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**HANSARD**

**Tuesday, May 26, 2020**

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**The Honourable Frederick Blake Jr, Speaker**

# Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

## Members of the Legislative Assembly

### Speaker

**Hon. Frederick Blake Jr.**  
(Mackenzie Delta)

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(Deh Cho)

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(Kam Lake)

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(Sahtu)  
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*Minister responsible for Homelessness*

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*Minister responsible for the Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission*

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**Mr. Kevin O'Reilly**  
(Frame Lake)

**Ms. Lesa Semmler**  
(Inuvik Twin Lakes)

**Mr. Rocky Simpson**  
(Hay River South)

**Hon. R.J. Simpson**  
(Hay River North)  
*Government House Leader*  
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(Nahendeh)  
*Minister of Environment and Natural Resources*  
*Minister of Lands*  
*Minister responsible for NWT Power Corporation*  
*Minister responsible for Seniors*  
*Minister responsible for Youth*

**Hon. Caroline Wawzonek**  
(Yellowknife South)  
*Minister of Finance*  
*Minister of Justice*

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Box 1320  
Yellowknife, Northwest Territories  
Tel: (867) 767-9010 Fax: (867) 920-4735 Toll-Free: 1-800-661-0784  
<http://www.assembly.gov.nt.ca>

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**YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES****Tuesday, May 26, 2020****Members Present**

Hon. Frederick Blake Jr, Mr. Bonnetrouge, Hon. Paulie Chinna, Ms. Cleveland, Hon. Caroline Cochrane, Ms. Green, Mr. Jacobson, Mr. Johnson, Mr. Lafferty, Ms. Martselos, Hon. Katrina Nokleby, 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 1:34 p.m.

**Prayer**

---Prayer

**SPEAKER (Hon. Frederick Blake Jr.):** Members, welcome back to the Legislative Assembly. Our Chamber looks very different. There are more seats and tables, to allow Members to physically distance themselves. I thank Members for their cooperation. These steps and others, such as hand washing, hand sanitizing, and changing how we move around in the building, have been taken to reduce the risk of COVID-19.

Before we begin today, I would like to extend the condolences of this House and my personal condolences to all who have lost a loved one recently. Such a loss is never easy. During these uncertain times, it has become particularly difficult as families and friends have been unable to come together to support one another and grieve their shared loss. Although you have not been able to get together to celebrate the lives of your loved ones, I know that you have continued to grieve their passing and honour their memories individually.

These are challenging times. However, there is essential work to do. Members must review and adopt the government's 2020-2021 budget. Also, this sitting allows Members to ask questions and review the government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

While the Assembly is closed to the public, the media can still attend. We continue to broadcast and stream live our proceedings. It is important residents can see and understand the work being done. This sitting will have interpretation into Chipewyan, French, and Tlicho. These proceedings will also be interpreted into all official languages and posted online. I want to thank our interpreters for their hard work.

To our residents, thank you. The restrictions required to stop the spread of COVID-19 have been hard. Now that some restrictions have been lifted, we must remain committed as we enjoy spring and summer.

Members, the Commissioner of the Northwest Territories has recommended to the Assembly the passage of Supplementary Appropriations Act (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 2, 2020-2021. Thank you. Item 2, Ministers' statements. Honourable Premier.

**Ministers' Statements**

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 40-19(2):  
MAY-JUNE 2020 SESSIONAL STATEMENT

**HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to welcome all Members back to the continuation of our Second Sitting of the 19<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly.

Much has changed in the Northwest Territories and around the world since our sitting was interrupted by the declaration of a global COVID-19 pandemic this past March. Governments across Canada, including our own, have had to take swift and strong action to protect the health and safety of Canadians from this disease.

COVID-19 is a disease that no one in the world has a natural immunity to. There is no vaccine, and there is no effective anti-viral treatment for it. The best way to prevent its spread is to ensure people are not exposed to the virus.

Physical distancing was and still is the best protection against COVID-19, and that is why governments across Canada moved quickly in mid-March to close businesses, restrict travel, and put limits on gathering of people.

Mr. Speaker, while these strict limits were absolutely necessary for protecting everybody's health, they were devastating for the national and territorial economy. The situation has left our government, like all governments in this country, grappling with two challenges at the same time: a public health crisis and a socio-economic crisis. On the public health side, we have relied heavily on the work of the Northwest Territories' Chief Public Health Officer as well as the Department of Health and Social Services and the Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority.

Along with public health officials across Canada, the Chief Public Health Officer was monitoring the progression of COVID-19 in other countries and taking steps to make sure the Northwest Territories was ready for it even before the global pandemic was declared on March 11.

The day before the pandemic was declared, the Chief Public Health Officer issued an update on COVID-19, and gave extensive advice to Northwest Territories residents on how to keep themselves safe. Recommendations included avoiding non-essential travel outside the territory, self-monitoring for people who had recently travelled, reconsidering plans for public gatherings, and keeping a two-week supply of food and medicine at home.

As COVID-19 began to spread in southern Canada, the Minister of Health and Social Services, on the recommendation of the Chief Public Health Officer, declared a public health emergency in the Northwest Territories on March 18, 2020. The following day, the Government of the Northwest Territories took the unprecedented step of directing its employees to begin working from home in an effort to help encourage physical distancing and slow the spread of COVID-19.

Two days later, on March 21<sup>st</sup>, the first case of COVID-19 was confirmed in the Northwest Territories and a public health order prohibiting travel into the territory was put into place, except for residents returning home and workers providing essential services. All people entering the Territories from outside were also required to self-isolate for 14 days in one of four regional communities where appropriate medical care was available in the case that they developed COVID-19.

On March 22<sup>nd</sup>, the Chief Public Health Officer recommended that all mass gatherings be cancelled immediately and that certain businesses, where it would be impossible to maintain physical distancing, be closed. These recommendations were made into binding public health orders on April 10, 2020.

To assist with the implementation of the Chief Public Health Officer's orders, the Government of the Northwest Territories set up regional self-isolation centres for people returning from outside the territory and established a compliance and enforcement taskforce, drawing on staff from across the Government of the Northwest Territories with enforcement experience.

To better coordinate the whole-of-government response, the Municipal and Community Affairs Emergency Management Organization was fully activated and a territorial state of emergency was declared on March 24<sup>th</sup>.

While all these measures were necessary to protect residents and communities from the spread of COVID-19, our government recognizes that these decisions also had serious economic consequences for people, businesses, and communities. We also recognized that we had an obligation to not just protect public health, but to help the territory weather the financial and economic storm that COVID-19 had caused. This would require a whole-of-government effort with all departments involved in the response.

On March 20, just days into the crisis, the Ministers of Finance and Industry, Tourism and Investment announced on behalf of our government the first set of measures designed to help reduce the impacts of the COVID-19 shutdown on the NWT and its residents.

Valued at \$13.2 million, this first economic package included measures like providing low-interest loans through the Business Development and Investment Corporation to help businesses offset the impacts of COVID-19.

The Government of the Northwest Territories also agreed to advance resource revenues to Indigenous governments that are signatories to the devolution agreement and to allow Indigenous governments, non-government organizations, and community governments to carry over unused contribution amounts into the current fiscal year. Increased funding was also made available through Education, Culture and Employment for Income Assistance clients and seniors to help address the impacts of COVID-19.

In addition to new funding, the Government of the Northwest Territories also decided to suspend or defer the collection of fees and revenues owing to it. This was another way to relieve the financial burden being experienced by people, businesses, and communities as a result of COVID-19. These measures included removing transportation fees by the Department of Infrastructure, deferring Business Development and Investment Corporation and student financial assistance loan payments, pausing most collection efforts, and extending the due date for Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission employer fees. The Northwest Territories Power Corporation contributed to these relief efforts by removing load limiters and ceasing disconnections, as well as pausing its collection efforts.

A second economic relief package valued at almost \$8.3 million was announced on March 31<sup>st</sup>, including additional supports for Income Assistance clients and further fee reductions.

This package also identified \$5 million for the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation to create

temporary housing for homeless persons, including housing in Yellowknife and 130 units in communities outside of the capital.

Further announcements saw Education, Culture and Employment allocate \$5 million to support childcare for essential workers and decide to exempt federal emergency benefits from Income Assistance eligibility calculations. The Department of Finance also introduced a wage top-up plan for workers earning less than \$18 an hour.

The Department of Justice also instituted a moratorium on residential evictions, allowed for rent deferrals for residential tenants affected by the pandemic, while the Housing Corporation enhanced the Territorial Rent Supplement Program.

Leaseholders on public lands were also seeing relief in the form of a \$2.7-million decision to waive rent on existing leases for the 2020-2021 fiscal year from the Department of Lands.

Support to businesses has been a joint effort of our government and the Government of Canada, with Government of the Northwest Territories efforts being designed to complement immediate relief available to territorial businesses from the federal government. In addition to working capital loans provided by the Business Development and Investment Corporation, \$4 million is available to territorial businesses through Industry, Tourism and Investment's SEED Program to help businesses recover as the COVID-19 pandemic subsides.

In the first of two planned announcements, the Government of the Northwest Territories, in partnership with the Government of Canada, is helping four northern passenger-based airlines access \$8.7 million in funding. Further funding announcements with Canada are expected for additional airlines.

Of course, the Northwest Territories is not alone in facing this pandemic, and all Members of Cabinet have been working closely with their federal, provincial, and territorial counterparts to help coordinate efforts and advocate for the Northwest Territories. All Ministers are working hard to ensure that the Northwest Territories' needs are clearly understood so federal assistance programs benefit our residents and businesses. We are also coordinating on key issues like securing the national supply chain so the territory continues to have access to essential goods and participating in national bulk orders for personal protective equipment.

While the threat of COVID-19 is not over, our government also recognizes that a complete shutdown of the Northwest Territories economy and society is not sustainable or affordable. Although

our priority in the past two months has been on managing the immediate threat to public health, we have also been working on plans for recovery and for emerging wisely.

Mr. Speaker, I am sure all Members felt the same relief I did when the Chief Public Health Officer unveiled her phased plan for carefully relaxing the public health restrictions that have kept Northwest Territories residents safe during the first stages of the pandemic. To be clear, emerging from those restrictions means taking on greater risk that there could be new COVID-19 infections, but the gradual relaxation outlined in Emerging Wisely will help us manage that risk together.

With a plan in place for managing the public health risk, the Government of the Northwest Territories is now focusing on emerging stronger with a plan for broader social and economic recovery.

This will not be a plan the government develops in isolation; the pandemic hit all sectors of the Northwest Territories, and all sectors need to be involved in designing the recovery. As outlined to Members previously, we will be working closely with Members of the Legislative Assembly to design a plan, advised by committees representing business and industry, Indigenous governments, community governments, and community organizations.

COVID-19 presents a shared challenge like none this government has faced before, Mr. Speaker. No previous territorial government has had to respond to a global health threat so quickly and with so little time to prepare. I am proud of the work this Government of the Northwest Territories has done to design solutions on the fly; protect public health; manage and mitigate the social and economic impacts on individuals, businesses, and communities; and keep essential services running safely.

I want to thank all the staff who worked tirelessly to help support the government's response to COVID-19, especially our front-line staff in the healthcare system, staff managing the self-isolation centres, and the compliance and enforcement staff protecting our borders and making sure people are following public health orders.

I also want to thank and recognize all the essential workers who have continued to come into work throughout this pandemic, like the truckers, grocery store and pharmacy workers, childcare workers, law enforcement, and airline employees, who have continued to keep the Northwest Territories moving.

While the entire territory has risen to the challenge of COVID-19, there are more challenges to come. We are a strong and resilient territory, and I am confident that we can successfully manage our way

through this pandemic and emerge even stronger, by working together with the same kind of spirit and determination that Northwest Territories residents displayed over the past two months. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 41-19(2):  
COVID-19 PUBLIC HEALTH RESPONSE

**HON. DIANE THOM:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the past few months, we have asked people to change the way we live, work, and socialize in order to protect our territory against COVID-19. This is by far the most significant public health crisis we have faced in decades. Today, I would like to reflect on the public health measures that we have put in place and how we will continue to protect our territory, while bringing some stability back to our lives.

Mr. Speaker, our response to COVID-19 began well before the public health emergency was called. In early March, the Department of Health and Social Services and the Chief Public Health Officer activated the Emergency Operations Centre. This allowed for rapid COVID-19 system planning and preparation. We also began enhanced testing of residents and visitors for COVID-19 who presented flu-like symptoms and had travelled outside the Northwest Territories well before the pandemic was declared. This allowed us to take quick action if a positive case was confirmed and ensure that our testing capability was in place across the NWT.

The Chief Public Health Officer also issued guidance to all long-term care facilities to protect our elders against the spread of the virus. Additionally, our healthcare system initiated enhanced infection control practices in all healthcare facilities to protect front-line healthcare workers. Our public outreach was also increased to provide residents with truthful, evidence-based information on the virus, and how to keep each other safe.

Mr. Speaker, as the situation in southern Canada began to escalate, it was apparent that stronger action was required. I declared a public health emergency on March 18<sup>th</sup> on the recommendation of the Chief Public Health Officer. This allowed the Chief Public Health Officer to issue the necessary public health orders to protect our territory. These orders prohibited non-resident travel within the territory, mandated two weeks of self-isolation for residents returning from anywhere outside our boundaries, and that self-isolation plans be submitted in order to ensure compliance.

As we began to get positive cases, we made the difficult decision to close businesses where physical distancing could not be maintained. At the same time, we provided the necessary advice for essential businesses and employers to stay open safely. We also acted to limit the risks from essential workers entering into the Northwest Territories to play crucial roles in our society and our economy by getting measures in place to track them, monitor their health, and have them self-isolate whenever possible.

Mr. Speaker, a significant amount of work went on behind the scenes to build the necessary systems to fully implement the public health measures. Within hours of restricting travel, our government instituted a public call centre, staffed check stops on our highways and airports, set up self-isolation hubs, and implemented a self-isolation planning and assessment process.

The Chief Public Health Officer has also established a compliance and enforcement taskforce trained to respond to public health risks in our communities. This team is working across the Northwest Territories and has visited more than half of our communities to provide outreach events to educate residents about the public health measures, as well as enforce.

Mr. Speaker, the results from our initial response have allowed us to contain the spread of COVID-19. We currently have no active cases and no community spread. That is a testament to the effectiveness of the orders in keeping us safe, and it is a credit to everyone in this territory who followed the orders and advice to contain this virus.

While implementing timely and aggressive public health measures was necessary to contain the spread, the need to gradually and wisely ease our restrictions was always part of the overall plan. We were just waiting until it was safe to do so.

Two weeks ago, the Chief Public Health Officer released Emerging Wisely, our path to emerging gradually, safely, and wisely from our strictest public health measures and bringing some stability back to the territory. It reflects the caution and care that our residents expect in order to continue to protect our remote communities and our healthcare system.

Through the four phases of easing, restrictions are gradually lifted to allow for residents to visit their friends, family, and neighbours; do more activities; and re-open more businesses, and doing it all safely, but we also made it clear that this is not a return to business as usual, and it will not be until this pandemic has run its course. We are calling on residents to accept that some measures will be in place for a long time.



Travel into the territory will remain restricted, and self-isolation requirements will remain in place for residents who choose to travel outside of the Northwest Territories and for those entering on an essential or exceptional basis. Until there is a vaccine, we must keep physical distance of two metres and continue to wash our hands more than we ever have; wear non-medical masks in crowded spaces; and keep our most vulnerable safe. That is what will keep this territory strong and healthy.

Mr. Speaker, all Northwest Territories residents have a role to play. We must remain mindful and use caution as our restrictions are lifted, because this pandemic will continue, and so will our response.

Lifting restrictions comes with some risks. It is likely that we will get more cases and we may experience community spread. To rise to the challenge, we may need to call on everyone to make sacrifices again, but, with these months behind us, I am confident that Northerners have the strength and resiliency to do what is necessary to protect themselves and their family and friends and communities to remain healthy. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister. Ministers' statements. Item 3, Members' statements. Member for Hay River South.

### Members' Statements

#### MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON RECOGNITION OF 90<sup>TH</sup> BIRTHDAY OF ALEX MORIN

**MR. ROCKY SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is with great respect and admiration that I stand here today and recognize Mr. Alex Morin, a respected elder and a long-time resident of Hay River who recently celebrated his 90<sup>th</sup> birthday on May 22<sup>nd</sup>.

Mr. Morin grew up in a commercial fishing family, and it was the allure of the Great Slave Lake and the resources it had to offer that brought him to the NWT at the young age of 17. Alex, as he prefers to be called, is originally from Ile-a-la-Crosse, a small commercial fishing community in Saskatchewan. Alex and his wife made Hay River their home, where they raised three children and were blessed with many grandchildren. Alex still resides in the west channel in Hay River, which is the heart of the commercial fishing industry.

Alex fished the big lake until his retirement. He is a strong supporter and advocate for fishers on the Great Slave Lake. He is well aware of the problems that have existed in the commercial fishing industry and continue to exist to this day. If you want history

on the Great Slave Lake commercial fishery, then Alex is the person to talk to.

In addition to fishing, Alex found the time to help establish the Metis Association in the NWT. He was president of the local Hay River Metis Association for a number of years, where he advocated for Metis rights and programs.

Alex, I know you enjoyed your birthday, and I look forward to having coffee with you when I get back home. As the commercial fishing industry is a priority of this government, I will be looking to you for some guidance. Happy birthday. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON PANDEMIC LESSONS LEARNED

**MR. O'REILLY:** Merci, monsieur le President. Like many residents of the Northwest Territories, I have been mulling over the dramatic changes to our lives as a result of the response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Very few of us could have predicted in January where we are today. Many have lost their jobs or had their income severely reduced. Students have lost the opportunity to fully complete their studies this year. Many parents and guardians are struggling with adapting to work from home.

On the positive side, there have been significant government assistance programs developed and delivered in very short order. We are on the verge of a guaranteed basic income. We have found housing for homeless people, including a managed alcohol program here in Yellowknife with remarkable results.

Here are some of the concerns that have been foremost in my mind during the COVID-19 public health emergency. They are largely a result of the concerns brought forward by constituents and residents across the NWT:

- Need for better communications from Cabinet;
- Stronger and better-coordinated border controls, follow-up, and enforcement;
- Clearer definition and communications around essential service workers; and
- Appropriate precautions being taken to ensure that southern workers do not put northern residents at significant risk.

There are still some gaps in the assistance programs including:

- Financial assistance for renters and small landlords;
- Targeted assistance for seniors and vulnerable populations;
- More tools for communities around liquor restrictions;
- Improved benefits and wages for essential service workers;
- Better-coordinated financial assistance for small businesses;
- Financial and other assistance for critical supply chains, including regional air carriers and trucking services; and
- Greater support for those activities and sectors that build greater self-reliance and economic resiliency, including food security.

We also need to start to turn our minds to what life can and should be like in a post-COVID world. We need:

- A thorough and public review of GNWT's pandemic planning and response;
- A re-evaluation of 19<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly priorities and Cabinet mandate;
- A thoughtful discussion of how to restart our economy without losing some of the significant assistance and program gains; and
- Increased initiatives to build a more self-sufficient economy.

As Northerners, we always help each other. We will get through this together and be that much stronger for it. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. Members' statements. Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes.

#### MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON REFLECTIONS ON COVID-19 PANDEMIC

**MS. SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today, we return to this House for our first day of our regular spring session, but this is anything but regular. We have our seats six feet apart, and Brian has the measuring tape to prove it. We have become accustomed to following arrows, not only in the Legislative Assembly, but everywhere in public, it seems. We have been recommended to wear masks in public, and we cannot fly without one. Like I said, Mr. Speaker, this is anything but regular.

Mr. Speaker, when we left here after session on March 16<sup>th</sup>, things changed so fast. On March 18<sup>th</sup>, the public health emergency was declared. Our first case of COVID was diagnosed. Travel was restricted to non-residents. The education leaders across the territory closed the schools for the remainder of the year. Then, on my birthday, I got a state of emergency declared. All this within less than two weeks, but on April 1, 2020, it really hit home for me. Inuvik got its first and only case of COVID-19. I thought my phone was busy when the day the first case was announced, but when it arrived at home, it scared everyone. My community was afraid. They were angry. They wanted to know who it was. I tried my best to answer the questions, give them as much information as I could on how to keep themselves and their family safe.

I want to thank my community for staying safe by following the recommendations that were given by Dr. Kandola. I want to thank the groups of people who got together to help out those in isolation, elders, and high-risk. I want to thank the Indigenous groups and their staff in my community for continuing to provide food, gas, and supplies for families to get out on the land. This year, I saw so many families' pictures out on the land.

Thank you to all the essential workers who continued to work in Inuvik to provide the needed supplies, groceries, and services. Thank you to the Ministers who took my calls and emails and made quick decisions and policy changes to assist our residents. I hope we can continue to make those quick changes.

I also give my condolences to you, Mr. Speaker, you and your family on the loss of your father, and to the families of my community who lost loved ones during this time. Even having a funeral was not normal, but they managed to pay their respects as best they could, and celebrate the lives anyway. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes. Members' statements. Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

#### MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON COVID-19 PANDEMIC OVERVIEW

**MR. NORN:** Marsi cho, Mr. Speaker. We are all Northerners. As Northerners, it's our very nature to mingle, hug, and shake hands, to be physically close with each other, especially true in our small communities. During this time, we normally had our carnivals. We had our jigging. I could hear the jigging in my head right now. I could hear the drums and people having a good time, but that was all disrupted by COVID. You know what? I believe we are all resilient. We are a resilient bunch, and we can get through this. We got through other

scourges. I said in an online address on my social media that the key to getting through this is through patience and discipline, and I stand behind that. I still believe that. We're not through this. This isn't over, and we need to stay the course.

Mr. Speaker, again, I mentioned that we went through the Spanish influenza way back, before World War I. When I left my home community, Deninu Kue, there is still a mass grave marker there. I hope we never have to go through that ever. I want to thank all the medical staff and all the workers, what they need, what they did to protect our people and to make sure everyone got through this without dying.

Our small communities, they took measures to protect themselves, i.e. security checkpoints. I stood behind them. I think that we could have done a little bit more as a government, but right now, this is a process. We are still going through this process. Where we are sitting right now is a perfect example of it, with our masks and our arrows now, our new protocols now because of COVID.

