stimulus, after the fact is a little bit premature when, right now, we're worried about the health of people and making sure that our groceries get into the Northwest Territories.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: We know that the departments have tools and legislation and policy that can assist small businesses. We don't have to go to the federal government; we don't need anything from them right now. What is this government doing with the tools that each department currently has to lessen the impact COVID-19 will have on small businesses?

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Those are some of the discussions we are having right now. That is why we have given direction for the departments to do the tabletop exercises. Like I said, we are looking at procurement practices, bill payments. We will also be looking at things like loans, et cetera, how we can make those easier for people.

Again, the federal government is also doing that work. They are looking at it. There have been no promises yet, is my understanding; however, they are looking at things. Can they pump money into business development agencies? Can they take money away from mortgages? Can they look at loans? Can they look at EI? All of those factors are being looked at by the federal government, and every jurisdiction across Canada is looking at how we can assist not only our residents but our businesses, and we are all working in partnership as we go forward. Daily conversations are happening, so that hopefully we are all in the same place, because we are all experiencing the same impacts by this to different degrees.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Honourable Premier. Final supplementary, Member for Hay River South.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wasn't sure what to ask on this last question, but listening to the Minister responsible for the NWT Power Corporation, I am pretty dismayed at his answer with respect to the limiters, because it is a small thing, but it means it is such a big thing.

I have a feeling that, if we are going to be, you know, nit-picking on that, we are going to be doing the same thing with evictions and housing, and both of those things have to be put aside, at least for the next few months. I would like to ask the Premier if she would commit to having a frank discussion with the Minister and with Cabinet to address these two issues? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Cabinet will be meeting every day throughout this duration. I should let everyone know that now, because we need to keep on top of this,

so I can commit, Mr. Speaker, that we will have conversations on the evictions, on the power rates, on the supply chains, all the impacts that will come to the residents of the Northwest Territories. I am not going to commit on what the solution will be. What I commit to is that we will have those discussions and we will be looking at the least impact possible relating to COVID-19. We cannot just shut down every collection, every business happening in the Northwest Territories, or every bill out of speculation, but we will be having those discussions. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Honourable Premier. Oral questions. Member for Kam Lake.

QUESTION 215-19(2):
COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND NORTHWEST TERRITORIES POST-SECONDARY
STUDENTS

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My questions today are for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. We have a lot of university students who are still in NWT residence who are currently living outside the Northwest Territories to attend post-secondary. I am wondering how the Minister of education and his department are communicating with students whose schools may have closed and gone to online courses and who want to come home? How are they communicating their options with them? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Kam Lake. Minister of Education, Culture and Employment.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is an ever-evolving situation. When I was looking at the news on Friday, it was changing right before my eyes. A few schools were closing their doors, but most were moving online, as the Member said, so classes aren't necessarily cancelled. Courses have moved online.

A lot of universities are also keeping their facilities, their resources open, like libraries, and so students might make the choice to stay down and finish their semester there because they need access to those types of resources. That being said, some who have the ability to complete their entire courses online might want to come back home. We haven't communicated that to them yet, seeing as how this happened over the weekend and everyone has been working full-out, but we will have that communication with them. Students who want to return home early, depending on the status of their post-secondary education, we will work with them to provide their travel home funds at an earlier date so they can get home. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. CLEVELAND: In the case where students are expected or end up coming home, because this is progressing quickly and we don't know where we are going to be at the end of the week, if students do end up coming home early, will the department of education be looking at what they can do for students in the event that students end up with an incomplete for the year but are still on the line for student loans?

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Like I said, it is still pretty early here, but if students make the decision to come home and complete their courses online, I would imagine they would be expected to complete their courses online; but, like I said, it is an evolving situation

and perhaps there are going to be situations where the online delivery doesn't quite work as well as it was expected, considering that some schools are throwing this together over the weekend. A mass of universities are trying to pull this off over the weekend. I am open to doing what we can to ensure people aren't adversely affected by this pandemic, but I can't make any guarantees at this point, given that things are still new and we have so little information.

MS. CLEVELAND: I appreciated the question from my colleague from Inuvik Twin Lakes in regard to daycares and day homes to the Minister of Health and Social Services, and I understand that it is the responsibility of the Chief Medical Health Officer to close day homes, but I received a concerned phone call yesterday from a constituent whose day home provider in a private residence was coming back from travel and not anticipating self-isolating in her home. In that case, how is the Department of Education, Culture and Employment communicating what it means to self-isolate and who is responsible for self-isolating to day home providers?

MR. R.J. SIMPSON: The communication about self-isolating and about the precautions that need to be taken has been happening, I believe, since January, was the first time that the department reached out, and I will ensure that those continue to happen. Similar to the schools, I don't have the authority to close day homes, as it is being done in other jurisdictions, but if there is a serious health concern, the Chief Public Health Officer likely has the ability to close that. If people do have concerns about what is going on, they should be bringing those forward.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Member for Kam Lake.

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In regard to the Premier's comments earlier today in regard to closing schools until after Easter, does that mean that the end of the school year for NWT students will move and will be prolonged a little bit more into the summer to make up that time? Thank you.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: What the Premier said was that I consulted with the Chief Public Health Officer and received advice to close NWT schools until after Easter. That is advice. I don't have the authority to close those schools.

I have a meeting today with the chairs of the DEAs and the DEC's, and they are the ones with that authority. Our recommendation will be to follow the advice of the chief medical officer, which is to close schools until after Easter. What that means, we are not sure yet. We will see where we are at that point and then re-evaluate, but there are a number of options on what can happen.

In the South Slave, they haven't had spring break yet. Perhaps they just don't have a spring break and they finish early. There are things like what happened in Alberta, where they cancelled school until basically next September, so it is still too early to know what is going on, but I can tell the Members of this House that it is my desire to continue educating children even in light of the physical closures of schools. I don't want to just abandon this school year. I want to ensure that our grads, people who can graduate, are able to graduate, and I want to ensure that we don't allow our students to fall further behind by just giving up on their education for the rest of this year.