It did bring out some experiences through all this. It made us think, reflect. During this time, as a people, we managed to house our homeless during this pandemic. It made me think about basic universal income that we are giving to people through this. It made me think of how we give Mother Nature a break, some breathing room here, some reduction in greenhouse gases. Those kind of things really, really, brought some things to light, and how we can proceed as a government in the future. I would ask unanimous consent to finish my statement.

---Unanimous consent granted

Marsi cho, Mr. Speaker. I will be brief. In closing, I wanted to say that a lot was disrupted. There were no weddings, or anything like that, and our funerals aren't even the same. My condolences to all those who lost their loved ones, all our elders. Hopefully, when all this is done, we can have a good, proper celebration, a good feast, and pay our respects the right way as a group like we always do, because that's what we do as Northerners. We're going to get through this, and I want to pass the message on to everybody in the North. Marsi cho.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Tu Nedhe-Willideh. Members' statements. Member for Yellowknife Centre.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON  
REFLECTIONS ON COVID-19 PANDEMIC

**MS. GREEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We in the NWT are experiencing a much-needed pause in the pandemic. It's time to reflect on what has happened

and to plan for the second wave of COVID-19 which we are told is coming.

Mr. Speaker, I wish I printed my statement out. We ended up sitting in a time of high anxiety. In my family, both my daughter and my partner were tested for COVID and quarantined until the results came back negative. Our family business, the funeral home, has had to adapt to a new way of helping families, because funerals are not allowed. It has been difficult for us and for grieving families to find new ways to say goodbye, but we are committed to, and we have followed the Chief Public Health Officer's orders, and we have adapted.

My constituents are also anxious. I had more calls than ever before, seeking exemptions to the public health orders as well as complaining about a perceived lack of enforcement; constituents worried about being evicted from their homes, and about not having a home to self-isolate in. Personal services businesses wondered how they could pay for their bills when their revenue dropped to zero, and from retailers who also saw similar drops. I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker, I'm having technical difficulties.

Good things have happened. The Chief Public Health Officer's orders have contained the spread of the virus in the Northwest Territories. People in all walks of life have innovated to keep us going, from new restaurant take-out options, to the beginning of a managed alcohol program, to teachers taking up the challenge of delivering distance learning. The United Way has been busy fundraising for communities around the NWT. The Yellowknife Co-op has generously shared its profits to help people who need food. The Yellowknife Community Foundation has doubled its scholarship offerings to assist students who do not have jobs this summer. Yellowknifers have been very generous to one another, from offering to pack hampers, donating to non-profits, and offering personal acts of kindness.

Mr. Speaker, now that we are emerging wisely, we are trying to get back to activities and services that are part of everyday life. Once again, the Chief Public Health Officer is guiding us through this process, and we need to continue listening to her advice and apply that to ourselves, our families, and friends. Throughout this stressful time, we have shown that we are indeed stronger together. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON  
COVID-19 PANDEMIC RESPONSE

**MR. JOHNSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Welcome back, everyone. It's truly an honour to be sitting in this House once again. I would like to begin by thanking everyone, our citizens, my colleagues, our public servants. I do not know when people sleep, honestly. Everyone has been working so hard, and it's been amazing.

The World Health Organization said, "In a pandemic, you must move quickly, and that won't always be perfect." I believe that's what we have done. We are one of few places on Earth with no active cases of COVID-19, Mr. Speaker. We are in the midst of a global pandemic which is no doubt a tragedy. Hundreds of thousands of people have lost their lives across this planet, but we, as the Northwest Territories, have had a very strong and resilient response, and it is in the midst of this pandemic that that resilience and entrepreneurial spirit of the North must guide us through.

I want us to not lose ground on the progress we have made to date. It is amazing how quickly our government can pivot on issues when we put our minds to it. I want us to think bigger, Mr. Speaker. Working from home, four-day work weeks, a guaranteed basic income, a truly digital government, hundreds of small businesses and entrepreneurs in a place that truly values their neighbours and neighbouring communities, I think all of these things are possible and more.

We know Northerners are resilient, and I want to take a moment to focus on our ability to be adaptive. Three months ago, I thought the idea of using the Internet as a tool to forward politics, education, and healthcare was a far-off dream. I thought our virtual care strategy in public health was not going to go anywhere, and, in months, we have seen more progress in virtual care than I ever thought to see in four years. I want to congratulate the Department of Health and Social Services for all of the amazing work they have done to date, Mr. Speaker.

I hope we realize that, as a territory, we have the capacity to continue improving our systems. Our government is uniquely positioned to take advantage of these new opportunities. We have proven that the GNWT can be flexible and nimble, and our size means that sweeping and effective change can be made simply by trying.

I look forward to these next few weeks. I look for to a renewed spirit of cooperation across the north, and, Mr. Speaker, I believe we will beat COVID-19 together. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Yellowknife North. Members' statements. Member for Kam Lake.

#### MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON REFLECTIONS ON COVID-19 PANDEMIC

**MS. CLEVELAND:** Mr. Speaker, I am thankful to Doctors Kandola and Cook and their teams, who have worked tirelessly to keep Northerners safe, but the last 10 weeks have taken their toll. My constituents are suffering. Businesses were told to close, consumers asked to stop consuming, and people were required to distance themselves.

I am grateful for the messaging urging people to stay home, stay connected, and that we are all in this together. However, while we are all in the same storm, we are not in the same boat. Some have faced this pandemic alone. Some have struggled to provide for their families through layoff or closed business. Many continue working full-time while home-schooling children. All are struggling to process the grief of change, uncertainty, and fear.

I have noticed an alarming change in my interactions with constituents. At the start of our lockdown, my constituents looked to me for clarification on restrictions and supports. Now, every single evening, I receive tear-filled phone calls from people who have run out of adrenaline. Change is exhausting. Treading water is exhausting. Our people need hope and to believe that things are going to get better.

Mr. Speaker, the GNWT needs to step up and take bold actions to quickly reinforce and rebuild our northern economy. It must ensure that all Northerners stay afloat, regardless of how leaky their boats may be. This will require all Members of this House to stay focused on the most important issues and to make tough decisions necessary for our recovery.

To my constituents, do not stop calling. Don't apologize for taking time, calling too late, or sharing too much. In this Instagram-ready world, society encourages us to put out an image of our best selves and teaches us to judge ourselves for negative emotions like sadness or anger. If we refuse to allow ourselves the space to experience these feelings, then we are denying our own humanity. Northerners need the space to be human in the midst of this pandemic, to navigate their grief, cope with where we are today, and build the skills required to move forward tomorrow. Embracing the emotional courage to share allows you to be human.

Mr. Speaker, our tomorrow will not look like our yesterday, and this is scary, but change also brings great potential. I pledge to continue to help my constituents push the GNWT to take bold and decisive steps to lead us to our new normal. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Kam Lake. Members' statements. Member for Nunakput.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON  
CONDOLENCES ON PASSING OF COMMUNITY  
MEMBERS

**MR. JACOBSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today, I stand up, and I would like to say condolences to some of members of my community of Tuktoyaktuk. We lost a great leader, Eddie Dillon, community corporation chair, longest standing mayor of Tuktoyaktuk, and a big asset to the Inuvialuit Final Agreement. He sat on so many boards, and the Tuktoyaktuk community corporation chair. At his passing, I would like to give condolences to his brothers, Billy, Wayne, Floyd, and his sister Coreen (ph); his children, Sara (ph), Terry-Lee (ph), Tessa (ph), Tia (ph), and his son William. Thoughts and prayers are with you.

Mr. Speaker, also Mr. Bert Kimisana (ph), thoughts and prayers are with Roy, Margaret, and Fred as they grieve, passing on.

Gord Nuknuviuk (ph), probably, in my own community growing up, one of the greatest polar bear hunters. He always travelled by himself with his dog, travelling out on the ice. You could watch when we were just kids going to school, and always successful, too, in his hunts. He passed away, and thoughts and prayers to his sister, Minnie Butt, and her family out of Hay River.

Mr. Speaker, also I would like to speak for yourself: your dad was a mentor to a lot of dug mushers in the Beaufort Delta. He was a mentor in bringing the delta husky to the region. One year we brought George Attla into the community. George Attla wanted one of his huskies. He said no, and that said a lot for your father. He was a great mentor, trapper, and he will be sadly missed. Thoughts and prayers to yourself and your mother, Grace, and all of the brothers and siblings.

Also today, the passing of my uncle, my wife's uncle, Billy Gordon (ph). He passed away this morning. I want to say to his partner, Helen Laroque (ph); his sister, Edith Burke (ph); my mother-in-law, Maggie Jordan (ph); Danny Sea Gordon (ph); his children, Janine (ph), Chuckie (ph), Ryan, (ph), and Von (ph), our thoughts and prayers are with you, and we will get through this together. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Nunakput. Members' statements. Member for Monfwi.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON  
RECOGNITION OF PASSING OF COMMUNITY  
MEMBERS

**MR. LAFFERTY:** Masi, Mr. Speaker. [Translation] In my home community, there is a funeral service. We're here now, but we would think of them, and you know there is so much tragedy has been happening in our home community. It's not very, very great. These are things people are going through. All the Drybones family, there is a funeral service in Behchoko right now, and there will be another one tomorrow. That would be a natural family. They are all related. I would like to say to them we are thinking of them. Although we are in a process of this Assembly session, but because we think of one another, thinking of them, having them in our prayers, we think of them greatly, Mr. Speaker.

Today, as the government, we have our work to do and how many gatherings that we do when we say social distancing. Because of the gathering, we have to respect our leaders, as well, that we have a lot of things that we have to be able to face.

Right now, today, I would like to say that we think of our people. What do we do? What do we say? We stand up strong, and we think of them in our prayers that we would make them feel they are remembered. Whenever we speak our family, because there is just been so many tragedies right now within our communities, within our lands, I will say right now that we are thinking of them.

Right now, today, you know what we are facing. I have to say one more time that we are thinking of them, praying for them, young and old and that passed now. We are all thinking of them, as well. We are hoping that we would be able to go through this whole process so that, with our great mind, with open minds, with us gathering right now, this gathering at the Legislative Assembly, take a minute to pray for them. Thank you. [Translation ends]

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you. Members' statements. Member for Range Lake.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON  
EULOGY FOR ROBIN MERCER-SPOULE

**HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE:** [English translation not available] ...2020. Robin was an incredible woman who touched the lives of many. She was an example of a true Northerner, one who gave her all, but, no matter how busy, she always made time for others.

Robin was an inspiration. [English translation not available] ...starting in 1976 as an 11-year-old figure skater. She also represented the NWT in both the Canada winter and summer games, making her one of the most accomplished Team NT athletes. In 1985, Robin helped start the first women's hockey in Yellowknife, and she is

recognized as one of the NWT's greatest female hockey players.

Proof of her phenomenal skills came in 1990. Robin travelled to Hawaii to play in the Royal Hawaiian Cup. She was the only woman playing and won top goaltender and most valuable player. In 1994, Robin was scouted for the women's hockey Team Canada, but a bad knee prevented her from joining the team.

Robin's other passion, Mr. Speaker, was broomball, and she competed in many territorial, national, and international tournaments, winning the 2013 Pacific Rim Tournament in Melbourne, Australia, as their coach. Robin has won awards over her career, including the Sport North Beth Miller Senior Athlete Award. In 2018, Robin was given the well-deserved honour of being inducted into the NWT Sport Hall of Fame.

Although famous for her sports career, Robin was also an incredible friend to many, many Northerners, as well as having friends from around the world. She was always the first to lend a hand where needed. Robin took on every challenge with grace and heart. It was that heart that led her to marry the love of her life, Traci. Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

---Unanimous consent granted

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Robin Mercer-Sproule was a true role model, not only in sports, but in life. Robin never backed down from a challenge, facing every day with relentless will. As Robin would say, "It doesn't matter if you are winning the game or losing the game. Always try your hardest, and never give up." My deepest condolences to Traci Mercer-Sproule, Robin's family, and the many, many people the North and throughout the world whose life she touched. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Range Lake. Members' statements. Colleagues, as it has been an hour since we started, with the rules that we agreed to go by yesterday, we will be taking a 10-minute break, as we don't have Pages in the House to refill your drinks or anything. We will give the Members 10 minutes and reconvene. Thank you.

---SHORT RECESS

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you. I will now call the House back to order. Item 4, recognition of visitors in the gallery. There are a couple there. Item 5, reports of committees on the review of bills. Item 6, reports of standing and special committees. Item 7, returns to oral questions. Item 8, acknowledgements. Item 9, oral questions. Member for Hay River South.

## Oral Questions

### QUESTION 222-19(2): HELPING BUSINESSES RESPOND TO COVID-19 PANDEMIC

**MR. ROCKY SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are all well aware that, because of the pandemic, our economy is being hit hard. We have to find a way, I guess, to get it back on track. One of the things that I see is that we have three departments, probably: Housing; Infrastructure; and Education, Culture and Employment. Those, I see as the three departments that are going to provide contracts and provide the employment and training for our residents and for our businesses. We also talk about, you know, having panels, like blue-chip panels and that, of businesspeople, and I guess what I see with that, if we're looking for our blue-chip panel, our blue-chip panels are in every community. They are made up of businesspeople who are working hard and trying to make a dollar.

The questions that I have are for the Minister of Infrastructure. Time is of the essence when it comes to helping businesses survive this pandemic period. Besides the loans, deferrals, and grants that are being provided, what is the Department of Infrastructure doing to make sure that businesses have the opportunity to get back to work? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Hay River South. Minister of Infrastructure.

**HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to thank the Member for his questions. The Department of Infrastructure is continuing with our capital plan. We have had to have a bit of delay in our process to account for COVID, including the lack or want of southern or outside workers in small communities. This has delayed the implementation of some of our contracting at this point.

However, the Department of Infrastructure does plan to continue with most of our infrastructure projects going forward that we already had on the books. We have started to tweak and look at our procurement strategy. We have done a few things right now to make that a little bit more accessible to Northerners and favouring Northerners, in that we have removed the minimum scoring requirements for the RFPs and a few other tweaks. I believe that I sent you all an email about that last week.

We are starting with some small changes that we can make at the moment, but we are going to be executing a multi-department review of procurement, which will include BIP. It will be in conjunction with the Minister of Finance's department, as well as my two departments, ITI and

Infrastructure. We recognize that procurement has some issues in the Northwest Territories. We are committed, as we have said in our mandate and priorities, to addressing those issues, and that is still the plan for Infrastructure going forward. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. ROCKY SIMPSON:** I would like the Minister to provide me with some comfort that the department will start to use tools, such as negotiated contracts and sole-source contracts, to the advantage of our northern businesses. Right now, what is happening is we still see contracts from the North going to southern contractors. There is always a reason why; there is always an excuse why, and we have to put a stop to that. I am looking to the Minister and her department to tell me how she's going to do it, and as soon as possible.

**HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY:** Yes, I completely do commit to making these changes. I think that, within the department, I have recognized that it is a much more complex situation than when I was first speaking to you about this. I do recognize that people are tired of excuses and tired of hearing, "We just have to do it this way," and playing it safe, because that is pretty much the messaging, is that the safest thing for me as a Minister is to put everything out to open tender, and then I protect myself.

That is not the way that we will be going forward, and I can guarantee and commit to that right now. We are already in discussions with Cabinet about some specific negotiated contracts, but, as well, a general conversation around direct, sole-source, and negotiated contracts and maximizing our dollars in the North. We definitely intend to go down that road.

I have already acknowledged that, at times, it's tough to move this government ship very quickly, and I acknowledge that it hasn't moved fast enough for some of the Members on the other side, but I continue to commit to making those improvements where I see fit. I do have to make sure, though, that I make informed changes and choices for my department, and I am recognizing, the more I am in this role, how little I actually know, and therefore, I do need to make sure we're making the right choices moving forward. I do commit to all of you that, at any time, if people do want to discuss specific contracts or this going forward more, we can.

**MR. ROCKY SIMPSON:** We saw how fast the Department of Health responded to COVID, and we saw what the government could actually do, how fast they can react. I am hoping that the Department of Infrastructure is going to be the same way, and not kind of drag this out with, "Wait

until we get panels in place," and coming up with more excuses.

One of the problems that I see is that the staff, no doubt, are working hard, whether they are at home or not, but one of the problems that I see is that we don't have a lot of people in the offices. We have office buildings in the communities that have separate offices, and we have nobody working in them. That has to change. I would like to see that change sooner than later, and I would like to know what the department is doing about that.

**HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY:** A lot of the direction around the workplaces and such came from the CPHO's Office, and Infrastructure and ITI just had to accommodate it like everybody else in the workplace. There was a whole-of-government conversation around our workspaces, but I do agree with what the Member is saying. Now we are past the reaction stage where we were just trying to keep everybody safe, and now we do need to look at being proactive and getting people back to work.

I do think that having people go back to the offices will actually increase productivity. I know, for myself, when I started coming to the Leg again a couple of weeks ago, when I was able to leave my home, that actually had a huge amount of change in my mental health about work, and just feeling like I was more productive. I was able to also, then, separate work from home, which I am hearing is a big concern of many of our employees. They are not able to deal with doing their work and having their children at home, and then they are finding that their work hours are extending well into the evenings. For some people, that's great. They're flexible; they work in the morning, and then they work in the evening. However, we do need to get back to doing business in the Northwest Territories.

Infrastructure did have a large role in the pandemic around the borders and the supply chain and procurement and PPE. We were quite busy with doing that. We did have contract issues that we had to look at for contracts that were ongoing, as far as whether they were still going to be able to be executed and whether we were opening the government up to liability. There was a lot within Infrastructure that we had to deal with before we could start turning out the contracts again and determining how we were going to do that. It has been, probably, a little slower than the Member would like, but I do commit to taking the points you have made about the offices back to my department and having that conversation with them this week.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister. Final supplementary, Member for Hay River South.

**MR. ROCKY SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I guess, in saying all this, I think that it is important that the Department of Health and the Department of Infrastructure work together to coordinate moving ahead. Everything went so fast, and I understand that, you know, the Department of Health probably had to take the lead and do stuff without really having time to talk to anybody else, but now we have that time. How is your department working with the Department of Health to make sure that this goes ahead smoothly and quickly? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY:** All of the departments have, quite often, ADM committees, working committees. They also have DM working committees. I would say that my department and the Department of Health have actually had a lot of conversation over the last while, but you are correct. There was a direction coming from Health and Social Services that needed to happen so that we could protect worker health and safety.

Maybe now is the time that Infrastructure does need to push forward a little harder and say, "Okay, we need to take a little bit more risk in having people back to work so that we can move forward the process of government." I would say that we did step back and, really, our priority and our focus was ensuring the health and safety of the residents. We also went into issues with WSCC if people are not feeling safe to go back into their workplace. They have every right to refuse unsafe work.

Right now, what the department is doing is we are looking at our buildings, all of the buildings that we manage for the GNWT, and we are trying to put as many measures in place, or engineering controls, so that we minimize the exposure of people who are working. Right now, we have things like sensor faucets going in, looking at no-touch doors, those types of things. Right now, that is the work that is going on with Infrastructure so that we can get government employees back to work. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 223-19(2):  
LESSONS LEARNED TO DATE

**MR. O'REILLY:** Merci, monsieur le President. My questions are for the Premier, who is coordinating the GNWT's pandemic planning and recovery. My statement earlier today reflected on some of the lessons learned to date. I recognize that we are still in the midst of the pandemic, but we must have learned some lessons and best practices by now. Has the Premier begun to plan for a thorough and public review of GNWT's pandemic planning and response, and what sorts of specific measures or steps can we expect to see? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

**HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Looking for a plan of our response for COVID-19, absolutely, we are looking at it. However, I do want to be careful with that, because COVID-19 is still here. We are still experiencing things at a rapid rate. It has slowed down a bit, but, by the second wave, we are expecting that changes will come pretty rapidly.

We have been in the process now of changing our services, providing services that we needed and programs that we needed to accompany people, but some other things will need to be done. For example, the municipal and community government, EMO is the one that stands in my head, the most prominent at this point. EMO, the emergency management organization, was meant to be a program for community programs, community issues, floods, forest fires, et cetera. This pandemic made it worldwide, and so, at that point, it became more of a Cabinet decision.

Those are things that, going into the future, will probably be a legislation that I would want changed in this Assembly. At this point, we are still in the middle of it. We have only just begun it. It would be inappropriate at this time to go looking at changing legislation right now, recognizing that Cabinet already has control of it, but it will be something that we need to do in this Assembly. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. O'REILLY:** I want to thank the Premier for that. I think that I almost heard her say that she is willing to look at the Emergency Measures Act. That's a good thing. I have lots of other ideas. I am sure that the Chief Public Health Officer is going to conduct some kind of review, as well, but the review needs to be done in a public fashion. Maybe the Auditor General can give us some ideas, as well.

I want to move on, Mr. Speaker. As MLAs, we collectively developed a set of priorities, and then Cabinet went off and developed a mandate that was tabled and discussed in the House. Would the Premier agree that, given the pandemic, it is time to review and update those priorities and the mandate?

**HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE:** A couple of months ago, when COVID-19 hit us, it was early March. Towards late March, I started to realize that life was changing really quickly. We were having to supplement areas that we had never put money in before; programs were closing up; offices were closing up; we were looking at a new way of doing business. It made me wonder, Mr. Speaker. We spent months going over the mandate, making it



based on the priorities, and I started to wonder, "Do we have the money? Is it still the priority?"

I gave direction, actually, at the end of March for the departments to start looking at the mandate and actually looking at what they can do. I am not going to give too much right here, because it is process, and I do believe that it's important to work with Regular MLAs. We have put an offer in to standing committee, my understanding is, and so, at that point, we would like to be able to talk to the Members to review where we are with the mandate and if we need any changes, because, in an initial review on our side, it looks like a lot of the mandate can still be done.

**MR. O'REILLY:** I want to thank the Premier for that. I agree that it is time to review the mandate. Probably, you need to collectively look at the priorities we developed. I want to say that GNWT's economic assistance programs to small businesses have been very slow and uneven. I am going to have a lot more to say about that, but I want to ask the Premier about overall planning for economic recovery. We have had an initial presentation without specifics, but can the Premier tell us now how the views of Regular MLAs are going to be incorporated, and when does she anticipate this effort really starting to take off?

**HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE:** Again, most people, when they talk about COVID-19, people have seen the economic impacts and people across the world, across Canada have been talking about economic recovery. I think we are one of the only jurisdictions that is talking about economic and social recovery. Perhaps because we are a small population, we had the benefit of actually seeing what we could do in a short amount of time. So I think that involving MLAs was a commitment that we made at the beginning of this session. It has been long. It does take a lot more time, but I made a commitment that it would not be Cabinet plus three, and I will maintain that commitment, which means that, as we work forward, when we develop our economic and social recovery plan, we have proposed to Members that we have a joint committee that is made up of Cabinet and the Regular Members so that the Regular Members are actively engaged, not just giving information, but actually engaged in the process of defining what our future will be.

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** Merci, Monsieur le President. I want to thank the Premier. I do believe that she is committed to an inclusive process. Clearly, there have been some success stories during this pandemic, and I mentioned some of those in my statement. We have got social programs that are

starting to deal with homelessness. We have got a managed alcohol program, wage subsidy for low-income workers, payroll of Income Assistance and more. Can the Premier share her thoughts about how we can keep these significant gains and how we can continue to plan for economic recovery at the same time? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE:** Those who were here in the last Assembly would remember one time I had been asked in the House about where I stood. I said people have called me many names, but they haven't called me a name, but people have called me at times a socialist. I don't think I am really that radical, but people have said that. I am all about universal childcare and guaranteed living wage. I think it is part of the answer. I do not believe the perception that people will just sit back and be lazy. I think that would tire people very quickly. I have already started to put the fuel in the fire.

As I meet with our Premiers across Canada, with our Prime Minister, I have already been saying to them things such as, "You've given the wage increase. You are giving these out to people. How can you ask us to take it back?" So I think that that is really important. It is a matter of not only what we do as a government, what the federal government does. I have been working very closely with our three territories on both sides, and we are looking at providing a win-win to the federal government. These programs, getting people in housing, giving people almost a guaranteed wage, giving people more access to childcare are all things that all of us in this House should be proud of. It would be a sin, Mr. Speaker, to take them back. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 224-19(2):  
FRANK CHANNEL BRIDGE

**MR. LAFFERTY:** Masi, Mr. Speaker. [Translation] Today, I would like to speak in Tlicho, but my interpretation is not coming across clearly, so I am going to do this in English. [Translation ends] [Microphone not turned on] ...at the last Assembly. It's a vital part of North Slave's highway lifeline to the rest of the territory and also the South. It's 50 years old and badly aging. Mr. Speaker, five months ago, I asked the Minister of Infrastructure in this Chamber about the status. The proposal was submitted at that time. Has it been submitted to date with the federal government? If yes, when was it submitted? Masi.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Monfwi. Minister of Infrastructure.

**HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have started discussions again with the federal government about the funding on the Frank Channel Bridge. As part of the COVID relief, the federal government's infrastructure stream is being allowed to have more flexibility within it. One hundred percent funding is one of the options. As well, we will be allowed to do the municipal infrastructure projects in schools and things.

Not super specific to the bridge. However, the bridge would fall under that funding, and we have had lots of conversations with the federal ministers about the fact that infrastructure projects are what is needed in the Northwest Territories to keep the economy going and keep our businesses running. We are very optimistic that we will get the funding soon for the bridge. I do believe that the actual submission is in. I will confirm that, though, and get that back to you. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister. Before we continue, we will just do a test on interpretation, make sure everybody's hearing well. No? Just maybe continue with the question and see how everybody's gauging it. Thank you.

**MR. LAFFERTY:** I understand that the Tlicho Government is in full support to replace the Frank Channel Bridge and submitted a letter to your attention, Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of Infrastructure. Of course, they requested a sole-source contract or a negotiated contract on the bridge, which is situated in the heart of the Tlicho land. Has that been shared with the federal government as part of the Chapter 26 of the Tlicho Agreement on economic measures, the possibility of either negotiated contract or sole-source contract as part of the Tlicho constitution?

**HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY:** I will look at you this time. The discussion around the Frank Channel Bridge within my department is very much about how we keep the Tlicho involvement in that. We are definitely having conversations about negotiated contracts on the Tlicho bridge -- sorry. There we go, giving it away. The Frank Channel Bridge. We recognize going forward that this could be a great opportunity to have Tlicho people employed and Tlicho people trained. Significant training would be part of what I would want to see in any negotiated contract. I do not want lip service, and I do not want to have a situation where I have the Member for Monfwi asking me why an American company is now operating in his area. I am well aware. His points have been taken, and we are definitely having that conversation with the federal government.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you Minister. I would like to ask the Member if he could speak in Tlicho so we could see how Members are -- I could hear clearly.

I am not sure if anybody else can. Thank you. Member for Monfwi

**MR. LAFFERTY:** Masi, Mr. Speaker. [Translation] Chapter 26 of the Tlicho Agreement strictly lays out the process between the Tlicho government, GNWT, and the federal government on any economic development in the Mowhi Gogha De Niitaae area, in which the Frank Channel Bridge is located. Section 26.3.3(8)(b) activities on Tlicho land will not be public tendered. Is the Minister of GNWT contracting fully aware of such agreement? Can I get a guarantee from this Minister and GNWT as a whole to bring this to the attention of the federal government and make them aware of Tlicho Agreement? [Translation ends]

**HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY:** [Microphone turned off] ...I apologize, but it's just that last bit of the question. I definitely would commit to having this conversation with the federal government about having the Tlicho involvement from the start. Once we have that funding, that conversation is going to begin with the Tlicho government. I made a promise to those chiefs, and I made a promise at roundup in front of those chiefs of what I was going to be doing with my department to ensure that Northerners worked and that we built meaningful Indigenous businesses out of that. I still stand behind that commitment, and I commit that again today that, when we have that funding in hand, we will have arm-in-arm in partnership with the Tlicho.

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

**MR. LAFFERTY:** Masi, Mr. Speaker. [Translation] The question is on Chapter 26 and is it [Translation ends] ...highly encouraged. Also the Minister if she can accept to conduct extensive training or workshop within her Department of Infrastructure to get familiar with the Tlicho constitution. Chapter 26 clearly highlights it in the subsections. One of the subsections, obviously, states out that, within any activities on Tlicho land, there shall not be any public tenders. The federal government is part of that agreement. They should be aware of it, too, but we have the onus on our GNWT departments. Can the Minister commit to having an extensive workshop or training for the senior staff so they are fully aware of our agreement? Mahsi.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Monfwi. Minister of Infrastructure.

**HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, I can commit to that. I also wanted to state that one of the conversations that I'm having with my deputy minister at this point is that I want to see a creation of an engagement unit within Infrastructure to deal with these exact types of situations and not have that be a tack-on, add-on to

the project manager's or the technical project manager's role. While it's very preliminary, I would then also welcome your input on how you would like to see that unit get formed. That is my plan, that is what I've conveyed to my deputy minister, and we're going to start doing engagement better in the Department of Infrastructure. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister. Colleagues, before we continue, we're really running short on time, here. Just to let everyone know to keep their questions short, and same with the answers, please. If you can, get straight to the answer. I know we have a lot of Members yet who want to ask questions and we are only on number four now, so just a reminder. Also, it's kind of challenging, but kind of talk slower so the interpreters can catch what you're saying, as well. Thank you. With that, we'll continue on with oral questions. Member for Yellowknife Centre.

QUESTION 225-19(2):  
COVID-19 TESTING

**MS. GREEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Minister of Health and Social Services. We've been told that testing and contact tracing is key to discovering and isolating COVID-19 cases. That has worked fine so far, but it's easy to see that it's more difficult if community spread of the virus begins. Let me start by asking how many tests of either the rapid or standard type the NWT has today? Thank you.

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

**HON. DIANE THOM:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have a cooperation agreement with the National Microbiology Laboratory, which is responsible for acquiring and distributing the reagents kits, and then we allocate them based on jurisdictions' needs. Right now, in the Territories, we do have a database in stockpile, and I won't show my paper up, but we do have a database that is able to track how much PPE we have, including the tests. Right now, in the Northwest Territories, we're getting 40 tests per week.

**MS. GREEN:** Thank you to the Minister for that answer. It doesn't give me an idea of the size of your stockpile, but let me try to get at it another way. How quickly could the department wrap up testing and provide results if there was an outbreak within a facility like a school or a jail or a small community?

**HON. DIANE THOM:** There are several tests that we do here in the Northwest Territories. One is the swab test, which we send out to Alberta, and we usually get a response within three days; and that,

we have basically an unlimited stockpile. It's the GeneXpert test, which is the point of care, this is rapid testing, so the turnaround time for those tests is about an hour. Right now, we have supplies in for 40 kits a week with that, and we continue to receive weekly supplies.

**MS. GREEN:** Thank you to the Minister. My next question is: what resources does the department have to conduct contact tracing and what kind of training do staff need to participate in contact tracing?

**HON. DIANE THOM:** We have two tests here at the Stanton hospital, and there is some training aspect required in order for us to administer it. We are still waiting for another form or test to come in so that we can send them out to Fort Smith, Hay River, and Inuvik. Right now, we have the training pieces administered for the one test and we're just waiting for the stockpile to come so that we can send it out to the regions.

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

**MS. GREEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm sorry my question wasn't clear. I was talking about contact tracing, where staff call all the people who the infected person has been in touch with to try and figure out who else needs to be tested. What is our capacity for contact tracing in the NWT?

**HON. DIANE THOM:** I can find out for the Member. We do have a system in place; I'm just not aware of what it is right now. Since we've had non-residents come in, they have to fill out a self-isolation plan. With the self-isolation plan, we have a mechanism that is in place so that, if their tests come back positive, we have a way to track where they've been so that we can do the contact testing. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 226-19(2):  
MANDATE LETTERS FOR MINISTERS

**MR. O'REILLY:** Merci, Mr. Speaker, and I'm sorry I didn't give the Premier a head's up, but it's on the list for today. I'm wondering if the Premier can tell us whether mandate letters have been prepared for each of the Ministers? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you. Honourable Premier.

**HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, absolutely. Mandate letters were done, painfully, again. At the beginning of this Assembly, first of all, it was identified which Ministers would take over the priorities in the mandate, and from the mandate exercise we

developed mandate letters. We had made a commitment that we would be sharing that with the standing committee. When we were almost ready, it was in my inbox waiting for me to give final, and COVID-19 hit. With COVID-19 we stepped back and we said, "Do we need to add in this COVID-19?" My first gut was just to add in COVID-19, you've got to do it, but then my staff challenged me, and rightfully, and they said, "Is life going to be the same after? With this COVID-19 are we going to have the same programs?"

We actually went through and again we just spent the last little while going through our mandate. It's not as bad as we thought. We're ready now to give out the mandate letters based on how they were before, of course, with a little inclusion of COVID-19. I believe, again, that we've offered it to standing committee. If we haven't offered it, I will make sure it's done in the next day or two. The next step is to present it to MLAs, and I promise to get their feedback on that.

**MR. O'REILLY:** I thank the Premier for her forthrightness. I had understood that copies of these letters would be provided to the standing committees before they've been finalized. That's what I had understood was supposed to happen. I know COVID, and so on, but here we are more than two months late, and the Premier is saying that the letters are finalized. I haven't seen these letters. When is the Premier going to provide these letters to the Regular MLAs, or at least to the standing committees?

**HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE:** Thank you for pointing it out. That was miswording. The letters have been done. They've gone through me. The commitment has been to share it with Regular Members, and that, I will do. No Minister at this point has received their mandate. They've got a first draft of it that they were allowed to provide feedback on to me. At no time have they gotten it. The work is done on my side. My commitment before, and I'll honour that commitment, is to provide it to MLAs for their feedback. The commitment was that we wouldn't negotiate, that it would be feedback, and I would take that. Once I listen to that feedback and decide what is done, at that point I will be handing those letters to my Ministers, hopefully within the next couple of weeks.

**MR. O'REILLY:** I want to thank the Premier for clarifying that, and I'll stand down a little bit, myself. I guess I had misinterpreted that to say that the letters have actually been finalized. I understand that they are in draft form. Can the Premier confirm when she intends to share these letters with the appropriate standing committees?

**HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE:** Things have been going really fast over the past few months, really

fast the last few weeks, so I was under the impression that we had already done it. My commitment is, if we haven't already done it, that I will be providing those this week. I know my staff is listening. They're jumping on it right now.

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** Merci, Monsieur le President. I want to thank the Premier for that, and I look forward to getting these letters, seeing them in draft form. It's customary for these in the last Assembly and in the federal government, they make the letters public, and I assume that the Premier is going to do the same thing. The reason why I'm so interested in these letters is that the mandate, the priorities we develop, don't actually cover a lot of what some of the Ministers may have to do. Can the Premier tell us whether these letters contain work for the Ministers to do that might be outside of the actual mandate? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE:** Yes. The mandate letters do identify some of the normal day-to-day operations that would be expected. It does focus on the mandate. There is a section on COVID-19, and there is room where we can actually tailor it. However, I must point out that every single duty that I expect from our Ministers will not be in that mandate letter. It is not possible. I would have to write a book to do that. There are other ways to make sure that Ministers do their jobs, such as why we are here. There is the BF system, where people ask, enquiries. There's walking into offices, talking to Ministers, and challenging on the floor, and that's what we're all here for. The mandate is one tool. It is not the only tool. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### QUESTION 227-19(2):

#### PUBLIC AVAILABILITY OF MANDATE LETTERS

**MS. CLEVELAND:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. While my colleague was asking questions of the Premier, I overheard an assumption that the mandate letters would be made public, and I'm wondering if the Premier can confirm whether she intends to make those public or not. Thank you.

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

**HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE:** Mr. Speaker, you said to make our answers short. The answer is: Yes.

**MS. CLEVELAND:** I'd like to start off first by congratulating the GNWT on its Emerging Wisely document. It was well-prepared and well-

communicated to the public. The document sets out for residents what they need to do to move from the lockdown phase, and to loosening of restrictions, and being able to interact again with their loved ones. I believe that, to accompany this document, we need an economic recovery plan that identifies the financial supports and programs the GNWT intends to put in place to combat COVID-19, or as businesses attempt to combat COVID-19. My question for the Premier is: what does she see as the most important thing the GNWT needs to do to recover the economy while moving out of the lockdown phase?

**HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE:** It is really hard to pick one. We have done a lot of economic revitalization programs and services that we provide to do for people. One thing I noticed is that, every time we had an initiative and went to the federal government and said, "Help, help our tourism industry, help our airlines, help our mines," there was somebody coming in behind.

I can't pick one. I'm going to have to pick two. There are two very critical things that I have to do, and I have been working on it. Every week, I meet with the Premiers, and every week, I meet with the Prime Minister. I've been saying, never has it been so critical. We have been saying this since the beginning that this House was built, but never is it so critical, base plus funding. Per capita is not working. All my Ministers are carrying that message strong. The other thing is flexibility. Do not put us in a box because a lot of your programs, people in the territories are still not accessing. Those are the two things, federally, I've been doing, so that's important.

The other thing that's important is to listen to the stakeholders, and that's why we're doing the groups. My Minister of ITI did a great job, putting out surveys to all of the businesses, trying to find out what they say. It is inappropriate for us as Members of this House to define what the future will look like for all residents unless we hear from the residents. That, again, is my commitment.

**MS. CLEVELAND:** The Premier alluded to the federal government in her response and, over the course of the pandemic, we have seen the federal government really crack open its purse. Given how close we are to our federal borrowing limit and the fact that, really, the territorial financing formula doesn't necessarily work for our territory, what can we expect to see this year to address both of those financing supports from the GNWT?

**HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE:** I'm going to kind of guess the answer, because the last part of that got quiet and I couldn't really understand what the question was, but if the question is what we're actually looking for the federal government for

supports, I'm going to go with that and you can correct me after. Again, it's, like I said, flexibility. The federal government, at each meeting that I meet with the Prime Minister, I'm told, we're at an opportunities gap to start with. We did not come in at the same place as our southern jurisdictions. I respect them. They are all fiercely fighting COVID-19, but they have the infrastructure we don't have, so I've been an advocate at asking for additional. We started with an opportunity gap. This COVID-19 can put us way back, if we're not careful. I do believe that our Prime Minister is hearing us and supporting us.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Honourable Premier. Final supplementary, member for Kam Lake.

**MS. CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My question was in regard to the territorial financing formula, and also the borrowing limit. Thank you.

**HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE:** I am not going to take other people's glory away, but I do know that the borrowing limit, our Minister of Finance has offered a briefing to standing committee on that, and I will let her do that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### QUESTION 228-19(2): DATA USED BY EPIDEMIOLOGISTS

**MR. JOHNSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have no doubt that the Chief Public Health Officer has been making numerous decisions on data, and we've heard that today. We have heard numerous requests, from Members and the media and the public, to see some of that data. I recognize there are some issues with modelling, but firstly, I just want to get a sense of our capacity to really be making evidence-based decisions. I was hoping the Minister of Health could tell me how many people specializing in epidemiology we have on staff?

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

**HON. DIANE THOM:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have four full-time staff and four part-time staff.

**MR. JOHNSON:** The reason I ask this question is because I have no doubt that those eight people who are trained in epidemiology, this is the most important time in their career, and the most important time for the decisions they are making for all of our residents. A lot of that has been behind closed doors, and I haven't seen a lot of that data today. I think there is sometimes a hesitation on the part of scientists to give data to people like myself,

who have no idea what to do with it. I was hoping the Minister could commit to bringing forward some sort of report of modelling, the data we have, an idea of the number of people with respiratory illness in the territory, what other jurisdictions have been doing. I would like to see some scientific evidence, and I was hoping the Minister of health could get that team to put something together for the public.

**HON. DIANE THOM:** The epidemiology unit created what is called a public dashboard. The public dashboard is not quite live yet. It is something that demonstrates some of the Northwest Territories' case and test data in more detail. We are developing some important and transmission models so that we can better understand how this COVID might spread throughout the Northwest Territories with partners that are outside the Northwest Territories. We are working on the dashboard. It's not live yet. We are getting there, however; we do have information that is available.

**MR. JOHNSON:** I look forward to seeing that public dashboard and what kind of scientific evidence is put on there, as well as seeing the transition modelling. I hope to see that sooner rather than later. A request: often, when our government publishes data, they don't actually do it with a data set or give you access to the open data. Sometimes, it's just a PDF. Sometimes, it's a nice graph, but, obviously, there is always some underlying data there. My question for the Minister is: in that public dashboard, can we contain access to the actual underlying data in an open format?

**HON. DIANE THOM:** The guidance documents are available on the GNWT website, and the public data dashboard will be available shortly, as I have just mentioned. The daily situational reports used identifiable data so these can be made public. Individual privacy can be assured. This only can be done with greater numbers. Right now, we don't have that.

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

QUESTION 229-19(2):  
DISTANCE LEARNING FOR POST-SECONDARY STUDENTS

**MS. SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. With the Emerging Wisely document, post-secondary is not recommended to begin in the fall, and there are a lot of post-secondary students who are hoping to continue or pursue their post-secondary this fall. Will there be programming in September, and what will it look like this fall for post-secondary in the college?

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes. Minister of Education, Culture and Employment.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the Emerging Wisely document, I believe it is phase 3 that the colleges can open. What the college has been planning for is for distance learning, come September. However, we don't know exactly where we're going to be, and we would like to be able to provide some in-person instruction for people who absolutely need it. The work is ongoing to try to figure out if we can do that, but the plan right now is distance learning for the most part. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MS. SEMMLER:** With the way the economy is right now, a lot of our students have no jobs. Some of them offset the cost of their post-secondary with these jobs. The federal funding is not a lot of money compared to what summer students would normally make. Will SFA be increasing the funding this year for those students to be able to afford their post-secondary?

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** The Member is absolutely correct. With the lack of summer employment, it is going to make it very difficult for summer students. As well, some of their parents, too, maybe have lost their jobs. It's going to make a very tough situation.

The federal government has announced increases to the Canada Student Loans Program. The Northwest Territories opted out of the Canada Student Loans Program back in the '80s, I believe, in order to create our own program tailored to Northerners. It is more generous to Northerners, but, as a result, we don't get that increase that the Canada Student Loans Program will get. However, the government did commit an increase to those who have opted out of the program, so we will be seeing an increase. The way it works is that the territory gets the student loan money based on how many students went to school. For the upcoming school year, we will receive that money in January of 2022. There is a bit of a lag there. With that being said, I am looking at ways that we can bridge that gap and figure out how to support students, because this is a serious issue that is going to affect a lot of people's lives.

**MS. SEMMLER:** Student housing, for some, is their main housing. Will the students be able to continue to live in the student housing even with distance learning?

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** The Member is hitting all of the high points here. These are a lot of hard conversations that we are having. There are some people who are from communities where, perhaps, the Internet doesn't allow them to take distance learning. I got an email from someone the other day

saying that they max out at 2.3 megabits per second on their Internet speed; they need 2.5 in order to take the program at the U of A. There are some real issues out there. We are looking at how we can support those students. Opening up residence for people is one of those, but that is an ongoing conversation. There are a lot of considerations, but these are exceptional circumstances, and we need to do everything we can to ensure that this is not a lost year for the students who wish to pursue post-secondary.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister. Final supplementary, Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes.

**MS. SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With that, if the Inuvik single-unit student housing is being occupied, something that is very needed in Inuvik, as well as the homeless shelter right now, how will -- I guess there are three Ministers, there; there's homelessness, health, and education -- work together to ensure that single students can get housing, that this program continues? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** I can't speak for all of the other Ministers involved, but the Member points out one of the big issues here. This is not just a student housing issue; there is a homelessness issue; there is a vulnerable persons issue. There are all sorts of things going on here, and so we all have to work together. Those conversations are happening.

I don't have an answer right now. This situation is evolving, but I know that we are working to find solutions to all of those issues. As many Members have rightly pointed out today, we have seen some great strides in terms of the social supports we offer, and we don't want to backslide on that, but we have to make sure that, if we have housing for students, or if we have these certain things designated for these certain needs, they are used for those. I don't have an answer, but I will work with my colleagues to try to find a solution to all of those issues. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 230-19(2):  
NUMBER OF VISITORS IN HOSPITAL

**MR. NORN:** Marsi cho, Mr. Speaker. Through this pandemic, we have had a lot of people go to the hospital sick. It has raised a lot of very sad stories that came across my desk, my e-mails. We have heard some of these terrible stories on the news about people being sick and dying alone because of COVID, and I was just praying that it never did, and I'm hoping it doesn't go that route.

I still had to make a lot of calls for some of my constituents because, as I mentioned before in my Member's statement, we like to do things as groups with our loved ones. I know that, if I was sick, terminally ill, I wouldn't want to be alone during my last days. With a lot of our protocols that we had to change and make adjustments in our own hospitals in the NWT, my question is to the Minister of Health and Social Services: what is the current number of visitors allowed for people who are sick in the hospital? Marsi cho.

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

**HON. DIANE THOM:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At this time, for anybody coming in the hospital, it would be on a case-by-case basis, but, if you have family members who are terminally ill, we will look at allowing more than one. Thank you.

**MR. NORN:** Thank you for the response from the Minister. I would like to just know a little bit more. Are there going to be any changes in terms of actually giving us a solid number? I know that it's case-by-case, but giving an actual solid number? I know that we have to keep in mind our social distancing and some of the rules that we have from our CPHO. If we could get an answer from our Minister, marsi cho.

**HON. DIANE THOM:** The most important message we have right now is we know that families need to be with loved ones during this time, while they prepare. The Northwest Territories Health and Social Services authority has a patient-centred approach, which allows visitors to come and visit family. As visitors come to see patients, we would review it on a case-by-case basis.

**MR. NORN:** Thank you. Nothing further.

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

QUESTION 231-19(2):  
STATUS OF PERSONAL PROTECTION  
EQUIPMENT ON HAND

**MS. GREEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a few more questions for the Minister of Health and Social Services. I know that, recently, there was a recall on N95 masks. That led me to wonder how much PPE we do have on hand. How many days or weeks, or some other measurement, of PPE is available to us here in the NWT? Thank you.

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

**HON. DIANE THOM:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Infrastructure, Minister Nokleby, and I

both participate at a national FPT, and we participate with the PPE, trying to find the requirement here in the Northwest Territories. You look at the situation now, we are having a number of low cases of people who have the flu symptoms, but we do need to prepare for, one, the second wave, and we need to prepare PPE for when the flu season comes. Right now, in terms of the N95 masks, we are looking at it's called a reusable PPE, so we have been reusing PPE in accordance with the federal guideline. We have four sterilization machines that have been secured to extend the life of the N95 masks and to help maintain our supply. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MS. GREEN:** I am not sure how much PPE we have, but it's useful to learn that there is now a trend towards making it reusable. Can the Minister tell me where in the NWT the supplies are located? Are they all in Yellowknife, Inuvik, and Hay River, or are they in other places, as well?

**HON. DIANE THOM:** The national emergency supply system sends all of their supplies here, and we have what is called a dashboard, so, at any time, we are able to see what we have. With Stanton Hospital, what we have with gowns, gloves, sterilizers, N95 masks, surgical masks, visors, facials. So we have quite a list, extensive list, of all of the equipment, and we are able to show how many stock days we have by region.

**MS. GREEN:** Thank you to the Minister for that. Can the Minister just clarify that some of the supplies are in the regions and some of them are here in Yellowknife?

**HON. DIANE THOM:** If you saw the CBC headlines this noon, there was a big announcement that PPE supplies have arrived in Canada, so we are all quite excited, which means that we will start to get more and more supplies. The idea is to continue to stockpile so that, when we get the next wave and we get the next flu season, we would be able to have enough in stock. However, at any given time right now, we are able to see where our stockpile is by the regions and by the communities. When numbers start to get low, we have a tracker so we are able to track how many gloves someone needs, and right now they only have enough for so many days, and we are able to send them out so that in any of our health centres or our hospitals, we are able to track and give them the supplies.

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

**MS. GREEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the Minister for clarification. My final question is: who has access to these supplies? Is it only the medical professionals in Yellowknife and the

regions, or are there other service providers who have access to the NWT stock of PPE? Thank you.

**HON. DIANE THOM:** We have a variety of stockpiles. Health, we maintain and we track our own list of supplies and PPE. We also, Infrastructure, we have a stockpile of PPE, as well as MACA, and MACA is working on distributing it now to Indigenous groups and the communities. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 232-19(2):  
STAFFING AT SOUTH MACKENZIE  
CORRECTIONAL CENTRE

**MR. ROCKY SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A question for the Minister of Justice: can the Minister confirm if additional staff are required to be on duty SMCC during this pandemic period, above what was there prior to it? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Hay River South. Minister of Justice.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At this point, there is no indication that additional staff are necessary. What we have been doing, though, is certainly working with human resources in the correctional facilities to ensure that all staff are available to be present. The information I have is that, so far, we have had no difficulty in maintaining the services that are required in the correctional facilities.

**MR. ROCKY SIMPSON:** I have had concerns raised by some of the staff that their leave has been cancelled, and there is starting to be some burn-out. Is your department aware of this?

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** I have no doubt that there is some burn-out. The correctional facilities across Canada right now, many of them have actually been struck quite significantly by COVID-19. We have been fortunate in the Northwest Territories to not be in that situation, but it is not for lack of tremendous effort put in by the correctional facility staff to undertake their work in a very difficult environment. We are aware that they always work in a challenging environment, and they are working in a particularly challenging environment right now with COVID-19. There are additional requirements for hygiene and cleanliness and sanitation. There are additional requirement for scanning inmates when they enter the facilities. So indeed, yes, we are certainly aware that the situation has been challenging for a lot of the correctional facility workers, as well as any of the essential workers, front-line workers, across departments in the Northwest Territories.



Essentially, Mr. Speaker, I am providing that answer as much from the Department of Finance human resources as I am from Justice, that it is a challenge for front-line workers all across, who are at times having their leaves cancelled because of the nature of the work that they are doing and the need to maintain services. I do not necessarily have a solution for the Member right now, other than to assure him that we are aware.

**MR. ROCKY SIMPSON:** Yes, I guess we have employees staying at home and probably burning out because it is difficult to be home day after day and trying to work from home. I understand that, as well. However, with respect to SMCC and corrections, what I see, I guess I equate burn-out with a safety issue, as well. How are you going to reconcile those two to ensure that nothing goes sideways in the facilities?

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** I will take a moment first to just remind all GNWT employees there are quite a number of measures that have been made available to staff for mental wellness. They are available under the "My HR" website. There have been extensive changes made to increase and enhance what is available for all employees, including correctional services employees. Prior to COVID-19, there were efforts under way already between human resources and corrections to start working together to really identify the fact that correction services is a challenged environment for employees and to try to find some solutions going forward. Some of that work has been delayed a little bit with COVID-19, but, really, we are starting to look at what we can do to get back to some of that business and back to doing the things we were under way in. That is certainly one of the areas that I will have to make sure that we are indeed getting back to that important work.

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

**MR. ROCKY SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Will the Minister just commit to taking a look at the SMCC facility? You know, there may not be a lot of employees there who are in that predicament, but there may be a few, and it would be nice to have it addressed sooner than later.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** We have three facilities, four if you include the youth facility, separate from the NSCC, and I would certainly commit to taking a look at the mental health resources available specific to corrections workers across all of those facilities. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister. Colleagues, our time for oral question has expired. We will now

take a 10-minute recess and finish up the rest of the session. Thank you.

---SHORT RECESS

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, colleagues. I will now call the House back to order. Item 10, written questions. Member for Kam Lake.

### Written Questions

#### WRITTEN QUESTION 12-19(2): VIRTUAL CARE

**MS. CLEVELAND:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On March 10<sup>th</sup> this year, I delivered a Member's statement along with oral and written questions on virtual care in the Northwest Territories. Little did I know, one week later, we would be sent home, and our healthcare system would instantly break down the barriers to delivering virtual care in the Northwest Territories. As a result, I have written questions for the Minister of Health and Social Services on the provision of virtual care in the Northwest Territories.

1. What solutions does the Department of Health and Social Services use to satisfy the barriers identified in the virtual care taskforce report, including, but not limited to, interoperability and governance, licensure and quality of care, payment models, and medical education?
2. What additional challenges or barriers did the Government of the Northwest Territories encounter through the provision of virtual care?
3. How does the Department of Health and Social Services intend to continue providing virtual care to Northwest Territories residents post-pandemic?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Kam Lake. Written questions. Item 11, returns to written questions. Mr. Clerk.

**CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer):** Mr. Speaker, I have returns to eight written questions to table.

### Returns to Written Questions

#### RETURN TO WRITTEN QUESTION 4-19(2): ACTION PLAN ON CORE HOUSING NEED

**CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer):** Mr. Speaker, I have a Return to Written Question asked by the Member for Yellowknife Centre on February 13, 2020, regarding reducing core need.

Later today, at the appropriate time, I will table a summary report on the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation's actions to support residents in core need, costing for these actions and the 2019-2022 Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation - NWT Bilateral Agreement under the 2017 National Housing Strategy. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

RETURN TO WRITTEN QUESTION 5-19(2):  
TLICHO ALL-SEASON ROAD PROJECT  
CONTRACTS

**CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer):** Mr. Speaker, I have a Return to Written Question asked by the Member for Monfwi on February 28, 2020, regarding the Tlicho All-Season Road project contracts.

The Member asked for a breakdown or details of all the contractors and sub-contractors involved in the Tlicho All-Season Road construction, including addresses for these contracts and the length of the contracts. The Member also asked for details of the operations and maintenance contracts after the construction is completed in 2022.

Mr. Speaker, in response to the Member's first question, later today, at the appropriate time, I will table the list of the businesses currently involved in the Tlicho All-Season Road Project. I am unable to provide addresses and the length of the contracts, as this type of information is related to contracts between parties and is ultimately confidential.

Regarding the Member's second question, I can advise that North Star Infrastructure will operate and maintain the road for 25 years after the construction is completed. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

RETURN TO WRITTEN QUESTION 6-19(2):  
EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES

**CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer):** Mr. Speaker, I have a Return to Written Question asked by Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh on March 3, 2020, regarding education facilities.

There are two tools commonly used by the Departments of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE) and Infrastructure (INF) to assess the degree to which a physical structure supports actual use and/or functional alignment where function means activities programs, services teaching methods, et cetera.

These two tools are:

- functional assessments or audits; and
- post-occupancy evaluations

When new schools are built, a "functional program" is produced. A functional program describes, in relatively high-level technical language, what a physical structure needs to include to support a list of identified functions. Examples of functions in schools include:

- teaching and learning, including contemporary pedagogical practice;
- learning support;
- recreation;
- administration;
- counselling and/or mental health services; and
- medical treatment

ECE and INF can take this approach and, where requested or required, produce a report that looks at the functions currently being delivered at an existing school and compare that with the type and quantity of space available to support those functions. The report would identify how well an existing building supports the various functions.

Post-occupancy evaluations are geared to actual use. After a major project is complete and some time has passed, ECE and INF will conduct a post-occupancy evaluation of the building. This report looks at how well the new space is supporting actual daily use by occupants. A post-occupancy report was recently completed on the East Three School in Inuvik. The other objective of this report is to assess whether the design elements developed during the project and reflected in the building were appropriate; a lessons-learned section to inform future projects.

The departments have a third tool that assesses school space called a technical status evaluation (TSE) which exclusively examines the physical and technical condition of the building and does not consider program suitability. TSEs are not discussed further in this response.

ECE has not conducted an audit of the existing learning space at Kalemi Dene School. ECE does not regularly conduct functional audits of existing schools. ECE would consider performing a functional audit, in partnership with INF, if a divisional education council (DEC) or district education authority (DEA) identified a serious functional issue with the existing space.

When ECE discusses the design of physical spaces and their capacity to support contemporary pedagogical practice, it is important to consider that how well spaces support practice is a spectrum. Most physical spaces, including older schools in the Northwest Territories (NWT) can, to a greater or

lesser degree, facilitate contemporary teaching and learning practices. Major renovations or rebuilds are opportunities to increase the degree of alignment between space and practice. For example, newer schools make greater use of breakout space to facilitate group work. All schools can use existing spaces to do group work, however newer schools with purpose-built breakout areas can facilitate group work better. Another example is storage space for outdoor equipment. Older schools can find storage for outdoor equipment to support outdoor learning activities or programs, but newer schools might have a purpose-built space, the new Ecole J.H. Sissons School design has dedicated space for this purpose.

If there are minor misalignments, ECE considers funding smaller, more focused renovations via its annual capital allocation, though these must be balanced by needs that are assessed as a higher priority such as safety issues, human rights issues, or changes required by regulations, among others.

With respect to Kalemi Dene, the school was built in 2009, making it one of the youngest and most modern facilities in the NWT. The existing space is capable of supporting current educational priorities and teaching methods. To ECE's knowledge, the community values and supports Kalemi Dene School, including its design.

ECE is not in a position to speak for the community government of Ndilo or the Yellowknives Dene First Nation on the issue of whether the existing learning space meets the community's view of educational priorities. ECE believes that Kalemi Dene is fully capable of supporting the delivery of the core educational program to students of the school.

The ability to tailor the delivery (the form), and some content, of the core educational program to account for local concerns is one of the primary functions of DEAs. ECE relies on DEC's and DEAs to work with their schools to ensure the education program reflects the needs and wants of the community, within the bounds of available resources.

ECE is aware of use restrictions being experienced due to high enrolments and lack of free space. These issues are generally addressed in the department's Capital Needs Assessment during corporate capital planning, however, there is no guarantee funding will commence in any particular fiscal year.

ECE has not produced, nor does it possess, detailed project planning documents including architectural drawings, scopes of work, project descriptions, or technical reports for future expansions of a classroom addition or gymnasium at Kalemi Dene in Ndilo. ECE had a brief

description of the scope of the project in its 2020-2021, 20-Year Capital Needs Assessment and this project was considered, but ultimately not selected, during the most recent capital planning process. ECE is aware of the general scope of the project but until planning study funds are allocated as part of corporate capital planning, ECE cannot retain the required design support to produce detailed documents or plans.

ECE is aware that the Yellowknives Dene First Nation has been looking at this project. A January 21, 2019 letter to the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment identifies a motion and work being undertaken with the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs. If there are detailed plans produced by the Yellowknives Dene First Nation, ECE is not currently in possession of them.

As background, projects like an addition to Kalemi Dene would not have detailed planning documents produced until after a project has been approved and funding allocated to a planning study.

ECE is not in a position to expand the minority language education rights established in section 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (Charter) beyond the Francophone community in the NWT. Implementing such a model on a territorial-wide basis would be exceptionally costly, complex, and it is unclear if it would improve educational outcomes. There are several possible unintended consequences of implementing such a model.

The Charter-protected language rights model would require a physically separate school building for each individual language. Operations are conducted exclusively in that language requiring all students, staff, teachers, and administrators be sufficiently fluent to function in the target language, including day-to-day conversation, documentation ranging from routine letters to parents and classroom materials, textbooks, worksheets and homework. Every school would be overseen by a DEA separate from all other languages and expected to operate exclusively in the target language, in both verbal and written forms.

This would require multiple schools in a single community where the number of minority language speakers warrant, however 'where the numbers warrant' is not expressly defined. For a community like Yellowknife, there could be between seven and 11 separate JK-12 schools. For Inuvik, there could be at least three, maybe five, separate JK-12 schools. Each community would need to be regularly assessed to determine if a new separate school for an un-served language was needed.

The infrastructure costs associated with building multiple separate schools, and operation and

maintenance costs for running them, for each linguistic minority community in every municipality would be significant. There are many other impediments to implementing the Charter protected language rights model to the NWT education system:

- Creating separate schools fractures the student population into smaller, but more numerous, groups. This results in many small schools with fewer resources to offer more and different programs than larger schools;
- The system itself gets more complex because each linguistic community needs its own education authority. This results in the complexity of authorities needing to interact with each other as students enter, leave, and transfer between them, more reporting requirements, more trustee elections, and so on;
- The need for all members of school administration, teachers, and staff to speak the minority language presents substantial staffing issues. More fluent teachers would be needed to implement such a system. The NWT is reliant on teachers trained in the rest of Canada who will not have the language skills needed for such a system; and
- It is unclear if all minority languages are in a state where they can deliver the full curriculum. Translating the full JK-12 curriculum into all nine Indigenous languages would prove a tremendous challenge.

One of ECE's objectives is to promote Indigenous language revitalization. The department recognizes that schools have a role to play which is why the Indigenous Languages and Education Policy, and its associated financial resources, was developed and implemented in 2018.

The policy provides dedicated Indigenous language resources for schools, including designated language positions. This policy replaces the previous Ministerial Directive on Aboriginal Language and Culture-Based Education.

Beyond the education system, the Indigenous Languages and Education Secretariat supports Indigenous governments as they design and deliver revitalization programs for their languages. The department's position, and one that is consistent with Truth and Reconciliation Call to Action 14, is that this work is best done by the language speakers themselves.

ECE is always open to observations and ideas on how well Indigenous language revitalization efforts are working, how to improve programs, and how

the department can better support revitalization objectives. ECE will continue to engage with district education authorities, which are comprised of locally elected community members, to see how Indigenous languages can be supported in the school environment and how well existing programs are being received. ECE has, and is using, a monitoring and evaluation framework to measure the effectiveness of the new policy but since it is relatively new, more data will be required before it can be evaluated. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

RETURN TO WRITTEN QUESTION 7-19(2):  
VIRTUAL HEALTH CARE

**CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer):** Mr. Speaker, I have a Return to Written Question asked by the Member for Kam Lake on March 10, 2020, regarding virtual healthcare.

In the Northwest Territories, virtual care is one of the ways that health care providers have been treating residents from a distance. Virtual care also allows for enhanced physical distancing, which is a priority during the COVID-19 pandemic. By offering virtual care options to our patients we can reduce the in-person interactions they have within our health system in waiting rooms, with our clinic staff, and with their healthcare providers.

Residents in smaller communities may lack on-the-ground health services and providers such as physicians, physiotherapists, and mental health workers. However, virtual care can enable patients to see these health care providers between community visits, and on a more immediate basis. A second benefit is that patients can continue to be cared for by the same provider virtually between the in-person visits.

Virtual care enables relationship-based care, which is foundational to culturally safe and effective primary care. It can decrease medical travel, both within the territory and to Alberta based consultants. When a patient receives care virtually in their home community from a remote provider, it means decreased inconvenience to the patient, decreased cost related to the patient being away from work and family for the duration of medical travel, and decreased cost to the system.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority has set up a COVID-19 virtual care initiative, which is broken into three phases. Phase 1 is the immediate deployment of virtual care capacity to meet the urgent needs of the pandemic and limit an initial viral outbreak. This included setting up virtual visits by phone and expansion of videoconferencing, as well as remote access to the Electronic Medical Records (EMR). Phase 2 is currently being planned and will add secure

messaging between health care providers and patients, and potentially between the Northwest Territories and Alberta. A future Phase 3, post-COVID-19, will align longer term investments, policy, and care delivery to support virtual care longer term, using the COVID-19 virtual care response to inform and guide future direction.

More broadly speaking, both during and after COVID-19, Virtual care is valuable and benefits patients because it can improve equity, timeliness, safety, and access to care.

Virtual care also limits the necessity for patient and provider travel, thereby decreasing the potential for viral spread. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

RETURN TO WRITTEN QUESTION 8-19(2):  
REPATRIATION OF NORTHWEST TERRITORIES  
RESIDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

**CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer):** Mr. Speaker, I have a Return to Written Question asked by the Member for Kam Lake on March 11, 2020, regarding repatriating Northwest Territories residents with disabilities.

As of December 31, 2019, there were 109 clients receiving Out of Territory Specialized Residential Services. The 2020-2021 total budget for these services is \$26,570,000.

The Supported Living Review will help us understand what supports and services will be required to bring our residents back to the Northwest Territories, but it is clear they will be wide-ranging.

Northerners who are receiving Out of Territory Specialized Residential Services have many complex challenges, including developmental and physical disabilities, concurrent diagnoses of mental health and addictions, psychiatric illnesses, and acquired brain injuries.

These individuals have also often experienced trauma and abuse, and some have complex behaviours that can put their safety and that of others at risk. They may require high levels of specialized support and supervision in order to have healthy outcomes.

Additionally, these individuals need services and supports from multiple government departments and community organizations related to housing, health and social services, justice, income, employment, and social inclusion. It is important to understand that, even with collaboration between services and investments by this government to improve Supported Living Services, we may not be able to support all these needs in the Northwest Territories.

The Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority already has plans for individual repatriation where they can, but often the service options that these individuals require do not exist. The Supported Living Review is targeted for completion by the end of March 2021. We expect planning for Northwest Territories support services and repatriation based on the accepted recommendations from the Review will begin in 2021-2022. Thank you, Mr. Speaker

RETURN TO WRITTEN QUESTION 9-19(2):  
CONTRACTS FOR WORK RELATED TO THE  
SLAVE GEOLOGICAL PROVINCE ROAD

**CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer):** Mr. Speaker, I have a Return to Written Question asked by the Member for Frame Lake on March 16, 2020, regarding contracts for work related to Slave Geological Province Corridor.

The Member asked for details of all the contracts entered into by the Government of the Northwest Territories for work related to the Slave Geological Province Corridor from September 1, 2015, to present, indicating whether any of the contractors were or are registered under the Business Incentive Policy. The Member also asked about future actions planned to maximize northern employment, training, and business opportunities in future contracts related to the Slave Geological Province Corridor.

Mr. Speaker, in response to the Member's first two questions, later today, at the appropriate time, I will table the detailed list of the contracts entered into by the Government of the Northwest Territories for work related to the Slave Geological Province Corridor project, including whether the contractors were or are registered under the Business Incentive Policy.

Regarding the Member's third question, the Government of the Northwest Territories is committed to maximizing northern business and labour wherever possible, and that commitment remains especially important as we look to recover from the economic impacts of COVID-19 across the territory.

Through the public procurement process, the Government of the Northwest Territories supports Northwest Territories and local content through the application of the Business Incentive Policy. Through the Mandate of Government of the Northwest Territories, we have committed to reviewing and strengthening our procurement policies and practices.