What that looks like, I am not sure. The staff in the department have been working with the NWT Teachers' Association, have been working with the superintendents and the school boards to try and figure out how we can continue delivering education in light of these closures. That is where we are right now, and this recommendation came in a few hours ago, so the plans are still in the process of being made. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Oral questions. Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

QUESTION 216-19(2):
COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND SUPPORT FOR ELDERS

MR. NORN: Marsi cho, Mr. Speaker. Just listening to some of the questions out there; I want to thank my colleagues from Kam Lake and Inuvik Twin Lakes for asking the questions. I was scratching out questions as I went along, here, but I did have one main question for the Premier: will the Premier advise if we will be distributing care packages for elders and those with mobility restrictions? What I mean by "care packages" is basically just dry goods, food, and supplies for elders, because it looks like this might be lasting a little longer than it should be. Marsi cho.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh. Honourable Premier.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At this time, we are not contemplating care packages for elders. We have zero confirmed cases in the Northwest Territories. If everyone does what the chief medical officer is asking, that they self-isolate if they have travelled internationally, if they are using good hygiene, if they are washing their hands, don't go to visit your elders, probably, in the long-term care facilities if you're sick, might be good advice. At this point, like I say, we have no incidences. We're not at that point that we're actually starting to panic. Those are discussions that will be coming across the table in the next week or two, though. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. NORN: Thank you for the response from the Premier. I have another question. With that in mind, I think that we need to be proactive here. There are still a lot of elders and mobility-restricted who are starting to be afraid to leave their homes now, so we need to start thinking about this. I am wondering if the Premier will be having these discussions and putting this in their emergency planning as they speak right now.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: As stated in the first question, there be discussions coming to Cabinet not only on care packages, whether we are going to go there or not, but also how we deal with the fears of our seniors, our elders, and their care, because they are the most vulnerable population within this pandemic. Those are conversations that we will have, but again, reinforcing, at this point, we have zero cases in the Northwest Territories. I am begging all residents, please, I know that people are panicking, but it's important that we remain calm, that we follow good hygiene, and we follow the advice from our chief medical officer. Connect with your government. Connect with your MLAs. Connect on Facebook. Get the information that is proper.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, honourable Premier. Oral questions. Member for Yellowknife North.

QUESTION 217-19(2):
COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES
EMPLOYEES WORKING REMOTELY

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Finance. Earlier, we heard that all departments do have response plans, and I am glad to hear that we have been working on this for a number of weeks. My question is: at what point in those response plans do we start telling GNWT employees to not attend work?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Yellowknife North. Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That time is not now. That's a discussion that has been ongoing for some time. It has been a discussion that has been happening in some detail for some time, since January, really, but these plans are plans that have existed long before now. They are plans that were developed last year when we were facing the strike and owing from years before when they were dealing with H1N1. There are different gradients for each department. There are different needs for each department. We have to consider our health department and our essential services first, make sure that their needs are being met, make sure that we're also looking at whether or not we have the technical capacity to increase having people off working online. All of those things are being discussed and considered right now. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. JOHNSON: I appreciate that answer. My concern here is that all of these things work together, and if we are closing schools, people lose childcare. If we are losing day homes, people lose childcare, and it's important that, if we're asking people to continue showing up to offices when they could be working from home, but they don't have childcare, we are putting them in a very difficult situation. My question to the Minister of Finance is: are people remote working now, those who are able?

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Certainly, anyone who is following the advice of the Chief Public Health Officer and who is returning from international travel should be working from home right now. Beyond that, anyone who has concerns or needs, such as childcare, resulting from the current situation ought to be speaking to their supervisor. All departments, I am sure, I am confident, are working closely and working with human resources to support their people right now in whatever circumstances they might find themselves, whether it's because they've returned from international travel or if they are needing to care for someone who is in that situation. If there is a need like that, I would suggest that every single department is aware and that the supervisors are aware and that they are in contact with human resources, and we will, for the time being, face that one step at a time.

MR. JOHNSON: I appreciate that answer. My concern here is that remote working requires some logistics. We have to build the technical capacity. I believe that we should start doing this now. We should start piloting sending different sections of departments who can work from home to do it. I'm not talking about front-line healthcare workers, obviously, or essential services, but we are the largest employer in this territory, and I believe that many of our workers should be working from home now. If we are closing schools and daycares and closing mass gatherings, it does not make

sense to have 5,000 public civil servants who can work from home being at work. My question is: will the Minister of Finance start directing departments to begin their workers remote working?

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: We don't need to pilot anything, and we don't need to start having the conversations about the technologies. The conversations about the technology have started. TSC and Information and Shared Services are already working together. The Department of Finance is already engaging and supporting Northwestel and their efforts to ensure that we have adequate bandwidth. These things are happening, so they don't need to start, and they don't need to pilot.

What I am not going to do is stand here and direct departments, who each have their own operational needs and who all have an operational plan. Departments are running tabletop exercises this week. They're determining whether or not they need to change the way that they are offering their programs and services, and whether work is done a certain way, and I am confident that, if the time arises where they need to have a directive, then that directive will issue. Until that time, if individuals can't attend work because they are sick, because they've returned, because they have childcare arising from what is happening, then they should be taking that up department by department, and each department is well aware that there are options for workers and that we are working to increase those options and to evaluate whether we need to change that as we go forward.

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

QUESTION 218-19(2):
FIVE-YEAR REVIEW OF DELEGATED AUTHORITY UNDER THE MACKENZIE
VALLEY RESOURCE MANAGEMENT ACT

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, monsieur le President. My questions are for the Minister of Executive and Indigenous Affairs. Earlier today, I raised issues with GNWT's mixed track record with regard to responsible resource development. A five-year review of GNWT's delegated authority under the devolution agreement should have started by now. Can the Minister tell us whether the five-year review has actually started? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. Minister of Executive and Indigenous Affairs.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I believe that the review was delayed. The intergovernmental council was waiting until Bill C-88, the federal bill, was passed. Now that it has been passed, we are in conversations with the federal government to move this forward. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. O'REILLY: I want to thank the Minister for that. There are a number of parties to the devolution agreement and a number of other Indigenous governments who have not signed it. Can the Premier confirm who will be involved in the five-year review of the MVRMA delegated authority and whether this will include the non-signatory Indigenous governments?