Mr. Speaker, ensuring benefits flow to NWT residents and businesses through the ongoing work to develop the Slave Geological Province Corridor

will be an important consideration as we advance the project. The construction and operations of the Corridor will provide training, employment, and business opportunities for Indigenous, local and Northwest Territories residents and businesses.

It will be several years before this project acquires the necessary regulatory permits and is able to proceed to construction. In the meantime, the Government of the Northwest Territories will be undertaking numerous studies, completing other planning work required to advance the project, and holding public community engagement sessions to ensure that Northwest Territories residents and businesses can receive maximum benefit from this project. Throughout the planning and environmental review processes, steps will be taken to ensure that GNWT contracting processes are followed. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer):** Mr. Speaker, I have a Return to Written Question asked by Member for Frame Lake on March 16, 2020, regarding Pointed Mountain gas field compliance and reclamation.

This response has been prepared with input from the Department of Lands, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, and the Office of the Regulator of Oil and Gas Operations.

The Department of Lands has not taken any enforcement action in relation to the June 5, 2019 compliance letter that was issued by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources with regard to the Waters Act. The Department of Environment and Natural Resources confirmed that the June 5, 2019 compliance letter directed the proponent to apply for a water licence. The proponent responded on June 12, 2019 that it would be starting the engagement process over the summer to apply for a water licence. The proponent submitted a water licence application to the Mackenzie Valley Land and Water Board on January 2, 2020. The Board then directed the proponent to provide further information, which will be available for public review as part of the Board's process.

1. Under land use permit MV2014X0011, the Department of Lands holds \$400,000 in securities for the Pointed Mountain site, in the form of an irrevocable letter of credit. There is no active water licence for the Pointed Mountain site.
2. The Mackenzie Valley Land and Water Board approved Paramount's Final Remediation Plan,

Version 3, on an interim basis in July 2019 and directed Paramount to submit Version 4 as part of a future water licence application. The status of that application is discussed below.

The Office of the Regulator of Oil and Gas Operations (OROGO) advises that all the wells in this field have been abandoned in accordance with the requirements of the Oil and Gas Operations Act (OGOA) and its regulations, and that any associated OGOA-regulated infrastructure has been decommissioned. In other words, the wells have been permanently plugged, cut, and capped in a manner that is protective of the environment. OROGO further confirms that there is no OROGO-regulated infrastructure or activity remaining on the site.

There is no current cost estimate for the full and final closure and reclamation of the site. As noted above, in January 2020, Paramount applied to the Mackenzie Valley Land and Water Board for a water licence for reclamation activities at the site. The Board then asked Paramount to provide further information, including a Final Remediation Plan and a closure cost estimate. Once these and other materials are provided, the Board will initiate a public review of the application and all associated materials. The GNWT will participate actively in the public review and will make recommendations to the Board which will include a security estimate based on the available evidence. The GNWT's submissions will be available on the Board's public registry.

3. The GNWT will continue to fulfill all its requirements related to the management of the site, including participating fully in the Land and Water Board water licence public review process.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

RETURN TO WRITTEN QUESTION 11-19(2):  
COMMISSIONER'S LAND ACT SECURITY  
DEPOSIT

**CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer):** Mr. Speaker, I have a Return to Written Question asked by Member for Frame Lake on March 16, 2020, regarding Commissioner's Land Act security deposit.

Later today, at the appropriate time, I will table a list of commercial and industrial leases issued for Commissioner's land since February 15, 2011, including the amount and form of security posted.

One lease was exempted from the requirement to post security under Section 3.1(3) of the

Commissioner's Land Act as the calculated security does not exceed one thousand dollars. In addition, security is not required for one of the listed leases because the application for that lease was accepted prior to the February 2011 coming-into-force date of the security provisions of the Commissioner's Land Act.

The amount of security required for commercial or industrial leases on Commissioner's land is calculated using a worksheet which appears on the Commercial/Industrial Lease Application Form. This calculation applies set restoration rates to the total area of land to be developed, the number and type of structures to be placed on the land, the amount of land used for the storage of fuel and the presence or absence of spill mitigating features. Additional multipliers are applied based on the lessee's previous performance and the potential for elevated environmental risk.

Security is not required for leases to municipalities or government agencies.

Commissioner's land securities are received by the regional Lands Officer or headquarters staff, reviewed and taken to the Department of Finance as soon as they are deemed acceptable. Securities are tracked at headquarters. A lease's security calculation is reviewed every five years to account for inflation and to ensure the amount of security held is still appropriate given the use of the land.

Security for lease CL-1600022T, in the amount of \$23,883.30, was returned on August 24, 2018, following the sale of the lot in fee simple. No other securities held under the Commissioner's Land Act have been returned. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Clerk. Returns to written questions. Item 12, replies to the Commissioner's address. Member for Thebacha.

### Replies to the Commissioner's Address

#### MS. MARTSELOS' REPLY

**MS. MARTSELOS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is my home. I was born here. I am Dene. I lived, worked, and invested in the NWT all of my life. Since the start of this 19<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly, I have been eagerly awaiting the opportunity to deliver my response to the Commissioner's opening address, which was delivered by Commissioner Margaret Thom on February 5, 2020.

What the Commissioner outlined was a mandate of the 19<sup>th</sup> Assembly. While I may not agree with all of the priorities that were listed, there are a number of them that I do support. In addition, I will outline my priorities that I would like to see completed during the remaining three-and-a-half years of this

Assembly. I will also address my thoughts on the Government of the Northwest Territories' response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Ultimately, our goal as a true consensus government will only be reached if the quality of life is matched across the board for the entire territory, regardless of community, ethnicity, gender, or age.

I am going to highlight 10 priorities that I support. The first item is food security. I support Indigenous and community governments locally producing goods through greenhouses, gardens, and traditional food harvesting.

Secondly, I support increasing the availability of mental health and addiction programs for those in recovery, especially an aftercare transition house located in Fort Smith. We can no longer ignore the impact of addictions in the NWT, one of the highest in the country, and as a government, we must address this.

Thirdly, I support developing a universal childcare strategy across the NWT. Children are our future, and it is our responsibility to ensure their basic needs are provided for in every community of the Northwest Territories.

The fourth priority I support is expanding the availability of distance learning capacity in all communities of the Northwest Territories; modernizing the Education Act and funding framework; and the piloting of a classroom assistant program. It is important to continue the transition of Aurora College into a polytechnic university with a strong, impartial board, with representation from every region across the NWT. All primary and secondary students need to have access to the same level of education across the Northwest Territories and to be able to access post-secondary programs in the Northwest Territories.

The fifth priority that I support is about increasing economic diversification and employment in all communities. We need to improve upon the number of journeymen and apprentices in the small communities and regional centres, expand the knowledge economy, expand tourism in all regions of the NWT, and allow home businesses to operate in public housing units. We need to support small- and medium-sized businesses to expand all sectors of our economy wherever possible. We must be more innovative, creative, and have an open mind and neutral approach to new business ideas, so that our economy can recover and be profitable.

The sixth priority I support is about reducing red tape and easing some regulations in an effort to help small businesses. This includes strengthening procurement policies, like the Business Incentive Policy, BIP; the Northern Manufactured Products Policy; and the government's approach to public-

private partnerships. Each of these areas helps to spur on economic growth and helps to retain more of the wealth that is generated here in the Northwest Territories.

The seventh priority I support is promoting local competition. There needs to be an increased awareness of Northwest Territories' contracting opportunities. We need to actively encourage Northwest Territories businesses to apply for BIP status, with a less complicated process, and develop a singular yet comprehensive website where vendors can shop online.

The eighth priority that I support is ensuring that this government collaborates with Indigenous governments to develop and implement regional mineral strategies, increase resource exploration and development, increase funding for mining incentive programs, and explore the feasibility of the exportation of liquefied natural gas. I am a firm supporter of increased resource exploration and development, as this funds our social programs and infrastructure projects.

The ninth priority I support is settling and implementing land, resource, and self-government agreements with Indigenous governments. We must settle the major outstanding and ongoing land claim negotiations that have been ongoing for many years, decades even for some. Only then will the NWT become a more attractive location to do business and gain investments.

Finally, the tenth priority I support is investing in vital infrastructure projects across the NWT. This includes:

- the Taltson Hydro Expansion;
- the Mackenzie Valley Highway;
- the Slave Geological Corridor; and
- expanding Internet services in all communities.

These major infrastructure projects have great potential to increase development and encourage economic activity for the Northwest Territories.

My Priorities for the 19<sup>th</sup> Assembly

Mr. Speaker, here is my list of my priorities I would like to see achieved for the constituents of Thebacha, the South Slave Region, and the Northwest Territories as a whole. I want to make clear that no one priority is more important than the other, so I am listing these items in no particular order.

Number one is to fix, improve, and update the Fort Smith Regional Airport. During the last Assembly, actions were taken to diminish our airport without

proper consultation with the people of Fort Smith. No Indigenous leadership was consulted and neither were the businesses who were directly impacted by the government's unilateral decision. What the Government of the Northwest Territories did has resulted in a lesser, lower-quality airport than before, putting the community at risk. What needs to happen to reconcile the error that was made by the Government of the Northwest Territories and do right by the constituents of Thebacha is the following:

- a new and improved terminal to be built;
- the runway to be restored to its original width;
- all LED lights to be properly reinstalled and in working order; and
- ensure the stakeholders of the Town of Fort Smith to be properly involved and consulted during the entire process.

Number two is building a new territorial fire centre for the Northwest Territories to replace the existing fire centre in Fort Smith. It must be state-of-the-art and contain the highest degree of technology and equipment, including fibre optics, in order to be on par with national fire centres. Geographically, the South Slave is the northernmost part of the boreal forest, making us the most vulnerable to wildfires. The territorial fire centre not only serves all of the NWT, but has agreements with assisting national and international fire centres.

Number three is Aurora College and the future of the polytechnic university. Fort Smith has developed and earned the reputation of being the education centre of the Northwest Territories through staffing incredible, competent people. Aurora College is an extremely important part of the fabric of Fort Smith and has been since 1968. Over the decades, employees have come from various backgrounds and many places around the country to make Fort Smith their home. There are also employees from the North who are Aurora College graduates themselves. In addition to providing advanced education to all northern students through trades and degree programs, Aurora College continues to meet the needs and benefits of all northern communities. The economy of Fort Smith is dependent on the college, and the new polytechnic university headquarters must remain in Fort Smith.

Number four is the Taltson Hydro Expansion. This major infrastructure project has been discussed at length in the NWT for several years. It is a priority item for this Assembly. Given the economic fallout that COVID-19 has induced, the Government of the Northwest Territories must pursue this project to lay the groundwork for economic growth and ultimately



reduce power rates for the people of the Northwest Territories.

Number five is the implementation of the Salt River Claim, signed June 22, 2002. It's been 18 years since the Salt River claim, yet the implementation of the claim has not occurred. The Government of the Northwest Territories is a signatory to that claim and has a responsibility to ensure the federal government follows through with this implementation. My support for the NWT Metis claim is also a priority as these are my constituents. The work to complete this claim must be honoured, supported, and done as soon as possible. Any claim that is settled always has positive effects on the entire community, economically and socially. I want to support the leaders and the people of these two claims to ensure that these agreements are completed immediately.

Number six is to have the Fort Smith Correctional Complex that houses both male and female offenders resume the rehabilitation focus. This facility had a rehabilitation component in the past. The majority of these offenders are Indigenous and are products of multi-generational impacts of residential schools. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) provided Calls to Action outlining the need for rehabilitation as a key part of correctional programming. Part of the rehabilitation process includes an educational component, and we have the unique opportunity in Fort Smith for offenders to attend Aurora College and to return to home communities with new skills and certifications.

#### Pandemic Response.

Mr. Speaker, now that I have outlined each of my priorities, I would like to address our government's handling of the COVID-19 pandemic. Taking into consideration the global recession that this pandemic has caused, our approach in recovering from this pandemic along with our shift into regular governance must have foresight for the long-term. It's very important that our government remains committed to transparency, accountability, and oversight. We must make decisions with proper checks and balances.

As a result of the damages inflicted by this pandemic, we're now faced with the daunting task of initiating our economic recovery. We must keep moving forward and work to rebuild our stagnant economy. We must be innovative and compassionate. We must be willing to think outside of the box from how things have normally been done. We cannot only operate on policies driven by bureaucracy, and we cannot lose sight of the people we are here to serve. We must also have open minds, open hearts, and be open for change, as we were elected here to do.

I want to make something clear. For the most part, I am largely happy with how our government has handled the health response of this crisis. Our Chief Public Health Officer, Dr. Kandola, took strong measures, closing our borders and restricting all travel in and out of the territory. We acted fast and it has paid off well, as the NWT had only five cases, fully recovered, and we've not had any community spread, either. These are all very good indicators of our efforts to contain the spread of COVID-19.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to address some of the gaps in our response. First of all, given the amount of money that was spent on the new Stanton Hospital, the Northwest Territories should have been in a better position for having stockpiled supplies of essential medical goods like ventilators, N95 masks, PPE, and other vital supplies needed during this pandemic. However, it's not only the capital that needs to be well-stocked with all relevant medical supplies. Each community health centre needs to be equipped with at least one ventilator, if not more, depending on its population, along with necessary supplies.

It's also important that all regional centres continue to conduct regular medical services for people, especially in times of emergency. This has resulted in the reduction of essential medical services ranging from lab services to cancer screening. Removing these essential services only weakens communities, which is detrimental to the regional population and is not the goal of this Assembly.

Similarly, our government must stop downsizing community health centres. This is not okay. I believe this reduction of services and lack of essential equipment contribute to our lack of preparedness in response to COVID-19. You must keep in mind that, whenever the next pandemic occurs, or when a second wave of the current pandemic hits, we need to be better prepared all across the board. That means that our government, including Ministers, support staff, and senior bureaucrats, must all be open to hearing constructive criticism, and be willing to compromise and be flexible with policy directions for departments.

Another aspect of our response that I am strongly against is the dial-a-bottle for delivery. The Indigenous leaders were very much opposed to this, as were the smaller communities, which is why almost none of them are participating in it. Only the capital implemented it so far. It also directly contravenes many of the regulations that were followed at the beginning of the pandemic to decrease the impact of alcohol in our communities. That says something about us that's not pretty. Many people claim to be fighting for the well-being of the peoples of the Northwest Territories, which is good to hear, but that's just it. It's just good words

to hear. We, as a government, sound more and more hypocritical when we do things that will actually bring further harm to our people, like that of dial-a-bottle.

Mr. Speaker, one other issue that I want to mention is the senior management that work under the Ministers, along with the broader Government of the Northwest Territories. It is vital that all staff remain unbiased, apolitical, and impartial at all times. We as MLAs are the ones to be giving direction, because that is what we were elected here to do. The directions come from the elected officials.

The majority of Indigenous population of the Northwest Territories live outside of Yellowknife, so, if we truly want to create a more equal future for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations, then smaller communities in regional centres cannot continue to fall by the wayside and be unheard in policy. We must be able to think clearly in all of the best interests of the Northwest Territories. That means that we must cater to the needs of people outside the capital and provide them with the same lifestyle. How are we going to do this? Our government must be proactive, not only reactive, regarding all the issues that most affect us.

Mr. Speaker, I'm standing here for the people who are not heard, for the people who don't have a voice at the table. Are we really a consensus government when a majority of all our budgetary funds go to the capital? The centralizing of a consensus-style government is to allow all people at the table to have a voice on every issue that arises. When only a small number of people in that circle are making the decisions, we are failing the people of the Northwest Territories because the people they elected to represent them are not been given the right to speak on their behalf. As I stated in the beginning of my address, my goal as a true consensus government will only be reached if the quality of life is matched across-the-board for the entire territory, regardless of community, ethnicity, gender or age.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I am grateful to be serving the constituents of Thebacha and the amazing people of Fort Smith. I will serve to the very best of my ability, and always in the best interests of the people of Fort Smith. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Thebacha. Replies to Commissioner's address. Item 13, petitions. Item 14, tabling of documents. Honourable Premier.

### Tabling of Documents

TABLED DOCUMENT 64-19(2):  
FOLLOW-UP LETTER FOR ORAL QUESTION  
104-19(2): CLOSING THE MUNICIPAL FUNDING  
GAP

TABLED DOCUMENT 65-19(2):  
FOLLOW-UP LETTER FOR ORAL QUESTION  
113-19(2): SEXUAL ABUSE IN SPORTS

TABLED DOCUMENT 66-19(2):  
FOLLOW-UP LETTER FOR ORAL QUESTION  
161-19(2): BUILDING STANDARDS ACT

**HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table the following three documents: "Follow-up Letter for Oral Question 104-19(2): Closing the Municipal Funding Gap"; "Follow-up Letter for Oral Question 113-19(2): Sexual Abuse in Sports"; and "Follow-up Letter for Oral Question 161-19(2): Building Standards Act." Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Honourable Premier. Tabling of documents. Minister of Health and Social Services.

TABLED DOCUMENT 67-19(2):  
FOLLOW-UP LETTER FOR ORAL QUESTION  
110-19(2): ADDRESSING DRUG USE IN  
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES COMMUNITIES

TABLED DOCUMENT 68-19(2):  
FOLLOW-UP LETTER FOR ORAL QUESTION  
128-19(2): MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS OF  
SENIORS IN LONG-TERM CARE

TABLED DOCUMENT 69-19(2):  
FOLLOW-UP LETTER FOR ORAL QUESTION  
141-19(2): ORAL HEALTH REPORT

TABLED DOCUMENT 70-19(2):  
FOLLOW-UP LETTER FOR ORAL QUESTION  
144-19(2): FULL-TIME PSYCHOLOGIST FOR  
CHILDREN AND YOUTH FOR TREATMENT  
CENTRE

TABLED DOCUMENT 71-19(2):  
FOLLOW-UP LETTER FOR ORAL QUESTION  
145-19(2): TRADITIONAL COUNSELLING  
MODELS

TABLED DOCUMENT 72-19(2):  
FOLLOW-UP LETTER FOR ORAL QUESTION  
150-19(2): ORAL HEALTH CARE

TABLED DOCUMENT 73-19(2):  
FOLLOW-UP LETTER FOR ORAL QUESTION

169-19(2): FORT PROVIDENCE HEALTH  
CENTRE

TABLED DOCUMENT 74-19(2):  
FOLLOW-UP LETTER FOR ORAL QUESTION  
175-19(2): HOME AND COMMUNITY CARE  
REVIEW

TABLED DOCUMENT 75-19(2):  
FOLLOW-UP LETTER FOR ORAL QUESTION  
203-19(2): COVID-19 AND THE TIMELINESS OF  
UPDATES

**HON. DIANE THOM:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table the following nine documents: "Follow-up Letter for Oral Question 110-19(2): Addressing Drug Use in Northwest Territories Communities"; "Follow-up Letter for Oral Question 128-19(2): Mental Health and Wellness of Seniors in Long-Term Care"; "Follow-up Letter for Oral Question 141-19(2): Oral Health Report"; "Follow-up Letter for Oral Question 144-19(2): Full-Time Psychologist for Children and Youth for Treatment Centre"; "Follow-up Letter for Oral Question 145-19(2): Traditional Counselling Models"; "Follow-up Letter for Oral Question 150-19(2): Oral Health Care"; "Follow-up Letter for Oral Question 169-19(2): Fort Providence Health Centre"; "Follow-up Letter for Oral Question 175-19(2): Home and Community Care Review"; and "Follow-up Letter for Oral Question 203-19(2): COVID-19 and the Timeliness of Updates." Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister. Tabling of documents. Minister of Infrastructure.

TABLED DOCUMENT 76-19(2):  
FOLLOW-UP LETTER FOR ORAL QUESTION 12-  
19(2): FORT SMITH AIRPORT  
INFRASTRUCTURE

TABLED DOCUMENT 77-19(2):  
FOLLOW-UP LETTER FOR ORAL QUESTION 23-  
19(2): ECONOMY OF THE NORTHWEST  
TERRITORIES

TABLED DOCUMENT 78-19(2):  
FOLLOW-UP LETTER FOR ORAL QUESTION  
116-19(2): TLICHO ALL-SEASON ROAD  
CONTRACT

TABLED DOCUMENT 79-19(2):  
FOLLOW-UP LETTER FOR ORAL QUESTION  
159-19(2): YELLOWKNIFE MOTOR VEHICLE  
OFFICE HOURS

TABLED DOCUMENT 80-19(2):  
BUSINESSES PARTICIPATING IN THE TASR  
PROJECT

TABLED DOCUMENT 81-19(2):  
SLAVE GEOLOGICAL PROVINCE CORRIDOR  
CONTRACTS LIST SEPTEMBER 1, 2015-MARCH  
31,2020

**HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table the following six documents: "Follow-up Letter for Oral Question 12-19(2): Fort Smith Airport Infrastructure"; "Follow-up Letter for Oral Question 23-19(2): Economy of the Northwest Territories"; "Follow-up Letter for Oral Question 116-19(2): Tlicho All-Season Road Contract"; "Follow-up Letter for Oral Question 159-19(2): Yellowknife Motor Vehicle Office Hours"; "Businesses Participating in the TASR Project," additional information for return to written question 5-19(2); and "Slave Geological Province Corridor Contracts List September 1, 2015-March 31, 2020," additional information for return to written question 9-19(2). Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister. Tabling of documents. Minister of Justice.

TABLED DOCUMENT 82-19(2):  
FOLLOW-UP LETTER FOR ORAL QUESTION  
117-19(2): RESPONSE TO AFFIRMATIVE  
ACTION POLICY

TABLED DOCUMENT 83-19(2):  
FOLLOW-UP LETTER FOR ORAL QUESTION  
171-19(2): DAYLIGHT SAVINGS TIME

TABLED DOCUMENT 84-19(2):  
FOLLOW-UP LETTER FOR ORAL QUESTION  
190-19(2): LACK OF ENFORCEMENT IN ILLEGAL  
DRUG TRADE

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table the following three documents: "Follow-up Letter for Oral Question 117-19(2): Response to Affirmative Action Policy"; "Follow-up Letter for Oral Question 171-19(2): Daylight Savings Time"; and "Follow-up Letter for Oral Question 190-19(2): Lack of Enforcement in Illegal Drug Trade." Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister. Tabling of documents. Minister of Lands.