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Certainly, the nine Indigenous governments that did sign on to devolution will be taking part in this review. We also will be developing a plan for how to engage with the other Indigenous governments that didn't sign on.

MR. O'REILLY: I want to thank the Minister for that response. I raised some doubts about whether we have been able to manage our resources responsibly, given devolution, but can the Premier tell us what role there will be for the public and Regular MLAs in the five-year review of our delegated authority under the MVRMA.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Normally, I would actually defer this to the Minister of ITI or Infrastructure, but she is self-isolating at this point for another day. What I can say is that my direction to all Cabinet Members is to engage better in this Assembly with our stakeholders, all stakeholders, the public, our stakeholders in the MRA, as are committee MLAs. We will be looking to engage both our standing committee and the public in most, if not all, regulations, recognizing that some regulations are just word-smithing and stuff. There will be situations that we won't be engaging everyone, but whenever possible, it is about engaging as many as possible.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Honourable Premier. Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. I want to thank the Premier for that response, but that is not really the question I was asking. I would like to know what role there will be for the standing committee, Regular MLAs, and the public in the five-year review of the MVRMA under the devolution agreement. The Minister spoke about the regulations that might come forward under resource management legislation, but I want to know what the public's role is going to be, Regular MLAs' role is going to be in the five-year review of the MVRMA. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Again, I am not going to want to notice on this question. I'm going to try to answer it. If it's not the right answer, then the next session, if the Member can bring it back to the Assembly. My direction to all Ministers was: try to engage stakeholders as much as possible. A five-year review tells me that there would be more than one opportunity, ideally at least once a year, that all stakeholders would be engaged with this. I would ask the Member to ask the appropriate Minister when she returns for a more concrete answer. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Honourable Premier. Oral questions. Member for Monfwi.

QUESTION 219-19(2):

COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND SELF-ISOLATION FOR INTERNATIONAL TRAVELLERS AND VISITORS TO THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

MR. LAFFERTY: Masi, Mr. Speaker. [Translation] When I talked about the Member's statement, I talked about the COVID-19. The COVID-19 that I was talking about, I know it's pretty dangerous. It still hasn't come up here, but let's prepare ourselves. [Translation ends]

I did a Member's statement on COVID-19. I talked about the seniors' homes, the tourists, and the industries. The first question I have could be departmental, I am not sure, but since it's related to health, Health and Social Services. We received a

statement from the Minister of health that states that we are strongly advising all travellers on the international to be self-isolated. We are advising them, so we are not directing them or telling them. Mr. Speaker, tourists who are coming from outside, international travels, it's at their pleasure if they want to go to do self-isolation, but it's not a mandatory thing. Is that a correct saying, that it's an option for international travellers coming to Northwest Territories to be self-isolated? Masi.

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

HON. DIANE THOM: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, that is correct. Our Chief Public Health Officer updated the public health advisory to include strong recommendations of self-isolation for all residents and visitors who travelled outside Canada in the last 14 days. They are expected to remain at home or in their accommodation and avoid contact with others while monitoring their symptoms until 14 days have passed. Also, with the tourism, they may return home if they wish. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. LAFFERTY: As you know, as we all know, it only takes one to have an impact in our Northwest Territories. It's great that we don't have COVID-19, the coronavirus here in the Northwest Territories, but we have to be proactive instead of reacting to certain things. Why couldn't we have a seniors' care package that Members identified and also the possibility of having workers work from home? Those are some areas that we can easily do within our mandate as the Government of the Northwest Territories. I am afraid that, if we are not proactive on self-isolation with interaction towards coming into the Northwest Territories, we may be impacted. We are trying to prevent that from happening. I highly encourage this government to seriously consider that. Obviously, we have to work with public medical officers, as well.

The second question I have pertains to seniors' homes, not only in my region, but other regions, as well. That is: we have workers travelling south with their kids for spring break. Obviously, they will be coming home. There, again, we are advising them to be self-isolated, but they will be returning to work. Whatever they bring back, the most vulnerable are the seniors. What is the department of health doing with the seniors' homes in our ridings to deal with this area?

HON. DIANE THOM: The long-term care facilities have been provided targeted advice on heightened protections, given that seniors are at risk of more serious complications and outcomes as a result of this disease. The Chief Public Health Officer is briefing the long-term care facilities and strongly advising that everyone takes precautions. These are all the things we are discussing right now.

MR. LAFFERTY: In the past, we have closed the doors to the public. When flu season came around, there was a direct impact on the seniors. We have done that. We have the authority to do that. I am advising the Minister to follow up on that with the communities' health organizers. I have a third question pertaining to school, the school closure. We have the highest person who advises us. The Chief Public Health Officer advised today to close NWT schools until after Easter. We are saying, "Well, it's up to the DEA to deal with that." This is the highest decision-maker coming down, advising us to close our schools, and here we are still debating that. I think we should follow through

with that, in my view.

HON. DIANE THOM: The Member is correct; our Chief Public Health Officer has closed down the schools. Now, we are looking at other areas such as the child development centres or the seniors' facilities. This is all work that is taking place now. It is something we will look at.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Final supplementary, Member for Monfwi.

MR. LAFFERTY: Masi, Mr. Speaker. Around us, throughout Canada, a lot of activities are happening. There are a lot of closures, whether it be schools, public places, and so forth. Here, we are reacting slowly to it. We need to be proactive as a government going forward. The final question I have is pertaining to industry, mine workers. As a stated in my report, the Baffin iron mines tells its Nunavut workers to stay home to limit COVID-19. What is our stand? We have so many workers who interact with international workers, as well, at the mine site. What is our stand as a GNWT working with the mine workers? Masi.

HON. DIANE THOM: At this point, this is ongoing work that is taking place. Our department is working day and night to ensure that we keep on top of what is going on with this coronavirus. We are looking at things like the mine and all the other departments because this is important. This is stuff that requires a lot of work. That is what we are working on. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Oral questions. Member for Nunakput.