TABLED DOCUMENT 85-19(2):  
FOLLOW-UP LETTER FOR ORAL QUESTION 56-  
19(2): CANTUNG MINE SURFACE LEASE

TABLED DOCUMENT 86-19(2):  
FOLLOW-UP LETTER FOR ORAL QUESTION 70-  
19(2): THAIDENE NENE STATUS

TABLED DOCUMENT 87-19(2):  
FOLLOW-UP LETTER FOR ORAL QUESTION 90-19(2): NORTHWEST TERRITORIES POWER CORPORATION USE OF LIMITERS AND ORAL QUESTION 211-19(2): LINE REPAIRS AND POWER LIMITERS IN NUNAKPUT DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

TABLED DOCUMENT 88-19(2):  
FOLLOW-UP LETTER FOR ORAL QUESTION 96-19(2): CAMERON HILLS OIL AND GAS FIELD ENVIRONMENTAL LIABILITIES

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table the following four documents "Follow-up Letter for Oral Question 56-19(2), Cantung Mine Surface Lease"; "Follow-up Letter for Oral Question 70-19(2), Thaidene Nene Status"; "Follow-up Letter for Oral Question 90-19(2), Northwest Territories Power Corporation Use of Limiters and Oral Question 211-19(2), Line Repairs and Power Limiters in Nunakput during COVID-19 Pandemic"; and "Follow-up Letter for Oral Question 96-19(2), Cameron Hills Oil and Gas Field Environmental Liabilities." Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

TABLED DOCUMENT 89-19(2):  
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES HOUSING CORPORATION SUMMARY OF PROGRAM INITIATIVES 2015-2019

TABLED DOCUMENT 90-19(2):  
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES HOUSING CORPORATION ACTION PLAN 2019-2022

**HON. PAULIE CHINNA:** Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following two documents and additional information "Northwest Territories Housing Corporation Summary of Program Initiatives 2015-2019"; and "Northwest Territories Housing Corporation Action Plan 2019-2022." Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister. Tabling of documents. Minister of Education, Culture and Employment.

TABLED DOCUMENT 91-19(2):  
FOLLOW-UP LETTER FOR ORAL QUESTION 34-19(2): INCOME SECURITY CLIENT BANKING ISSUES

TABLED DOCUMENT 92-19(2):  
FOLLOW-UP LETTER FOR ORAL QUESTION 62-19(2): IMPROVING INCOME ASSISTANCE ADMINISTRATION

TABLED DOCUMENT 93-19(2):  
FOLLOW-UP LETTER FOR ORAL QUESTION 97-19(2): INCOME ASSISTANCE

TABLED DOCUMENT 94-19(2):  
FOLLOW-UP LETTER FOR ORAL QUESTION 111-19(2): MENTAL HEALTH AND SUICIDE RESOURCES FOR STUDENTS

TABLED DOCUMENT 95-19(2):  
FOLLOW-UP LETTER FOR ORAL QUESTION 147-19(2): DAY CARE AT ECOLE J. H. SISSONS

TABLED DOCUMENT 96-19(2):  
FOLLOW-UP LETTER FOR ORAL QUESTION 156-19(2): WOMEN IN TRADES

TABLED DOCUMENT 97-19(2):  
FOLLOW-UP LETTER FOR ORAL QUESTION 170-19(2): INCOME ASSISTANCE

TABLED DOCUMENT 98-19(2):  
FOLLOW-UP LETTER FOR ORAL QUESTION 177-19(2): SUPPORT FOR TRADES EMPLOYMENT

TABLED DOCUMENT 99-19(2):  
FOLLOW-UP LETTER FOR ORAL QUESTION 207-19(2): SUCCESSION PLANNING FOR INTERPRETERS TRAINING

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table the following nine documents "Follow-up Letter for Oral Question 34-19(2), Income Security Client Banking Issues;" "Follow-up Letter for Oral Question 62-19(2), Improving Income Assistance Administration;" "Follow-up Letter for Oral Question 97-19(2), Income Assistance;" "Follow-up Letter for Oral Question 111-19(2), Mental Health and Suicide Resources for Students;" "Follow-up Letter for Oral Question 147-19(2), Day Care at Ecole J. H. Sissons;" "Follow-up Letter for Oral Question 156-19(2), Women in Trades;" "Follow-up Letter for Oral Question 170-19(2), Income Assistance;" "Follow-up Letter for Oral Question 177-19(2), Support for Trades Employment;" and "Follow-up Letter for Oral Question 207-19(2), Succession Planning for Interpreters Training." Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister. Tabling of documents. That has to be a record here. Item 15, notices of motion. Item 16, motions. Item 17, notices of motion for first reading of bills. Member for Yellowknife North.

## Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills

BILL 6:

### AN ACT TO AMEND THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY AND EXECUTIVE COUNCIL ACT

**MR. JOHNSON:** Mr. Speaker, I give notice that on Thursday, May 28, 2020, I will move that Bill 6, An Act to Amend the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act, be read for the first time.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Yellowknife North. Item 18, first reading of bills. Item 19, second reading of bills. Item 20 consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters: Tabled Document 30-19(2), Main Estimates 2020-2021. By the authority given to me as Speaker by Motion 1-19(2), I hereby authorize the House to sit beyond the daily hour of adjournment to consider the business before the House, with the Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes in the chair.

### Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters

**MS. SEMMLER:** All right. I now call Committee of the Whole to order. What is the wish of committee? Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**MS. SEMMLER:** Thank you, committee. We will take a short recess.

---SHORT RECESS

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** I now call committee back to order. Order. We're calling back to order. Committee, we have agreed to consider Tabled Document 30-19(2), Main Estimates 2020. Does the Minister of Infrastructure have any opening remarks?

**HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY:** I do, and I don't stand up; right? I do. Thank you. I am pleased to present the 2020-2021 Main Estimates for the Department of Infrastructure. Overall, the department's estimates propose an increase of \$11.6 million, or 4.4 percent, over the 2019-2020 Main Estimates. These estimates support our fiscal objectives to prioritize responsible and strategic spending while matching the modest expected revenue growth over the coming year.

Highlights of these proposed estimates include:

- forced growth increases of \$7.7 million, which primarily consists of \$2 million for utility costs at the new Stanton Territorial Hospital and \$4.5 million for UNW collective bargaining increases;

- \$3.9 million for a new lease and operations and maintenance costs associated with the long-term care facility in Yellowknife;
- increases of \$2.8 million, which includes \$2.4 million in funding associated with the Low Carbon Economy Leadership funding agreement with the Government of Canada and \$390,000 for a permafrost data management and analytical system for the Dempster and Inuvik to Tuktoyaktuk Highways;
- a transfer of \$873,000 to the Department of Finance for assets transferred as part of the formation of the Information Systems Shared Services; and
- sunsets of \$142,000 for reduced operating costs for ferry services on the Dempster Highway, as the recent engine replacements on the Louis Cardinal ferry have resulted in fuel savings; and a sunset of \$236,000 for reduced environmental monitoring requirements on the Inuvik to Tuktoyaktuk Highway.

These estimates continue to support the priorities of the 19<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly by promoting energy efficiency and sustainability.

To fulfill the goals outlined in the 2030 Energy Strategy, we will provide continued financial support to the Arctic Energy Alliance and introduce larger-scale grants for communities, commercial buildings, and industry that target reduced greenhouse gas emissions. As such, the Department of Infrastructure will provide \$2.74 million in core funding to the Arctic Energy Alliance, as well as an additional \$797,000 for community energy grants and \$2.27 million for Northwest Territories-wide energy programs supplemented through the Low Carbon Economy Leadership Fund. This brings the total Arctic Energy Alliance contributions to \$5.8 million.

This concludes my opening remarks. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Minister. Do you wish to bring witnesses into the House?

**HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY:** Yes, I would like to bring my deputy minister, Dr. Joe Dragon, and my director of corporate services, Mr. Gary Brennan.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Sergeant-at-Arms, please escort the witnesses into the Chamber. I'll just get you to introduce who is who.

**HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY:** On everyone's left, that's Dr. Joe Dragon, and on the right is Mr. Gary Brennan. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. I will now open the floor to general comments, but first, I am just going to say, just as we were following the last 10 minutes, one round for questions, two for each section that we go through. Just opening the floor to general comments on the Department of Infrastructure. Member for Hay River South.

**MR. ROCKY SIMPSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. We are going through this process now, and the last time we were here, we weren't too concerned about COVID, and now we are. I'm just wondering, with these estimates, how factual are they, and are they going to change significantly or remain the same because of COVID? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. We feel that we will be able to produce and deliver on the projects within the department as we thought. I know that there would be extra costs associated with COVID that we are all tracking in our different departments that potentially could be reimbursed from the federal government. That's our goal.

I know that the estimates were submitted to whoever they get submitted to ahead of COVID, so yes, they still are pre-COVID numbers. However, we do recognize that we will have a lot to do in the next year with respect to COVID, so the main estimates and such for the next year are going to reflect a lot more the impacts of COVID.

I would just ask if Dr. Dragon wanted to add anything to that, if that was fulsome? Okay. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Minister. You're good? Okay. Member for Hay River South.

**MR. ROCKY SIMPSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Has the department done any work, taking in the fact that we have a pandemic on hand? Have you looked at those numbers and thought about adjustments already? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY:** I think that's pretty much all the department has been doing for the last while, is adjusting all of our programs, our projects, everything with respect to COVID. It's just unfortunately, with the way that the system of the budgeting goes in, this is my understanding, was we have to get the budget in. It was done prior to COVID, and then there will be adjustments coming. Maybe, Dr. Dragon, I don't know if you have any

significant adjustments that you might want to discuss at this point?

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Minister. Dr. Dragon.

**DR. DRAGON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Looking at COVID, one of the things we've been doing, right off the bat, we were involved in the border crossings, getting those up, doing a lot of communication, a lot of legislative changes. Looking at when we were giving some benefits to the airline industries and stuff, we had to do legislative changes there in order to enact that in terms of fees. Lots of work around the procurement side and making it available for people to do online, as well as aligning to the regular meetings of the emergency management office. A big part of the work that we do, as well, in Infrastructure, is with the TSC, so all the employees who are working from home, we've had to come up with our unit to be able to provide that type of support. When the Member was mentioning about some of the fees, that's where we incurred a lot of the fees in terms of Infrastructure.

To date, we are about \$1.2 million, and the majority of that cost, over a million of it, is having to do with the TSC and providing that type of support for all of our employees. The other part that we look at, as well, is all our capital projects. We've had a team meeting with our colleagues in the Department of Finance who manage the capital planning process. We have a group that meets every two weeks that looks at all the capital projects that are going across the Northwest Territories, and we feel we're in a fairly good position right now. They meet every two weeks and come back to us with a report. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MR. ROCKY SIMPSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. With respect to the projects, have you looked at whether they can be delivered on time? You probably have a timeline for them, and I just want to know that because I want to make sure that contractors that are out there know what is going to happen, and I think it's important to them for their survival. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Minister.

**HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY:** Yes, we have been. One of the things that Joe and his team have been doing is creating a matrix of all of our projects that we have and applying a sort of risk assessment, is the right word for it, a ranking system of a red, yellow, and green, and then there are columns as well that look at what are the potential delays,

where are the pinch points, so, if this project doesn't go ahead by this point, it's now going to be delayed, so that they're aware of where all of those critical moments are for project life.

We have, like I said, a red, yellow, green tiered system. Obviously, green is on track, ready to go, good to go, funded, and all the way to red, where we may be waiting for funding or we may think it's not going to be able to be done because of, perhaps, community backlash or not wanting to have southern or outside of their community people in. It's not just necessarily southern workers, it's often just workers from within the NWT. That's all happening.

I recognize that contractors are probably a little bit in the dark as far as what is going to go ahead and what is not, but that is part of the conversation that we are continuing to have. I do understand, and I shouldn't say that because I do believe the department has been very much back-and-forth with a lot of the contractors. Letters went out very early on to talk with the different ones that were already contracted and set to go ahead this summer to have those conversations with them, were they seeing economic hits to their companies, where they felt like maybe they weren't going to be able to produce or deliver the product. All of that kind of work and triaging of our projects has been ongoing since basically COVID hit. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MR. ROCKY SIMPSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. With respect to contracts, have you looked at the ones or identified the ones that we know can be done by northern contractors versus southern contractors? Have those projects been given priority? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I will ask Dr. Dragon to answer that. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Dr. Dragon?

**DR. DRAGON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes, in terms of looking at all of our infrastructure projects, as the Minister mentioned, we have that scale where we're looking at not only the projects that we manage within Infrastructure, but within Infrastructure we manage about 65 contracts, capital projects that go on. For line departments, we do another 87. What we're trying to do there is make sure that we have all the information out on kind of a litmus test of where projects are at.

As the Minister had mentioned, we've sent already over 100 emails to contractors since COVID hit to make sure that they have the supports that they need. We've been dealing with a lot of companies worried about what is the process of getting into communities, so we've been working very effectively with the Office of the Chief Public Health Officer in looking at ways of trying to get into communities. So far, what all that work has told us is that we actually are on track with the majority of our projects. We do have some that are not going to be progressing, and some of those are having to do with budget issues, not necessarily having to do with COVID issues. We haven't seen any so far that we have felt that is in relation to COVID that it's not going on. We continue to monitor it every two weeks to try and make sure that we are on top of it and we're communicating very regularly on any best practices that we are getting from other jurisdictions on capital projects, and we've seen some of that in projects now. Just for example, the TASR, where they're coming on board, they've taken a lot of the lessons learned from other jurisdictions that they're applying to that.

Finally, I would say, when we have communities that are looking at maybe not so much having the ability or wanting southern contractors to come into their community, what we're doing is looking at very specific points where we get into issues of timing with the projects. Right now, we're looking at timing, and those haven't been an issue to date. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Dr. Dragon. Member for Hay River South.

**MR. ROCKY SIMPSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. One last question. You mentioned that you sent emails to contractors. What type of response have you received from those contractors, and has there been any follow-up with telephone calls to them or meetings with them? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. There has been lots of back and forth. I'm going to guess though there has been some where, perhaps, they haven't had that follow up. Again, I don't have the metrics of how many have actually responded and came back, but I do understand from my department that there has been a lot of back and forth with our contractors. I know myself, personally, I've had a lot of contractors reaching out to me and had conversations with them, some from your region. I guess, again, I will just ask Dr. Dragon if he actually has any sort of numbers or data around the results.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Minister. Dr. Dragon.

**DR. DRAGON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. In terms of the communication that we go through, I don't have metrics on how many have been going back and forth, other than the fact that the group, I've asked them to keep track of how many emails that they're sending out to contractors. We do have 100 so far that have been sent directly to contractors. Talking about active projects that we currently have on, I wanted also to let the committee know that, when we're going out and we're talking to contractors, one of the things that we're doing is also providing them with website links, any contact information as well for the Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission, WSCC, and also the Office of the Chief Public Health Officer so that they get the information directly in terms of what are some of the constraints for their employees if they are southern or if they are northern. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Are there any further questions in regard to general comments? If not, I'll move into the details contained in the tabled document. Agreed?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Committee, we will defer the departmental summary and review the estimates by activity summary, beginning with asset management, starting on page 226, with information items on page 229. Questions to asset management? Member for Yellowknife North.

**MR. JOHNSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. There are a number of projects expected under asset management: highway projects; there are schools, Sissons; a school in Tuktoyaktuk, Behchoko, Colville Lake. I am also looking at the line here, design and technical services of \$3,800,000. Would the Minister be able to give me a sense of what proportion of that design and technical services went to BIP businesses? Would the Minister have that? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY:** I have to apologize. I am missing a section in my binder. I don't have page 226. I wonder if I have two 226s. Sorry. My apologies. Okay. Two-twenty-eight is my next number, Joe. Thank you. If the committee would give me a second, I am going to pull up my e-binder. I apologize. If that would be okay?

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** I just stopped the time.

**HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY:** I will have Joe answer this question. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Okay. Dr. Dragon.

**DR. DRAGON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I believe the question was looking at how much of that was BIP-related. Anything that we are looking into our contracts that we provide, that is the first opportunity that we do in terms of the BIP. I don't have a percentage on that in terms of how many contracts, but I have asked in terms of the department. We will get that back for you. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Dr. Dragon. Member for Yellowknife North.

**MR. JOHNSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate that. I recognize I don't need it necessarily for this specific issue. Glancing at the list, I just know offhand that a number of these went over tender and they never actually were awarded to northern businesses. I think there is this disconnect in that I know BIP is in ITI, and I know much of the procurement is in Finance and then some of it is in Infrastructure.

At the end of the day, I would like if the Minister could give me a sense of, in this Infrastructure project, the contracts we are actually putting out at the end of the day that actually go to BIP businesses, if I could get a breakdown of that figure. I know the policy exists and it's a good policy, but there seems to be a disconnect of contracts actually being awarded to BIP businesses at the end of the day. So if I could get that commitment from the Minister, that would be appreciated. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY:** I would commit to that, but my deputy is also indicating over there that he actually has the answer, so I will pass it over to Dr. Dragon. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** All right. Thank you, Minister. Dr. Dragon.

**DR. DRAGON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. One of the things that I wanted to let committee know in terms of looking at how many contracts, I know there has been a lot of focus on northern businesses. Looking at some of the metrics, I wanted to give the committee some of the reflection on that. Last year, in terms of the 2019-2020 fiscal year, in terms of our contracts for construction maintenance, architecture, and engineering services, anything valued at over \$500,000, we had 45 contracts that were awarded at about \$95 million



for construction maintenance and A and E services. Of those 45 contracts, 39 of them were awarded to northern businesses. So approximately 87 percent went to northern businesses at a value of \$78 million, that is 82 percent; 31 of those contracts were awarded to BIP-registered companies, 71 percent.

Six of those contracts were awarded to southern firms. The reason why is we did not receive any bids from any northern companies for those six, and those were contracts for services that we couldn't get here, looking at water treatment plants. We had one with the Trout River Bridge rehabilitation, as well as some highway stripping and sealing, coating services.

Again, looking at that, we continually have the reflection of making sure that northern businesses, and especially during this time, I have asked our procurement staff to make sure that I have regular reports on how many northern businesses are actually getting our contracts, but, again, for the 2019-2020 fiscal year, we are looking at about 87 percent that are going to northern businesses. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Dr. Dragon. Do we have any other questions? Member for Kam Lake.

**MS. CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Just in speaking with businesses from my constituency, I understand that sometimes a lot of contracts are, yes, awarded to northern businesses, but the employment doesn't necessarily stick behind. Do you guys have a breakdown of, even though 87 percent of contracts went to northern businesses, how much of the dollars or employment actually stayed in the North for that percentage? Thank you.

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

**HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I think that would be one we would have to come back to you on. I doubt that we have those numbers handy, but we will commit to that. Thank you.

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

**MS. CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. In addition, another thing I would be curious to know, and I understand that the Minister might not have this information handy, is, if contracts are being broken up and then passed on to companies down south that are then bringing up workers who are actually doing the work and gaining the employment, it would be interesting to know: can we as a government actually break that work up

ourselves and do a bit more project management to be able to maintain the employment actually in the Northwest Territories? Thank you.

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

**HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Just one second, here. Definitely, that is the goal, obviously, to not have it just become again a sort of shell company that gets a cut and then just gives everything to the south. Obviously, this is part of our mandate and our priorities that we all came to together. So, we definitely will be incorporating those types of suggestions into our procurement review and our, what do you want to call it, when we start making the adjustments to the procurement system. I am not really getting my word right. Yes, we commit to incorporating that. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MS. CLEVELAND:** Thank you, Madam Chair. The last piece that I want to be able to bridge in there is -- actually, I am going to save that question. I am good. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Okay, thank you. Are there questions on asset? Member for Deh Cho.

**MR. BONNETROUGE:** Mahsi, Madam Chair. I am looking at page 228, specifically the Deh Cho Bridge Opportunities Grant. It states that the grant is for the purpose of creating community benefits and economic opportunities related to the Deh Cho Bridge. I know they get I think it's \$200,000 on a yearly basis. I had asked the questions, I think, through emails previously.

I believe the agreement states that, in the eighth year, it can be up for renegotiating, or maybe to negotiate the parameters or the criteria. Right now, it's strictly for somebody who gets a business licence, and they are getting free funds, free money as a business, and it's continuing every year. The business doesn't even have to be successful. It doesn't even have to go out and get a contract.

That is what I noticed as a project officer. Those construction companies weren't even bidding on contracts that were in the community. It was going to people from La Crete. I just thought the CERB funding and all this funding where they just get it for free and no incentive to really go out and actually do some work and bid on contracts. My question is that the time surrounding this funding could be negotiated so that we can use the funding to create employment within the community, you know like make-work projects or else it can be used to build

something, maybe upgrade the harbour or something like that?

Because I know right now you can't do much with that funding except those little criteria, you know. It does benefit the schools and the employment office and those kinds of people, but not a huge amount, and we never, ever get any reports on a yearly basis to see what is the tax we have and who is getting all of this money on a yearly basis, you know, those type of things. Because there are people who could be in conflict who actually handle this money, who are getting those grants, too. My question around that is: can it be opened? Since you are in the eighth year, can it be looked at to get away from specific criteria and be open for the wishes of the community? Mahsi

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

**HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It is my understanding that that grant is fairly flexible and can be used for different items within the community, its cultural well-being, education and training, community economic development, a small portion going to administration. I will commit that we can give you an annual report. I think that is completely a fair and valid request, and so we definitely will do that.

Like a lot of the programming that we are talking about with the federal government or within our GNWT programs, we talked a lot around flexibility. You will see with the SEED funding under ITI that we did change some of the parameters around that funding. That is another thing that the federal government is doing around infrastructure, is removing some of the restrictions so that we have more flexibility to make those decisions for ourselves because we know where things need to be spent and done right now with COVID-19 and being able to bring in the lens of keeping people employed and working and businesses operating. So we have all of this. We are already having this discussion about flexibility with our different funding pots, so I would add this to our list. We will definitely look at it. I know there have been ongoing conversations with the Member regarding this grant, and I can commit to continuing to have those conversations with him and going forward together. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Minister. Member for Deh Cho.

**MR. BONNETROUGE:** Mahsi for that. I know you have a set criteria for the funding because you did mention those other, the different criteria for the grants that people can use, but I have never, ever seen or heard anything in the community that any of that money given to those four areas created

employment. That is why my question is: can we have this modified, the criteria changed, so it benefits the community so that they can maybe look at building something or getting a large infrastructure, maybe a community freezer, that type of stuff? Then it creates some employment in other areas, constructing a building or something like this, to keep people employed. I am wondering if you can, if you are open to that, could write a letter to the Deh Gah bridge corporation to initiate discussions leading up to any changes that we can see and if they can identify some opportunities and if you would be open to making some changes to some of the criteria. Mahsi.

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

**HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It is my understanding there is no criteria. I am just wondering if it's perhaps an education piece, that we maybe need to be letting people know that they could kind of come together with a proposal that would have more of a significant build or such. I am almost wondering if this is perhaps a function of small businesses just accessing the pot on their own and nobody really thinking to get together to create a large proposal for accessing the funding. My understanding, there is no criteria or limits to what could be accessed; it's just a request, and then the funding goes to those businesses.

We definitely will commit to revisit, and maybe I don't have that right, so I do commit to revisiting that with you and having that conversation with you, then, so we can ensure that we use the money in a sort of more effective and efficient way, is I think what I am hearing you say, so that we come up with something big versus tiny little bits of companies advancing slightly. I think maybe that is an area where the department could do better outreach, then, and come in and say, "Hey, have you guys thought about using this pot? You guys want to build an arena in that location?" I do not know what Providence's immediate demands are, but maybe that is a conversation we should be saying: "You know, you have this money and this funding; why does not a company come together and bid on it?" Thank you. I commit to that, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Minister. Member for Deh Cho.

**MR. BONNETROUGE:** Yes, thanks for all that. Just to let you know, it was like a secretive group, you know. I was asking questions of the corporation. I guess some members were getting upset because I was asking questions of it when I was working out of Hay River. I was asking, "Where is this? Who is on the board? When do you guys have meetings?" Apparently, what they do is they send emails to

each other. Because I was asking questions, it turned a lot of them off, against me. I could not believe it. You know, asking questions and the administrator, she does the finances and stuff, and I asked questions of her, and she just refuses to answer anything whatsoever. We don't know that. Every time we are trying to ask something, we are being turned away. We are not being given straight-out answers or anything. I have asked the band councils and that if these boards are accountable to them and if they see reports, and they don't seem to want to do that. They don't want to hold anybody accountable for anything.

Regarding the reports, I am not sure if you legally can share it with me, but, if you can and it's okay, then I would like to see a report. Mahsi.

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

**HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate that you've raised the point of the fact that perhaps there are things we actually cannot tell you from an agreement, but definitely, everything that we can tell, I would like to provide that to you so you have comfort that the money is going out in a good manner. If it's not, that will tell us that we need to make some corrections there. So I definitely commit to reporting on whatever we can that is not in violation of any sort of accounting or agreements, but I would have to look into that, and I commit to looking into it, for myself. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Minister. Are you good? Okay. Questions. Member for Monfwi.

**MR. LAFFERTY:** Masi, Madam Chair. [Translation] I just, Madam Chair, would like to say about the road, the access road on our land and towards Behchoko, last year, they did some drilling, and they were getting prepared. Last week, the Minister with the grand chief, chiefs, all the chiefs in Tlicho region, meeting with the Premier and the Minister, they did a public tender, and then the Yellowknife local, they left it in Yellowknife to leave it in Yellowknife to do. The tender was out, and it was like it was condemned. It was going to be the favouritism to Yellowknife, but now it's like we see some changes now. We are happy about it, but now, under chapter 26, and I am hoping that these people who are doing the books are well prepared in understanding about our system, about how we are going. So just like my friend across from me, he had the same question. Right now, a lot of money that is coming this way, to NWT, it looks very, very well, but a lot of times in a contract that they do is it written for the business or the road that that's going to happen, that business to the road, that access road, every time there is a contract, is there a

saying in that a document that 87 percent that would be able to go to the people in from our territory. That's what I'm asking right now. [End of translation]

[Microphone turned off]

**HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY:** I have noted what the Member has said and his concerns with the Rae Access Road. I have to apologize; I didn't quite catch your question. I do commit that, obviously, we're going to do lessons learned. That's a big part of the engineering world and I know you're probably going to get sick of, just as much as you get sick of the Premier's saying she's a social worker, you may get sick of me saying I'm engineer after a while, but that is the engineering process, to go back and look at our past ones and see what we've done wrong. Clearly the Member has a feeling and believes that we've done wrong when it comes to the TASR and the way that the Rae Access Road comes. I commit to you that I'm listening to what you have to say, and all of those lessons learned, because I don't want to be sitting in the House again or be having that conversation again with the Tlicho chiefs. I commit to learn the lessons from these projects and do better and do differently going forward. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Member for Monfwi.

**MR. LAFFERTY:** Masi, Madam Chair. Obviously, I would just like to have a clear dialogue with the department. Obviously, we've learned from TASR, we've learned from Tlicho All Season Road. This Rae Access Road, if we didn't meet the public tender, would still be out there. Obviously, it would have gotten even worse from my leadership. I'm glad the Premier and Minister met with us to deal with that. It shouldn't come to that, that's what I'm saying. We should have a concrete written agreement with such agreements, similar to what the Member for Kam Lake is alluding to, that there is 80 percent going to northern contracts. Is that written in stone within a contract? I know the contracts are different and a different calibre of the whole Northwest Territories. I'm just wondering, Madam Chair, if it is written in such a way that the Northerners are benefitting? I know that TASR, there is a certain percentage. To my knowledge, it is low, but that was negotiated before us in last fall before the elections. With this new access road and Tlicho Bridge that's coming, I want to be prepared for that. Is there any set agreement on numbers? That's what I'm after, Madam Chair. Masi.

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

**HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes, you're right, every contract is going to

be different. I do recognize that, if we don't change the language in our contracts, we're just going to keep letting people game the system, which is what's happening. That's when you see the cutting of the cheque or, you know, the bait and switch of, "oh, we've got these people" and then, "oh, now we've got the contract we're going to hire these people." All of those types of situations are things that I'm pretty aware of and alive to and part of my motivations for getting into this seat in the first place. All parts of the conversations that we're having, I would actually like to offer that you do come and have the conversation with me and my department and we discuss what you want to see for the Tlicho, I'm going to start calling it, the Frank Channel Bridge when we get that funding, et cetera. I would say, yes, come to us. Let's have that conversation and make sure that, when we go forward the next time, it's not in a manner where you're going to be upset or it's not meeting the needs of your people, or the Member's people. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MR. LAFFERTY:** Mahsi, Madam Chair. Once we get the funding, not when, once we get the funding. We will get the funding, I'm hoping. Madam Chair, just maybe one more question. Other expected projects, we talk about asset management and planning design of buildings. There has been discussion and we met with the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment on a Behchoko school. It's been four months now, I think we met, I believe, in January. I'm just wondering if this an opportunity to discuss that, because it is part of asset management. I'm just wondering on the status. If Members or staff don't have any information, I would love to get some information later on, as well. Mahsi.

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

**HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. This would be under ECE's department. They are a client group of Infrastructure, but it is under their department for those conversations. I know that Minister Simpson was just very nice to let me know that they haven't reached out to the chiefs yet, and perhaps that's going to be coming soon but I can't speak for ECE. We can, again, maybe have another conversation outside of the Committee of the Whole. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Minister. Are there other questions under asset management? Member for Hay River South.

**MR. ROCKY SIMPSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. With respect to the highway systems, the design, I

expect that they've looked at all the highways in the Territories and have done some assessment and prioritized them as to which ones have to be looked at first? My concern is that Highway 1, from the border to Enterprise and also Highway 2, from Enterprise into Hay River, there hasn't really been any realignment or any widening in the last number of years. I know that because once in a while I ride my bicycle to the border. There is not much there for a shoulder. We have a number of trucks [microphone turned off] and we're lucky we haven't had any major accidents. A month or so ago, or a few weeks ago, they blocked off, for instance, the access to the Alexander Falls and parking area. People then were parking on the highway, which was a safety issue, and that got resolved fairly quickly. I guess I would like to know and I would like to see something done with those sections of the highway, because nothing has been done in a while and they are important to the big trucks heading into the mines and into Yellowknife. We have got to do something sooner than later on that. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. As part of that project matrix that I was talking about earlier, all the highways are included in that. Yes, we do look at ranking them and determining which ones need repair and rehabilitation sooner rather than later. We can definitely commit to looking at the particular areas that you are looking at. We do have a published highways report that could be, if the Member wants more information you can access that. I'm definitely willing to take those suggestions back and we can look at where those pieces of infrastructure fall into the planning for the department and when we might see them realistically being addressed. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MR. ROCKY SIMPSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. The other thing is with respect to contracts. In the past, the contracts, years ago, they used to be broken down and then we kind of start combining them together and making them bigger. What that did was discourage northern contractors, the smaller ones, from bidding and not getting work. Has the department looked at possibly breaking those contracts down, or the way they're putting the contracts out, to ensure that small businesses, small contractors, can pick up some of the work on their own? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It's funny because, as you say that to me, I have contractors in different areas of the territory that tell me, "Stop breaking down contracts. I don't want bid on just providing a loader." Again, a very complex situation, which I think we do have to look at as a case-by-case situation. I was joking with someone earlier that it would be easier if the all the contractors would just get together and come to me with all the portions of the project that they have agreed upon to work on, but that is not going to happen. I do recognize that that is a function of what my department needs to do, is taking at a realistic look at the capacities within a region and seeing, okay, if we carve out certain parts of this project, we will get more companies working, but it will have to be, I believe, project by project. We can't make a statement overall that we are going to have one guy providing the loader, one guy providing the pickup truck. Sorry, I know you are not talking to that degree, but definitely we will take that back because one of the things that is happening is we do have large infrastructure projects coming that do need to have a certain calibre or certain types of skill sets that we do not have in the Northwest Territories.

This is again part of that entire procurement review that we are starting, underway between the departments. It's part of the mandates of the 19<sup>th</sup> Assembly, was to maximize benefits to northern business, Indigenous business. We are looking at Indigenous procurement options and what we can do now to ensure that more Northerners are working because all of the companies are coming to me, saying, "We don't want a handout. We don't want a wage. We want work." So that is a message that is resonating really loudly with me and I am taking back to my departments. Thank you, Madam Chair

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

**MR. ROCKY SIMPSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Basically, that is what I have been hearing, too, is that contractors want to work because, if they are taking loans and they are taking deferrals and that, really they are just putting themselves further in debt, and that does not help their survival. The other area is in engineering opportunities. We have a number of larger engineering firms here in the territories, but we also have in Hay River a smaller one. It was born here in the North. It was born in Hay River, and it is owned by local people, but again, there they have problems trying to compete because they might say, "Well, we don't have this or we don't have a land surveyor or we may not have a geotech person," but they do have access to those types of people.

I would like to see, I guess, somehow that we can ensure that those smaller firms as well have an opportunity to bid on the work and allow them to build some capacity to grow bigger, as well. The other problem I have, too, is that, when we talk about not having capacity here, if we are putting contracts out and if we see that maybe some of the same contractors are always getting the work, then we have to get some buy-in or we have to somehow force them to relocate here or set up an office. We cannot just allow them to pick up a contract and operate down south. There has got to be something for us here in the Northwest Territories. If they are not willing to do it, we have to look at how we are going to approach that and how we can change that. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY:** I think the Member makes really good points, all things that I have considered. I am in one of the engineering companies that does not have the people to bid on something. Another part that we see often is, as stated, the downturn in Alberta occurred. We had a lot of people who started to buy work in the North. That is a problem, and that is again, I guess, back to the negotiated contract versus the RFP-type conversation, because I cannot go out and tell a company not to lower their rates of their employees to win a job. So I understand that that has to now be coming back into the RFP and how we are writing that and how we are scoring people and holding people accountable when they are proposing to put certain people on projects but also building in the training capacities, like you talk about.

I think, as we move to more virtual business anyway, it will be very hard to force people to open up brick and mortar offices in the North, but I totally know what the Member is saying, and it's all part of the conversation that we are having as part of the procurement review and part of a larger conversation that we are having as a Cabinet in the sense of not just looking at dollar for dollar but looking at those intangible or indirect benefits of, you know, if we spend the \$200,000 with the northern company, well, that saves 10 employees from going on unemployment, so are we going to start factoring in that amount of money for IA into the change in that bid? I mean, we cannot do that in the bid scoring, but we need to start changing the mentality so that we recognize that the lowest bid is not always the right bid or the best bid. Most engineers will fight for quality-based selection, where you don't even start talking about money until you have actually made it through the technical bid and you've chosen a firm to negotiate with.

Unfortunately, I think, with the way our financials are set up, it will not work. Because we do not start until April, we miss our field season, and that is actually a good point I should make on procurement with contracts. Because of the setup of the money not coming till April, it really forces the Department of Infrastructure to have to do stuff very, very quickly because our client departments are not coming to us until they have their funding, to say, "I want to build this project." All of a sudden, we are finding out in May we need to start building projects this summer, and, a lot of that, it gets delayed. I saw it in my own work, and I have to think it's impacting the entire departments overall. I had a conversation with someone, "It would be great to shift to January-January," because then we'd actually have four months of winter to plan what we are doing in the summer. I think that does add to some of this problem that is occurring. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MR. ROCKY SIMPSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I guess for businesses in the North, you know, we are always concerned that people will say they are charging too much, but the cost of doing business here and having a brick and mortar here is costly. We are paying higher rates all around. Somehow we expect that BIP is going to take that into account, and it does somewhat but not fully. Now we are not taking into account the downturn in the economy down south. There is a cost to that. How do we include that when we are putting tenders out there? That is why I think it's very important that we deal with BIP as soon as we can and do some changes to it because it's a powerful tool; it could be a powerful tool for us. It's been good, but with the economy the way it is in the South, it does not give us the advantage it used to. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Member. Minister, a short answer.

**HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. That is my other department's hat. I will take that back.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Members, it's 6:00. We have been going for just about an hour now. Are any more question under assets, or did you want to finish assets and then break for supper?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Okay. Member for Frame Lake.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Madam Chair. On page 227, the contract services amount last year was

\$3,978,000. This year it's \$4,332,000. Can someone explain what's happening there? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. In that one, we had an increase of \$345,000, and that was the Northern Transportation Adaptation Initiative. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Minister. Member for Frame Lake. No? Are there other questions under asset management? All right, so there are no further questions under asset management. Infrastructure, asset management, operations expenditure, on page 227 of the 2020-2021 Main Estimates, \$19,254,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. We will now take a break.

---SHORT RECESS

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** I will call the committee back to order, and we are moving on to Infrastructure, corporate management, operations expenditures, on pages 230 and 231. Just wait. Where am I? Corporate management, yes, sorry. I'm throwing my pages around. Pages 230 to 233. Questions? Member for Kam Lake.

**MS. CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. First off, I am very happy to see the allotment for Students Against Drinking and Driving. I appreciate that line item. Thank you very much. I am wondering if the Minister can please speak to the line item for strategic infrastructure that seems to vary quite a bit from year to year. Thank you.

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

**HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY:** Yes. Just one second, here. Thank you, Madam Chair. Under strategic infrastructure, over this last one, we have had an increase of \$36,000, which was the collective agreement wage increases. In the past, we have seen a decrease of \$134,000. That was \$14,000 of incremental collective agreement wage increases, as well, there. Net of in 2019-2020, there was a one-time supplementary appropriation funding and transfers. Are you following? Okay. \$148,000 of that funding was to provide support to the Slave Geological Province Corridor project, the design and planning. That was federal funding, so that was an increase. That \$170,000 also included a \$22,000 collective agreement wage increase. The variance of \$270,000 was new funding acquired in

2019-2020 for a new strategic infrastructure division. That was 1.5 positions, along with related operations and maintenance; so the director of one and manager of a half. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MS. CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Just to confirm, both of those positions were added to headquarters? Thank you.

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

**HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes, they were. Thank you.

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

**MS. CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I noticed here in the description of this, as well, it talks about how this is where we would talk about federal funding agreements. Right now, we have on our list of priorities three fairly hefty strategic infrastructure projects. I know that you have been working quite hard with the federal government to secure funding for those, but what if the federal government turns around and says to us, "We'll do 75-25 for all three of those"? How does the Department of Infrastructure plan to fund those or to choose which one goes forward? Thank you.

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

**HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. The three strategic infrastructure projects, at least two of them are funded already for the next four years, to get them to a shovel-ready project. Actually, I think all three of them have funding for the next four years. We're not actually looking to go and ask the federal government in this Assembly for more money for those three strategic infrastructure projects. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MR. JOHNSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I guess I am always a little confused about the role of Finance and the role of Infrastructure. When I look at the Department of Infrastructure's policies, I see three policies: the Infrastructure Establishment Policy; the Disposal of Goods Policy; and the Disposal of Improved Real Property. Are there other policies in the Department of Infrastructure that exist? Thank you.

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

**HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I think there are a lot of policies within the Department of Infrastructure. Perhaps I will pass this over to Dr. Dragon for a little summary of all of those policies. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Minister. Dr. Dragon.

**DR. DRAGON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes, the Minister is correct. We have a lot of policies that we follow, but a lot of policies that we also have connective tissue with Finance. As the Member mentioned, a big one that I alluded to earlier is the capital planning, where the Department of Finance actually oversees that, but we have a lot of projects that we actually oversee and then report in, along with other line departments, as well. A lot of connective tissue. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MR. JOHNSON:** I think this is a problem across departments. When you go to their websites and you look at the policies that they're responsible for, none of them are complete across departments. I'll just make that as a note to Ministers that I would like to know all of the policies, because there are the procurement guidelines in Finance, and I think that that is the biggest driver here. Finance, to me, is really the driver of procurement, despite us constantly asking Infrastructure questions. Does the department have a policy on design-build versus design-bid-build, and do we have a preference or a general way that we decide between those two? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I think this one I will pass over to Dr. Dragon to answer. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Dr. Dragon.

**DR. DRAGON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes, in terms of looking at design-builds, every project that we look at, we look at as an opportunity to see where we use different techniques to procure larger projects. It really depends on the area, the type of project, whether we are looking at various entities being a part of that project. In some cases, we look at a design-build where we want to make sure that the people who are actually building it maybe have the ability to, in some cases, actually manage that type of building over the life of the asset, as well; so having them build it actually makes sense. It's not for every case that we do in these large infrastructure projects. We look at them on a case-by-case basis. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MR. JOHNSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I guess I want to distinguish between P3s and design-builds here. Projects over \$50 million under the P3 policy; that's in Finance. I have issues with P3s, but if I have issues, I bring them to Finance. It's that \$1-million to \$50-million range. To me, that's Infrastructure's bread and butter, and if I am going to look at what has happened in the history of the North, as we have made a transition from design-bid-build to design-build and what that has done is there are only select firms that can bid on design-builds. I think the honorariums that we are giving out just aren't enough. Our northern architecture firms, our northern engineering firms, are deciding to avoid design-builds, because you have to be a very large firm to take on all of the risks that go into a design-build.

The design-bid-build process, I think, is exactly where we should be focussing on. It allows us to break projects up smaller. If we create an engagement department, something I think would be great, it allows us to have a little more flexibility with our architectural team to see what a community can actually do. As much as I hear you say, "Yes, it's a case-by-case basis, and we're looking at breaking up contracts," the only way that your words really reflect the actions on the ground is in policies. Absent those policy changes happening, I guess what I would be looking for from the Minister is, this is a big debate, but I think there is a lot of work to be done in that \$1- to \$50-million range. I would be looking for the Department of Infrastructure, which it can, because this is where that lies -- if the Minister of ITI was here, we could also amend BIP, because they work hand-in-hand - - to create a policy that says, "We prefer design-bid-builds." Because, to me, that is what has been killing a lot of the small contractors in the North. Would the Minister be willing to do that? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I definitely commit to having a look at this and taking the Member's points under notice and having that conversation with him. It sounds like he has lots of great ideas, so I would suggest that, if he wants to put them together and send them to me, that would be great. We will be having, as I said, that fulsome procurement review across departments. I understand that that will probably take longer than the Member would like, but that is the nature of what we have to do. We have noted the policy comment, and we will definitely incorporate that into our review. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MR. JOHNSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I guess I will build onto this. I look at the procurement guidelines, and it appears that the Department of Finance doesn't really seem to have an opinion on this in the procurement guidelines. They are worried about the financial side. If you guys decide you want to construct something that way, they'll go put the contracts together. I don't see a prohibition against Infrastructure creating a preference to design-bid-builds.

I also don't see anything in the procurement guidelines that would prohibit the Department of Infrastructure from creating a policy that sets out how we break down smaller contracts. Whenever a department comes to you with, say, "Did you go out and consult and talk to the labour pool in that community and what they have," and then make that the contract that then goes to Finance. I recognize that the procurement review is happening, and people have been saying that for years, but it's really you, as the Minister, who could grab one of your policies, of which I'm sure there's a bunch I have never seen and can't find, and change a couple of lines in them to reflect that.

I guess I would ask the Minister: would you also be willing to find wording that reflects this principle that we want to break up procurement contracts to reflect what a community can actually bid on? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I guess, you know, that is part of the whole goal, is to have a whole-of-government revamp and look at our procurement dollars and what we are going to be doing. Everything that the Member has said is noted. We definitely want to ensure that we maximize our dollars. I know that I will only be hearing about it if we don't. I'm leery of creating more policies when all I heard through the campaign was that there are too many policies and procedures, and we're not doing great at executing them anyway, but I understand your point. I do commit to putting in language, or looking at those policies and adapting them as we see fit, in a newer, more fair procurement system. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MR. JOHNSON:** Thank you. Just one final thing. I will send the link to the Minister and her team, but could you put all of the Department of Infrastructure's policies on your website? I



recognize there are executive policies, departmental policies, and then there are the procurement guidelines and all of the capital projects that lie with Finance, but I know, somewhere buried in the Department of Infrastructure, there are guidelines on how exactly we are choosing to build buildings.