QUESTION 220-19(2):

COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND PORTABLE MEDICAL EQUIPMENT FOR COMMUNITIES

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions today are for the health Minister on an action plan for COVID-19 for my riding in Nunakput and all small communities across the territory. For isolation equipment, oxygen machines, portable oxygen machines, are they being sent into our communities? Do they have to be called out of Inuvik to be sent into the community? How does that work, Mr. Speaker? Thank you.

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

HON. DIANE THOM: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. All communities have the necessary personal protective equipment supplies on hand to respond to this virus and the infectious disease. It is important to remember that we work with all of our small communities, and important that it's not getting into the communities. The equipment in the communities, most of the equipment in the smaller communities is supplied, and we have measures out there. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just want to make sure that the communities across the territory, not only my riding, have portable health breathing equipment for them in regard to if anybody does get COVID-19, making sure our elders and that are properly cared for. I know that they're working hard. Our frontline staff are

working hard, and just to make sure that equipment is in the community prior. Like I always say, it's better to be proactive than reactive.

HON. DIANE THOM: As I mentioned, our health centres are equipped with the usual routine and emergency equipment.

MR. JACOBSON: Just in regard to the action plan in regard to the staffing, how does it work now in regard to where we are going to get our extra nurses from to provide services in case something happens in the community? Is there a special nursing team that's going to come in and help the nursing staff of the day, I guess, if anybody in the community has that? Is there a plan in place to make sure that our staff is not overworked and somebody is backing them up?

HON. DIANE THOM: Our department has the emergency operation centre. The purpose of this is to provide the health and social services system response and recovery for emergency situations. The emergency operation centre includes representatives from the departments and the Health and Social Services Authority. This was activated on March 11th, and the centre has been meeting daily. A representative on the Emergency Operation Centre also works closely with MACA and the Territorial Planning Committee.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Final supplementary, Member for Nunakput.

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, with staffing, we have 33 communities, and not all communities have nursing stations. We have nursing stations, but no staff, such as Tsiigehtchic. For the next three months, are we going to be providing a nurse in Tsiigehtchic, and making sure that all of our nursing stations are properly complemented with nursing staff? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. DIANE THOM: In the community of Tsiigehtchic, we do have a nurse who comes in. I believe the schedule is twice a week. I'd like the Member to be aware that I've been talking with the MLA from the Mackenzie Delta on possibly extending this service in the interim, to have someone there more frequently. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Oral questions. Member for Yellowknife Centre.

QUESTION 221-19(2):
COVID-19 AND SUPPORT FOR TOURISM

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to go over a few questions that I received over the weekend from constituents. The first is that a number of news releases or public advisories have gone out with phone numbers for people to call in the event that they have symptoms to report. My constituent called the Yellowknife number, which is the public health unit number, yesterday afternoon, and there was no answer. I'm concerned that, in fact, these numbers are only monitored during work hours. Can the Minister assure me that there is some kind of seven-day-a-week coverage of these phone numbers that are being advertised to people to call? Thank you.

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

HON. DIANE THOM: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was not aware of the phone number and no one being on the other side of it. We do provide numerous numbers. We also have a website, www.hss.gov.nt.ca. That website contains the most up-to-date information on what to do to keep your family safe if you've been travelling or concerned that you may have been exposed to this virus.

MS. GREEN: I appreciate that answer from the Minister of Health, but it's simply not good enough. If somebody feels that they have symptoms and they require testing, a two-day delay can result in a lot more exposure between them, their families, and the public in a grocery store or any other place. Can the Minister make a commitment to have at least one number that everyone can call 24-7 to talk to somebody in person about their symptoms?

HON. DIANE THOM: I will go back and look into this, because it is crucial. Communication is key in keeping everybody up-to-date and informed. This is something I will look at.

MS. GREEN: Another question I received on the weekend was: why is it that the health department has decided that, if and when a case is confirmed, the location will not be shared with the public? Can the Minister tell us why that is the case?

HON. DIANE THOM: On Friday, when we did the press release with the Chief Public Health Officer, she did make that announcement. I don't know the rationale about why we won't disclose this, but it is something I can find out and get back to the Member.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Final supplementary, Member for Yellowknife Centre.

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think that this is really a key point. People will want to know, and they're going to be asking us, as Members, where this case is. From my point of view, it would be better to be able to provide factual information than for the rumour mill to crank up on social media, that it's in one place, another place, it turns out it's in 10 places that it's not. I would appreciate the response on this.

We know that we're asking tourists to self-isolate for 14 days. Are we reaching those people in languages other than English? Are we talking to them, for example, in Cantonese or in Japanese? Thank you.

HON. DIANE THOM: I'm not aware that we are, other than our official languages at this time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Colleagues, our time for oral questions has expired. Written questions. Member for Frame Lake.

Written Questions

WRITTEN QUESTION 9-19(2):

CONTRACTS FOR WORK RELATED TO THE SLAVE GEOLOGICAL PROVINCE

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. I have three written questions today. The first written question: Contracts for work related to the Slave Geological Province. My

questions are for the Minister of Infrastructure.

Please provide a list of all contracts entered into by GNWT for work related to the Slave Geological Province Road from September 1, 2015, to present, and:

1. Indicate the date of the contract signing, date of completion or anticipated completion, whether the contract was sole-sourced, the value of the contract, the general purpose or scope of work, whether there were any financial or scope amendments and a summary of same, the name and location of the contractor; and
2. In providing the list of contracts, indicate whether any of the contractors were or are registered under the Business Incentive Policy and received such consideration in the evaluation of bids or proposals; and,
3. What future actions are planned to maximize northern employment, training, and business opportunities in future contracts related to the Slave Geological Province Road?

WRITTEN QUESTION 10-19(2):
POINTED MOUNTAIN GAS FIELD COMPLIANCE AND RECLAMATION

MR. O'REILLY: Number two, Mr. Speaker. Pointed Mountain gas field compliance and reclamation. My questions are for the Minister of Lands.

The Pointed Mountain gas field near Fort Liard went into production in 1972 under British Petroleum Canada and stopped in 2001. The site was acquired in 2010 by Apache Canada and the name of the owner was changed to Paramount Resources in 2017. There currently a land use permit covering this site until June 4, 2022, but no water licence. A Government of the Northwest Territories inspection of the site was carried out on July 24, 2018, and on June 5, 2019 the owner was notified that the site was in violation of the Waters Act. What, if any, enforcement action has been taken against the owner of the Pointed Mountain gas field, and:

1. What, if any financial security is held for the Pointed Mountain gas field, including the form and amount of such financial security;
2. Whether there is a current and approved closure and reclamation plan for the site and all its facilities;
3. Whether there is a current cost estimate for the full and final closure and reclamation of the site and the amount of that cost estimate; and
4. If there is no current and approved closure and reclamation plan, and no current cost estimate for the closure and reclamation of the site, what further action does the Minister intend to take and when?

WRITTEN QUESTION 11-19(2):
COMMISSIONER'S LAND ACT SECURITY DEPOSITS

MR. O'REILLY: My questions are for the Minister of Lands. Section 3.1 of the Commissioner's Land Act establishes the requirement for the posting of security, the

factors for determining security amount, for restoration of lands and for refund of security. Please provide a listing of the commercial and industrial leases on Commissioner's Land issued since February 15, 2011, including the lease number, general location, issue date, amount and form of security required, and:

1. Whether an exemption was granted under any leases from the requirement to provide security, including the reasons why the exemption was granted;
2. A general explanation of how the amount of security is calculated under this regime;
3. A general explanation of how the posting of security is managed and tracked under this regime; and
4. In instances where securities have been returned, the amount and reasons for the return of security.

Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. Item 9, returns to written questions. Item 10, replies to the Commissioner's address. Item 11, petitions. Item 12, reports of committees on review of bills. Item 13, reports of standing and special committees. Item 14, tabling of documents. Minister of Finance.

Tabling of Documents

TABLED DOCUMENT 61-19(2):

INTERIM ESTIMATES (OPERATIONS EXPENDITURES) APRIL 1 TO JUNE 30, 2020

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following document: "Interim Estimates (Operations Expenditures), April 1 to June 30, 2020". Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Tabling of documents. Minister responsible for the Northwest Territories Power Corporation.

TABLED DOCUMENT 62-19(2):

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES POWER CORPORATION TO MINISTER REGARDING THE 2019-2020 CAPITAL SPENDING BUDGET

TABLED DOCUMENT 63-19(2):

2020-2021 CORPORATE PLAN - NORTHWEST TERRITORIES HYDRO CORPORATION AND NORTHWEST TERRITORIES POWER CORPORATION

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table the following two documents: "Letter from the President of the Northwest Territories Power Corporation to Minister regarding the 2019-2020 Capital Spending Budget"; and "2020-2021 Corporate Plan - Northwest Territories Hydro Corporation and Northwest Territories Power Corporation." Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Item 15, notices of motion. Member for

Yellowknife North.

Notices of Motion

MOTION 6-19(2):
EXTENDED ADJOURNMENT OF THE HOUSE TO MAY 26, 2020

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that, on Wednesday, March 18, 2020, I will move the following motion: I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Hay River North, that, notwithstanding rule 4, when this House adjourns on Monday, March 16, 2020, it shall be adjourned until Tuesday, May 26, 2020; and further, that at any time prior to May 26, 2020, 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, or at a time later than the scheduled resumption of the House, the Speaker may give notice and thereupon the House shall meet at the time stated in such notice and shall transact its business as if it had been duly adjourned to that time.

Mr. Speaker, At the appropriate time, I will be seeking unanimous consent to deal with this motion today.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Yellowknife North. Item 16, motions. Member for Yellowknife North.

Motions

MOTION 6-19(2):
EXTENDED ADJOURNMENT OF THE HOUSE TO MAY 26, 2020

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am seeking unanimous consent to deal with the motion I gave notice of earlier today.

MR. SPEAKER: The Member is seeking unanimous consent to deal with the motion he gave notice of earlier today. Are there any nays? There are no nays. You may continue with your motion.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I MOVE, seconded by the honourable Member for Hay River North, that, notwithstanding rule 4, when this House adjourns on Monday, March 16, 2020, it shall be adjourned until Tuesday, May 26, 2020;

AND FURTHER, that at any time prior to May 26, 2020, 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, or at a time later than the scheduled resumption of the House, the Speaker may give notice and thereupon the House shall meet at the time stated in such notice and shall transact its business as if it had been duly adjourned to that time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. Motion is order. To the motion. Motion has been called. All

those in favour. All those opposed. Any abstentions? The motion is carried.

--- Carried

Item 17, notices of motion for the first reading of bills. Item 18, first reading of bills. Minister of Finance.

First Reading of Bills

BILL 4:

SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION ACT (INFRASTRUCTURE EXPENDITURES),
NO. 1, 2020-2021

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Nahendeh, that Bill 4, Supplementary Appropriation Act (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 1, 2020-2021, be read for the first time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is in order. The motion is non-debatable. All those in favour. All those opposed. Any abstentions? Bill 4 has had its first reading. Item 19, second reading of bills. Minister of Finance.

Second Reading of Bills

BILL 4:

SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION ACT (INFRASTRUCTURE EXPENDITURES),
NO. 1, 2020-2021

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Nahendeh, that Bill 4, Supplementary Appropriation Act (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 1, 2020-2021, be read for the second time. This bill makes supplementary appropriations for infrastructure expenditures of the Government of the Northwest Territories for the 2020-2021 fiscal year. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. The motion is in order. The motion is non-debatable. All those in favour. All those opposed. Any abstentions? The motion is carried. Bill 4 has had second reading. Item 20, consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters: Tabled Document 30-19(2), Main Estimates 2020-2021; Tabled Document 61-19(2), Interim Estimates (Operations Expenditures), April 1 to June 30, 2020, with Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes in the chair.

Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): I will call committee to order. What is the wish of committee? Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

MR. NORN: Marsi, Madam Chair. Committee wishes to consider Tabled Document 61-19(2), Interim Estimates (Operations Expenditures), April 1 to June 30, 2020. Marsi cho.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Does committee agree? Thank you, committee. We'll take a short recess and resume.

---SHORT RECESS

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): I will call committee back to order. Committee, we have agreed to consider Tabled Document 61-19(2), Interim Estimates (Operations Expenditures), April 1 to June 30, 2020. Does the Minister of Finance have any opening remarks?

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair, yes. Good morning, Madam Chair. Today, I am presenting Interim Estimates 2020-2021 for the Government of the Northwest Territories. The interim estimates provide the necessary appropriation authority to support the government's operations for the three-month period of April 1 to June 30, 2020.

The interim estimates will allow public services to continue to be provided until the main estimates for the fiscal year have been fully debated and approved by the Legislative Assembly. Interim estimates are not used regularly. They are a tool that can be used to allow the Assembly more time to finalize a budget, typically the first budget of a new Assembly. Interim estimates have been used by this Legislative Assembly most recently in 2016-2017.

During the May-June sitting of the Assembly, the review of the 2020-2021 Main Estimates is anticipated to resume, and, subject to approval at that time, these interim estimates will be superseded by the main estimates.

As Members know, these interim estimates had to be prepared quickly. This current sitting of the Assembly will conclude today, to allow Members of the Legislative Assembly and the territorial public service to focus its efforts on preparing for and responding to COVID-19. Departments worked together to bring these interim estimates before us today. These estimates include the following:

- Amounts required for the first three months were used, as identified by all departments as part of the development of the Main Estimates 2020-2021 process. An exception to this approach was required to address contracts, grants, and contributions in a way that will ensure compliance with the Financial Administration Act, or the FAA;
 - Under the FAA, a department cannot enter into a contract or obligation without the appropriation to do so. Amounts for service contracts have therefore been fully allocated for the 2020-2021 fiscal year to ensure compliance with the FAA. The exception to this approach is the Territorial Police Service Agreement, for which 50 percent of the amount has been allocated in this interim appropriation, and
 - Similarly, in order to comply with the FAA, amounts for grants and contributions for organizations have been fully allocated. The only exceptions with respect to the full allocation of grants and contributions were for larger entities, such as education authorities, Health and Social Services authorities, and the NWT Housing Corporation. These entities have been funded based on their cash requirements for the interim period;

- To address the anticipated high demand for health services, a 25 percent contingency has been added to the compensation and benefits for the Department of Health and Social Services, and to the portion of grants and contributions to health authorities allocated in this interim appropriation, representing \$39 million;
- To address any increase to the Income Assistance Program, a 25 percent contingency has been added to the Department of Education, Culture and Employment budget for this item, representing \$1.8 million; and
- To ensure sufficient appropriation for all departments to the end of the interim period, a 5 percent contingency has also been allocated, representing \$41 million.

The proposed interim estimates total \$872 million. These estimates also include \$615,000 for a dialysis unit in Hay River within Health and Social Services Authority, and \$600,000 for Indigenous language revitalization in Education Culture and Employment. This will allow for funding of these important matters during the interim period. That concludes my opening remarks.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Minister. Do you have witnesses?

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Yes, I do.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Sergeant-at-Arms, can you escort the witnesses to the Chamber, please. Minister, would you introduce your witness for the record.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. I have Mr. Sandy Kalgutkar beside me. He is the deputy minister of Finance.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. I will now open the floor to general comments. Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. I would like to start offering my personal thanks for what I'm sure is really, truly a heroic effort on the part of our Finance staff working with other departments to pull together this set of interim estimates. I do personally want to thank them all for that work that they had to do over the weekend. I have one question, though. It's about the 5 percent contingency that the Minister noted in her opening remarks. I would like to know whether that 5 percent contingency includes contracts and grants and contributions. Thanks, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. Minister.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes, Madam Chair, I appreciate the Member's comments. The department did work tremendous hours over the last many days. Other departments did as well, as well as at the same time dealing with their COVID planning. The 5 percent is not meant to go on top of grants, contributions, et cetera; at least, not initially, it was not. There were different individuals working on this, and in the bit of the rush and the fact that we wanted to get this before committee here today, for Lands, Legislative Assembly, ITI, and the Health and Social Services Authority, there is an additional 5 percent on their contracts amount. This results in approximately \$3.5 million, \$2 million of which, actually, is going to go to the health authority. Ultimately, it was determined that, really, what might have been seen at

one point as an error might now actually turn out to be something positive in that it's giving extra money to an area that is likely to need it. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Minister. Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. I in no way want to take away from the work that the staff did over the weekend. If these departments, the 5 percent contingency was applied, this is something that can still be squared up when we get the main estimates when we sit next in May-June. That's where this can be squared up? Thanks, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member. Minister.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. There was no intention to permanently add to the base budget for contracts and grants and contributions in these areas. We will certainly make sure to have another look at that when the time comes in May-June. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Minister. Are there any further questions under general comments? Seeing no further general comments, we will review the supplementary estimates by department. The committee has agreed to begin the review with summary of interim estimates by department, and we will start with the Legislative Assembly. Does the committee agree to forego general comments on each department?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): All right. We will go into department, Legislative Assembly. Questions? Schedule 1, operations expenditures, department, Legislative Assembly, appropriation authority required, \$8,712,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, committee. We will move on to department, Education, Culture and Employment. Any questions? Seeing no questions, summary of interim estimates, department, Education, Culture and Employment, appropriation authority required, \$126,592,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. We will continue on. The next department is Environment and Natural Resources. Appropriation authority required, \$53,818,000. Does committee agree? Member for Yellowknife North.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just wanted to ask a single question. My understanding is that the grants and contributions for all departments have been funded yearly. Can I confirm that, for Environment and Natural Resources, the full amount for the Community Harvesters Assistance Program is being funded? The annual amount is being funded in this interim budget?

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member. Minister.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. I don't have that particular item broken down, but if I am not mistaken, that is a grant or contribution, and therefore, it would have been funded as 100 percent. If I am in error, Madam Chair, I will get back to the committee immediately. Sorry, Madam Chair. That is in the grants and contributions. Yes, sorry, it is here. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Member for Yellowknife North.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate that we went through the effort to fully fund all the grants and contributions, because I think, given the nature of the coronavirus, we will see a strain put on a number of those. I know that applies to numerous departments, but I just wanted to speak to this one specifically. Our Chief Public Health Officer has said that a good way to social distance is to get people out on the land. That is what CHAP funding is for, so I was just hoping that I could get a commitment with the Minister of Finance to have a conversation with ENR about getting this funding out of door sooner rather than later.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member. Minister.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. We were just looking at what the total budget is. We will make sure that it is prioritized, and I am confident that I can work with the Minister for ENR. If there is anything that we need to do to do that, I agree; we will be following all of the advice of the Chief Public Health Officer, including this. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Minister. Are there any further comments? Seeing no further comments, we will go back to department, Environment and Natural Resources, appropriation authority required, \$53,818,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Next department, Executive and Indigenous Affairs, appropriation authority required, \$7,873,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Next department, Department of Finance, appropriation authority required, \$110,265,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Department, Health and Social Services, appropriation authority required, \$268,147,000. Does committee agree? Member for Hay River South.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just wanted to confirm. I guess I received my final "yes" with respect to the funding for the dialysis expansion for Hay River. Is that included in item number 6? Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member. Minister.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes, Madam Chair. It's under contributions, Madam Chair, and yes, I can confirm that it is included here in this appropriation.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Minister. Member for Hay River South.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. That's all.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Member for Yellowknife North.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate that we have provided a 25 percent increase to compensation and benefits, I believe, for Health and Social Services, to allow some of our nurses to -- there will likely be overtime. Can I just get a sense from the Minister, if the coronavirus increases and Health and Social Services goes beyond the budgeted amount, does that become a cash flow problem? I want to make sure that they have access to resources to deal with this and how would that work if they spend this money. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member. Minister.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. All departments have a 5 percent contingency, as well, which I realize isn't a large cushion on top of 25, but there is some additional cushion. I guess, what I want to say, number one, is that no one should be worrying about their salary at this point in time. If the Department of Finance has to use tools within its disposal, it will do that, so that nobody should be worrying about their salary right now. We will sort out what we need to sort out to make sure that everyone gets paid to do the work they need to do to keep people safe. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Minister. Are there any further questions? If there are no further questions, we will go back to the department, Health and Social Services, appropriation authority required, \$268,147,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Next department, Industry, Tourism and Investment, appropriation authority required, \$36,615,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Department of Infrastructure, appropriation authority required, \$140,005,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Moving on to Department of Justice, appropriation authority required, \$54,324,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Moving on to Department of Lands, appropriation authority required, \$9,591,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Moving on to Department of Municipal and Community Affairs, appropriation authority required, \$56,257,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): All right. Now, we'll move on to operations expenditures, appropriation total, \$872,199,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Under schedule 2, establishing borrowing limits for the Government of the Northwest Territories, appropriation authority required, \$940,471,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, committee. Do you agree that you have concluded consideration of Tabled Document 61-19(2), Interim Estimates (Operations Expenditures), April 1 to June 30, 2020?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Minister. Thank you to the witness. Sergeant-at-Arms, can you please escort the witness out. Does committee agree that this concludes consideration of Tabled Document 61-19(2)?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

COMMITTEE MOTION 11-19(2)-19(2):

CONCURRENCE MOTION - TABLED DOCUMENT 61-19(2): INTERIM ESTIMATES (OPERATIONS EXPENDITURES), APRIL 1 TO JUNE 30, 2020, CARRIED

MR. NORN: Marsi cho, Madam Chair. I move that consideration of Tabled Document 61-19(2), Interim Estimates (Operations Expenditures), April 1 to June 30, 2020, be now concluded, and that Tabled Document 61-19(2) be reported and recommended as ready for further consideration in formal session through the form of an appropriation bill. Marsi cho, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): The motion is in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Question has been called. All those in favour? All those opposed? Abstentions? The motion is carried.

---Carried

Tabled Document 61-19(2) will be reported as ready for consideration in formal session through the form of an appropriation bill. Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

MR. NORN: Marsi cho, Madam Chair. I move that the chair rise and report progress.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): There is a motion on the floor to report progress. The motion is in order to non-debatable. All those in favour? Opposed? Abstentions? The motion is carried.

---Carried

I will now rise and report progress.

MR. SPEAKER: May I have report of the Committee of the Whole? Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes.

Report of the Committee of the Whole

MS. SEMMLER: Mr. Speaker, your committee has been considering Tabled Document 61-19(2), Interim Estimates (Operations Expenditures) April 1 to June 30, 2020, and would like to report that consideration of Tabled Document 61-19(2) is concluded and the House concurs in those estimates, and that an appropriation bill be based thereon be introduced without delay. Mr. Speaker, I move that the report of the Committee of the Whole be concurred with. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Secunder? Member for Nunakput. All those in favour. All those opposed. Any abstentions? The motion is carried.

--- Carried

Item 22, third reading of bills. Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to return to item 18, first reading of bills.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. The Minister is seeking unanimous consent to move to item 18, first reading of bills. Are there any nays? There are no nays.

--- Unanimous consent granted

Item 18, first reading of bills. Minister of Finance.

First Reading of Bills (Reversion)

BILL 5:

INTERIM APPROPRIATION ACT (OPERATIONS EXPENDITURES), 2020-2021

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Nahendeh, that Bill 5, Interim Appropriation Act (Operations Expenditures), 2020-2021, be read for the first time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. To the principle. To the principle of the bill. The motion is in order and non-debatable. All those in favour. All those opposed. Any abstentions? The motion is carried.

--- Carried

Bill 5 has had first reading. Item 22, third reading of bills. Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to return to item 19, second reading of bills.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. The Minister is seeking unanimous consent to move to item 19, second reading of bills. Are there any nays? There are no nays.

--- Unanimous consent granted

Item 19, second reading of bills.

Second Reading of Bills (Reversion)

BILL 5:

INTERIM APPROPRIATION ACT (OPERATIONS EXPENDITURES), 2020-2021
CARRIED

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Nahendeh, that Bill 5, Interim Appropriation Act (Operations Expenditures), 2020-2021, be read for the second time. This bill makes interim appropriations for operation expenditures of the Government of the Northwest Territories for the 2020-2021 fiscal year. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. Motion is in order. To the motion. The motion has been called. All those in favour. All those opposed. Any abstentions? The motion is carried.

--- Carried

Bill 5 has had second reading. Item 22, third reading of bills. Minister of Finance.

Third Reading of Bills

BILL 4:

SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION ACT (INFRASTRUCTURE EXPENDITURES),
NO. 1, 2020-2021

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Nahendeh, that Bill 4, Supplementary Appropriation Act (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 1, 2020-2021, be read for the third time. I would request a recorded vote. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. The Minister has requested a recorded vote. All those in favour, please rise.

RECORDED VOTE

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer): The Member for Yellowknife South, the Member for Sahtu, the Member for Range Lake, the Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes, the

Member for Inuvik Boot Lake, the Member for Hay River North, the Member for Hay River South, the member for Nunakput, the Member for Kam Lake, the Member for Yellowknife North, the Member for Monfwi, the Member for Nahendeh.

MR. SPEAKER: All those opposed, please rise. Any abstentions, please rise.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer): The Member for Yellowknife Centre, the Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh, the Member for Frame Lake.

MR. SPEAKER: The results of the recorded vote: 11 in favour; zero opposed; 3 abstentions. The motion is carried.

--- Carried

Bill 4 has had third reading. Third reading of bills, Minister of Finance.

BILL 5:

INTERIM APPROPRIATION ACT (OPERATIONS EXPENDITURES), 2020-2021

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Nahendeh, that Bill 5, Interim Appropriation Act (Operations Expenditures), 2020-2021, be read for the third time. Mr. Speaker, I would request a recorded vote. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. The motion is in order. To the motion. The motion has been called. The Minister has requested a recorded vote. All those in favour, please rise.

RECORDED VOTE

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer): The Member for Yellowknife South, the Member for Sahtu, the Member for Range Lake, the Member for Boot Lake, the Member for Hay River North, the Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes, the Member for Yellowknife Centre, the Member for Hay River South, the Member for Nunakput, the Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh, the Member for Frame Lake, the Member for Kam Lake, the Member for Yellowknife North, the Member for Monfwi, the Member for Nahendeh.

MR. SPEAKER: All those opposed, please rise. All those abstaining, please rise. The results of record vote: 15 in favour; zero opposed; zero abstentions. The motion is carried.

--- Carried

Bill 5 has had its third reading. Mr. Clerk, will you ascertain of the Commissioner of the Northwest Territories, the Honourable Margaret Thom, is ready to enter the Chamber and to ascent bills. Thank you.

COMMISSIONER OF THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES (Hon. Margaret Thom): Please be seated. Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker and Members of the Legislative Assembly. [Translation] Thank you. Glad to see you here again. I am glad that I am very grateful that I am going to talk to you. It is going to be for your work. I honour you. [Translation ends]

I am honoured to be in this great House to address our government.

As you are aware by now, we are saddened by the news that former Commissioner of the NWT, John Parker, passed away on March 9th. He served as the Deputy Commissioner of the NWT from 1967 until 1979, when he became Commissioner of the NWT and served in this position until he retired in 1989.

Mr. Parker played a huge role in the shaping of our political arena in the Northwest Territories. He worked diligently with only the best interests of, and for the betterment of, all northern residents. His hard work has allowed us to make decisions for ourselves as a distinct northern territory, and this helped to change how the world perceived us. Most importantly, John Parker gave us the power to govern ourselves. We honour that legacy he left us, and it is our responsibility to carry on this journey in a respectful way.

We send our sincere condolences to his wife, Helen, and his family, and to all Northerners who crossed paths with John and became lifelong friends. May his journey to the spirit world be a peaceful one.

We find ourselves in a worldwide crisis with the coronavirus. Although there are no confirmed cases in the Northwest Territories and our neighbouring territories of Nunavut and Yukon, it does not mean we are immune to this very serious virus. We need to continue to be extremely diligent in taking all precautions to ensure the safety of our health, the health of our families, and of our friends and neighbours across our territory. We must be aware and accepting and vigilant about how serious this pandemic is, and of its very severe and dangerous potential consequences to our people and to our economy.

I want to thank our government departments, in particular the Departments of Health and Social Services and Municipal and Community Affairs, for all the research, preparation, and updated information they are providing to keep us all informed so that we will make sound decisions regarding the COVID-19 pandemic. Mahsi cho.

In closing, I wish you all the guidance, prayers, and Godspeed as you continue your deliberations in establishing and preparing an action plan to deal with COVID-19 in the NWT. We need to lead by example by taking all the necessary precautions to keep us all safe and healthy. It is so important that we all work together collectively in the spirit of cooperation, remembering that we are a resilient territory and nation.

Assent to Bills

As Commissioner of the Northwest Territories, I am pleased to assent to the following Bills:

- Bill 4, Supplementary Appropriation Act (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 1, 2020-2021
- Bill 5, Interim Appropriation Act (Operations Expenditures), 2020-2021

Mahsi cho, thank you, quyanainni, merci beaucoup, koana.

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Clerk, orders of the day.

Orders of the Day

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer): Orders of the day for Tuesday, May 26, 2020, at 1:30 p.m.:

1. Prayer
2. Ministers' Statements
3. Members' Statements
4. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery
5. Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills
6. Reports of Standing and Special Committees
7. Returns to Oral Questions
8. Acknowledgements
9. Oral Questions
10. Written Questions
11. Returns to Written Questions
12. Replies to Commissioner's Address
13. Petitions
14. Tabling of Documents
15. Notices of Motion
16. Motions
17. Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills
18. First Reading of Bills
19. Second Reading of Bills
20. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters
 - Tabled Document 30-19(2), Main Estimates 2020-2021
21. Report of Committee of the Whole
22. Third Reading of Bills
23. Orders of the Day

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. Colleagues, before we leave, I would like to wish everyone good health. Please take care of yourselves and your families and also our constituents of the Northwest Territories. This House stands adjourned until Tuesday, May 26, 2020, at 1:30 p.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 1:18 p.m.