From what I can see, we have slowly been creating these shell, fake, northern companies, that are actually southern companies, and those true, kind of, northern construction firms are becoming rarer and rarer. This hasn't happened in the last eight months since you've been in charge; this has been a decade-long experiment with more P3s and more design-builds. I think that it is failing, and I would really encourage the Minister to get hold of all of the Infrastructure policies and look at some little tweaks. Perhaps start doing that without this huge procurement review that is probably going to take us two years or three years. I'll leave that with the Minister. Thank you.

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

**HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. As I already mentioned before and in the email I sent you, we did do that exact thing with the RFP and changing one small item to encourage northern -- it was a situation where, if they don't even meet the minimum scoring, then they don't actually even make it to the financial part or evaluation, which is where all the BIP comes into play. We made that change very rapidly, very quickly, when I said to Dr. Dragon that we needed to do something in the meantime. I recognize that the review is going to take long.

I just want to email people or send out letters. I had my lovely conversation with the Member for Monfwi, and I wanted to respond to his chiefs very quickly, but I had to go through a whole process to get the response out. I recognize that that impedes our government, and it creates problems. I am committed to streamlining and rewriting policies that make more sense. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Minister. Because I didn't set the time, I'm going to move on to Yellowknife Centre.

**MS. GREEN:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I was astounded to hear from the Minister that there is no additional money required for the three infrastructure projects she is promoting, because we only appropriate money a year at a time. Can she reply on that?

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

**HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am not an accountant. I misspoke. I apologize. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Minister. Member for Yellowknife Centre.

**MS. GREEN:** The point of the question is not only to point out the error, but also to point out that, in fact, these three projects are not all signed, sealed, and delivered. There still is an opportunity to choose a priority and to allocate the money to that. Is there any work going on in that respect? Thank you.

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

**HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Could I ask for clarification? Is there looking at reallocating money from those three infrastructure projects to other projects?

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Member for Yellowknife Centre.

**MS. GREEN:** Making one project a priority.

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

**HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I think that's a conversation for all of us as a whole as to whether or not we're revisiting the mandate. I don't believe that we're at that point in the conversation, and if we are, I'm not aware of it. No, that's not ongoing at this point. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Minister. Member for Yellowknife Centre.

**MS. GREEN:** What confidence does the Minister have that the revenue surpluses will be adequate for funding all three projects going forward? Thank you.

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

**HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I don't like to predict the future, so I'm going to pass this over to Dr. Dragon to answer. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Minister. Dr. Dragon.

**DR. DRAGON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. In looking at all three of these projects in terms of our due diligence and looking at what opportunities we have, a number of them, as we go through them, look at going through the environmental assessment process right now, developing

developer assessment reports. We're really also looking at our Indigenous partners and seeing the feedback because, in these, I'll just go through a couple of them real quickly. The Mackenzie Valley highway, we're probably taking about the next four years to go through that process. If we look at the Slave Geological Province Corridor, right now, the money that we have allotted for that project is going to be, probably, in the next six years in terms of going through an environmental assessment and looking at all the regulatory authorizations. Then, finally, in terms of looking at Taltson, we have \$18 million going through that project, and we're looking at design feasibility and environmental assessment. All three of the projects are in the early stages. It's very, very critical that we have Indigenous engagement in all three of those, and I think the long-term plan is to try to identify business cases for all three that would then be able to come to the committee to be able to have a discussion on which one makes sense to go forward, but we're a few years away from that. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Dr. Dragon. Member for Yellowknife Centre.

**MS. GREEN:** Yes, thank you for that information. It doesn't answer my question. My question was that the premise was for funding infrastructure is that there has to be a surplus in the budget; and the surplus is forecasted to go down to a double double at Tim Hortons at 2023, so how is the government going to continue to pay its share of these three projects in the life of this Assembly? Thank you.

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

**HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Those are good questions and, obviously, something that we're going to have to be dealing with over the next while. I do want to say that some of the federal funding that's coming forward now, they are, as I mentioned before, looking to be more flexible. We are looking to get 100 percent dollars for projects going forward so, perhaps, that may be a route we can go with the three major infrastructure projects. Those would be options that we would be looking to discuss with the federal government. The conversation I'm having with the federal government is that, not only were we already in a huge infrastructure deficit prior to COVID, we were in a bad economic situation, and it's just kicked us right off the cliff with COVID. One of the conversations we're having is: how do we keep Northerners working? What Northerners can do, is they can do these projects, and they can build roads, and they can bite away at these types of projects, and that's part of our structure going forward. Yes, it will play into making sure that Northerners are doing those projects. When economies are bad, governments build

infrastructure, so we will see better supports, and we already are seeing better supports from the federal government on our infrastructure projects and in that conversation. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Minister. Member for Yellowknife Centre.

**MS. GREEN:** Thank you, Madam Chair. The Minister's comments are only relevant if the contracting is going to the North, and the Tlicho All-Season Road tells us how that can really not work in our favour. My follow-up question is: when does the Minister expect to reach an agreement with the government for the 100-percent funding for northern infrastructure? Is this something that's going to happen in the life of this Assembly, in the life of this fiscal year? What's the timing on that? Thank you.

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

**HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Well, I think, as we all sit here, the future is fairly uncertain. I don't have a time frame, and I won't profess to say something just to answer a question. In a new world when it comes to our funding formulas, we already have seen flexibility and changes within federal pots of funding that are already available. We are going to continue, all of us, to go to our FPTs and have these conversations with the federal government. I can't give you a time frame, but I'd be surprised if anyone can tell you what's going to be happening anywhere in the world in a year. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Minister. Member for Yellowknife Centre.

**MS. GREEN:** Yes, I'll just finish with a comment. This is really a hopes and prayers section of the budget. We hope that we will be able to advance these three projects to the business case that there will be northern contracting, there will be Indigenous partnerships. I feel like we don't have anything that is super sturdy, here. We just have a lot of hopes and prayers. For something that is so vital to our economy, I would like to see a more proactive or, at least, show me that it's a proactive approach to obtaining more infrastructure money from the federal government. I don't see that now. I hear it's being discussed, but I don't hear there's any deadline. We hope and pray the federal government will come up with 100 percent funding for infrastructure. I mean, that would be wonderful, wouldn't it, but it's not something we that we can count on. I think that we have to deal with what we've got, and maybe that means going back to the priorities and looking again at the three large infrastructure projects and sorting out how we can prioritize those. Thank you. I have nothing further.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. I will take that as a comment, so I am just going to leave it at that. I am going to move on to the Member for Thebacha.

**MS. MARTSELOS:** Madam Chair, some of the comments that were just made are enlightening. One hundred percent for projects, it's possible. Us underestimating the Indigenous peoples is not okay because I know that you've got to engage the Indigenous people. There are people that the claims have been settled, and they are, in part, in that partnership. No matter which project it would be, I firmly believe that Indigenous people have come a long way. If you want to do amazing things, you can do amazing things. It was very positive, what the Minister had just said, Madam Chair. I never give up. As a leader, you have to always think out-of-the-box, and you can do anything you want if you put your mind to it. Amazing things could happen. I'm very optimistic when it comes to business.

I also want to comment on a couple of other things. Design-build, P3s, or any of those, you have to look at the project and the terms of reference. Signing on the bottom line has got to make sure that you have your Is dotted and your Ts crossed. I just want to make sure that people understand that design-build is not a bad thing. There are Indigenous people who could actually put that together.

I do not underestimate anyone in the Northwest Territories because, if you put your mind to something, you get those kind of people who work for you. You still are a winner in the long run because you are in charge. Indigenous people, I am talking about and also whether it be local content or local contractors here in Yellowknife with engineering and architectural acumen. We have to look at those. Because I strongly feel that some of the design-builds, when you do turnkey, you have everything inside. That didn't happen over here at the Stanton. We should have had an MRI. We should have had all these other things. That didn't happen. Lessons learned.

You know what? You learn from some kind of times when things go wrong. You try to learn from them. Not everything goes right in contract negotiation or mediation or any of these things, but you have to have an open mind. I said that in my speech this afternoon. Not everything fits the mould. Dr. Dragon touched on it briefly. I would like to keep an open mind. I am not going to say design-build is no good. I am not going to say P3 is no good because I am open for options. We have to build an economy here. If we are going to start all this stuff of "you can't do this" and "you can't do that," we are closing all the doors again. You have the clientele in the North. You just have to make sure that it fits the mould.

I don't want to underestimate any of our Aboriginal groups because there are a lot of really incredible, amazing people who I sat with over the years and very business-minded. We are always able to give positive input to various things. Something that you wouldn't see, they see. They see things a little bit differently sometimes, but that doesn't mean they don't have the ability to move forward. I think that we have to encourage that. I am not going to ask any questions because I just want to make sure, those were encouraging statements that were just made, Madam Chair. I am the type of person who is all about the economy. I have always been pro-development to ensure that the Northwest Territories could pay for their own someday. I don't think I will see it in my time, but I hope that our future generations are able to grasp that. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Member for Thebacha. Since there are no questions in there for the Minister, I will move on to Member for Frame Lake.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Madam Chair. I just wanted to follow up on some of the comments made by my colleague from Yellowknife Centre. I think I heard the deputy minister say that the Mackenzie Valley Highway is going to take another four years in environmental assessment before shovels can hit the ground again. That project has been in environmental assessment since 2013. 2013! Another four years, that means it will have been in environmental assessment for 11 years. Why is it in environmental assessment for 11 years? Because GNWT submitted a project that was ill-defined and has had to be redefined about five or six times. It's gobbling up an enormous amount of money and regulatory time. The thing was submitted prematurely. This is not the way to do big infrastructure projects.

Then I hear that the Slave Geological Province Road, from the deputy minister, is going to take six years through the environmental assessment. I think that is terribly optimistic. Again, we don't have any money to build it. I am astounded that we continue to chase these kinds of things without having solid projects that are shovel-ready. You shouldn't be taking something to environmental assessment unless you have the money to do it, quite frankly.

I don't know how you are going to convince the federal government to give 100 percent dollars for this stuff when it's still going to take years to get through EA, and so on. I just can't see how this is going to work. Can someone explain to me 11 years in EA for the Mackenzie Valley Highway? Why is it taking so long, and why do we keep changing the project? It's because we don't have

money. We don't have a well-defined project. I would like to start with that. Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Actually, many of these projects are actually lots of different, smaller projects together. For example, Mackenzie Valley Highway, we have already done the Canyon Creek portion of that highway. We will be looking to do Prohibition Creek next. We are breaking away bite-sized pieces of those overall, large projects. When you get to the comments of shovel-ready, well, there are actually, in fact, several shovel-ready small projects that go along or work for consultants or work for contractors, things like that that are the drivers in keeping a lot of people in our economy right now working. I have got a lot of interest in people wanting to know when the Prohibition Creek is coming out. No, Mackenzie Valley is not waiting another four years before we start work on it. We are working on it now. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Madam Chair. Look, I have been up to Canyon Creek. I have seen the road. It was parcelled in a way that allowed the community to take better advantage of it, but that is not the project that was submitted back in 2013 to the Mackenzie Valley Environmental Impact Review Board. I just want to caution the Minister to make sure that, if you are going to submit something to environmental assessment, you better have it scoped out properly and you better have the money to do it. Otherwise, it's wasting time and it's wasting money.

If I had to pick one of the three big projects, I would probably pick Mackenzie Valley Highway. I think there is at least a prospect of doing that in a way that will benefit smaller communities and lead to some communities rather than the wilderness, perhaps. I think it raises unrealistic expectations. I never agreed to have the three infrastructure projects in the priority list from the Regular MLAs in the first place. I think it's just setting us up for failure by continuing to try to say that those three projects are going to get done or that they even can get started in the lifetime of this Assembly.

The kinds of projects I want to see are government focus on are things like housing, community infrastructure, environmental remediation. I think you have some prospect of actually attracting federal investment in those things over projects like the Slave Geological Province Road or even Taltson. Taltson, we don't have a market. We don't have buyers. There is not a feasibility study. There

is no business case for it yet. In any event, I agree completely with my colleague from Yellowknife Centre that we should be revisiting the priorities, the big infrastructure projects, and focusing on one. Trying to say to the federal government we want to do all three at the same time, bad messaging.

If there is one other project that I think we should be advancing, that is connecting all the communities to high-speed Internet. We have seen the impacts of that as a result of COVID. We can't teach kids. Businesses can't access our services. We can't even hold meetings part of the time, because Members can't even get on at the same time. We have to fix that, and we need to fix that now. That should be the priority in terms of big infrastructure projects. I want to ask the Infrastructure Minister what she is doing to help make sure that all of our communities are connected to high-speed Internet and why that is not the priority. Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. As most people are aware, a government does multiple things at a time. Supporting and advocating for one project does not mean that we are not doing others. I would completely agree. COVID has highlighted the lack of infrastructure and the have and have-nots of our territory. I 100 percent agree with that. However, Internet is actually in the Department of Finance; it's not my department. However, I do continue to work with my colleague on that, because there is a bit of an overlap in that area.

I would argue back, for your comments regarding the project, I mean, we have large portions of the Mackenzie Valley Highway already completed. The environmental assessment is for the bridge on the Mount Gaudet access road. These have created a lot of employment. We have had capacity-building projects as part of this. Canyon Creek was a great example of that. We are going to continue to go forward and do small portions of projects that have an overall larger overarching theme. As a government, we need to create the infrastructure that we are lacking, and we have to start somewhere. The best time to have started these roads would have been 20 years ago, but we have to start at some point, and we can't leave our communities stranded.

We all sat around, these 19 people, and we took a vote. It's well-noted that those three projects were not ones that you wanted included in that. However, as everybody likes to say, it's consensus. We had a vote, and they were included. I am sure that the Premier is taking note of your concerns around the

mandate and priorities and will take that into account. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Minister. I will move on to the Member for Deh Cho.

**MR. BONNETROUGE:** Mahsi, Madam Chair. I see from the corporate management activity description that this is kind of like a high-level division within Infrastructure. I can imagine that there is probably quite a bit of very experienced people in those positions. I note from the active positions for that division that there are 37 in headquarters. I am wondering how many of those are P1 Indigenous in management in that division. I'll ask that first question. Mahsi.

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

**HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I do not have the breakdown of Indigenous, but I do believe that Dr. Dragon does, so I will pass that over to him. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Minister. Dr. Dragon.

**DR. DRAGON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. In terms of senior managers in the department, 61.5 percent of the senior managers are identified under the GNWT's Affirmative Action Policy. In addition to those managers, when we look at our complement of senior staff, very much within our regional superintendents right across the regions, we have strong Indigenous Aboriginals in those positions. Overall, if you look at the Department of Infrastructure, we're very much in that 45- to 46-percent range of Indigenous Aboriginal right across the department. I think we'll be getting to that later on in terms of the positions. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Dr. Dragon. Member for Deh Cho.

**MR. BONNETROUGE:** My question was specifically to the corporate management, the active positions on page 233, the 37 that are listed there. I am aware that the other positions you are noting are further ahead. I am not getting there yet; I'm just looking at these positions here, just to see how many are P1 Indigenous people you have in there, and if there are any succession planning or apprenticeship programs, or to bring in people into that corporate management division. Mahsi.

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

**HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I will commit to getting back to the Member on the number of percentage there if Dr. Dragon

can't find it in the next two minutes, or two seconds, even. I do commit that this is generally a conversation that I am having with the department. It has been a bigger conversation that I have had in my career, is the lack of technical Northerners and Indigenous people in these positions. It is a discussion that Dr. Dragon and I had very early on. Another piece of that, which is not what you're asking, has also been about women. I recognize that the department is not doing well from a female standpoint, and it's something that I clearly wanted to change. I am committed that I am having those conversations.

I do believe that Dr. Dragon has found the number, so I am going to pass it over to him. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Minister. Dr. Dragon.

**DR. DRAGON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. In terms of our senior managers, which consists of those 26 positions, we have myself, the deputy minister; we have three assistant deputy ministers; 16 directors; and five regional superintendents. Of the employees who make up that group, three are Indigenous Aboriginal, four are Indigenous non-Aboriginal, and eight are women. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Member for Deh Cho.

**MR. BONNETROUGE:** Mahsi cho. Thank you for all those numbers. Those ones you're referencing from the 37, I wonder: they're not just administration positions, are they? The three you mentioned?

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Member. Dr. Dragon.

**DR. DRAGON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. No, they consist of positions that we have in the department that are within the corporate management entity, but those are administrative assistants, some for those assistant deputy ministers and myself, a senior advisor. We also have the capital planner who is in with that group, as well, but the majority of that unit is our senior management team. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Dr. Dragon. Member for Deh Cho.

**MR. BONNETROUGE:** We always have post-secondary students who are looking for work and stuff. It's good to bring them into the folds and job-shadow people, even for the summer, so it gets their interest up. I am wondering if you can provide me a breakdown just to show me how many are actual Dene people in your positions there. Mahsi.

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

**HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY:** I'll head that back to Dr. Dragon, as well. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Dr. Dragon.

**DR. DRAGON:** The head of the department is a Dene person. Looking at the opportunity within Infrastructure, again, I think it has a very strong representation of Indigenous Aboriginal people.

The one thing that I wanted to mentioned is that, in the department, we have been taking succession planning very seriously. In one situation, we provide transfer assignments. In the department, we have currently 48 developmental opportunities. Those people are going to other departments to get experience. In terms of those 48, 11 are Indigenous Aboriginal employees; nine are Indigenous non-Aboriginal employees. We also participate in the GNWT leadership program. Based on that, we have 14 participants in that. Five are Indigenous Aboriginal; three are Indigenous non-Aboriginal. We also have two senior managers, one who is Indigenous non-Aboriginal, who are a part of that development program. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Dr. Dragon. Member for Deh Cho.

**MR. BONNETROUGE:** You mentioned the GNWT leadership program. I am wondering what program you're mentioning there. It's not the associate directorship program? Can you elaborate? Mahsi.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Member. Dr. Dragon.

**DR. DRAGON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. The GNWT leadership program is actually divided into three groups. We have emerging leaders. These are who we would consider just about getting into the management area, wanting to become a manager of people, providing them opportunities, as well as managers who have been in there who now want to move up into the director level. The third category is actually the executive leadership stream, and that is where we as a government look at leaders who we have in the organizations, who we feel could use other developmental opportunities in other departments to increase their competencies and move them to that potentially ADM or deputy role. Thank you, Madam Chair

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Dr. Dragon. Member for Deh Cho.

**MR. BONNETROUGE:** Yes, maybe. Something about that emerging leaders program, my work with Infrastructure as a project officer, I did take the first

level of that training, emerging managers program. My manager at the time allowed me to go, but that is as far as it got. The other two levels were off-limits to me. So it's mostly geared for people who are in actual management positions, to enhance their roles, and stopped a person like me. I am a prime example. I can tell you I applied for a manager position. I was not even considered for an interview or any transition, so there are problems within the departments, no matter how well you figure you have it structured. In succession planning, there are always problems. 2020, brighter future, I have been there for over 10 years and was never, ever advanced, so there are problems with succession planning. Like we say, you live within the Indigenous territory. We want to see more of our people advancing. In order to get that, you have to open these doors for them. Those are the only comments I would like to make at this point. Mahsi.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Member for Deh Cho. I will take that last as a comment. Are there any further questions? Member for Hay River South.

**MR. ROCKY SIMPSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I think the Minister made a comment or somebody made a comment on lessons learned on projects. We have seen the Deh Cho Bridge, the highway out at Behchoko is going ahead, and we hear problems there, and there are probably other ones out there, as well. Over the years, we seem to always go back to lessons learned, but I don't know if we ever learn any lessons, to tell you the truth, or, if we do, we forget them pretty quickly. I just want to know what your department is doing; what are you doing with the information from lessons learned? Give me some examples or something that tells me that you guys, that the department, has actually learned something. Can you do that? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Well, considering I have only been here for eight months, I do not have a delta. I can't look at what it was before and say: this is how it's changed to here. However, I can tell you I have already learned lessons from projects I had nothing to do with the contracting of, for example, the Member's comments about the TASR, about Rae access, other things such as that, so I can guarantee to you that I am personally learning lessons and I will be incorporating those. I will turn it over to Dr. Dragon, though, to speak to the department's more formalized lessons learned planning. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Minister. Dr. Dragon.

**DR. DRAGON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I think, as a lifelong learner and coming into this department, one of the opportunities that we have is to be able to look at all of the different facets of the department and where we can do a better job. I think something where we can point to where we actually learned from something was recently when we did the Rae Access Road. In that situation, again the criteria to go through and select which home community was selected was based on what the department had been doing for a number of years, and so, when it was brought to the attention within my staff, what we did was we now have revisited all those internal procedures. We have put a directive to all of our contract administrators that review all of the outgoing tenders now to confirm the appropriate BIP local communities that have been selected in the system. I think it shows that you can learn, and the opportunity that we have within infrastructure is we have a lot of projects, there is a lot of activity, and a lot of benefit for the North. We want to make sure that continues, and, by learning some things like that, we are able now to effectuate that change. It was unfortunate that it happened, but we were able to correct it very quickly, and now it has changed the procedure within the department. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Dr. Dragon. Member for Hay River South.

**MR. ROCKY SIMPSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I guess, you know, again going back to lessons learned, I was talking to somebody today, and on the Whati road there is in excess of \$200 million worth of work, and right now my understanding is that it's less than 10 percent northern, and, of that 10 percent, most of it is diesel fuel and just flow-through type goods. What have we learned, I guess, if that's what is happening? Maybe I am off-base, but I would like to hear what you have to say on that. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I have to admit that I am not familiar with the context of what you are saying, to give you the more fulsome answer, but I commit to looking into it; I will take that back. Again, I think I want to reiterate the commitment that I personally have and that I am directing my department, that we need to start doing things differently and that we do have to have things stay in the North and Northerners working. Even if it's more painful for us as a department to ensure that that work is staying, we need to do it. That is the messaging I am giving my department. How long it's going to take to change a department of -- I don't know how many people work in our department, which maybe I should know; I can probably look on my page here, but it's

a big, big department. It is going to take some time for my new corporate messaging to filter down and become the reality of what they are doing, and that is going to be a learning experience, and the lessons learned is part of that.

I can tell you that there are times where I butt heads, where I am saying, "This has to change," and these are the conversations that Dr. Dragon and I are having. The other part is that both of us being new to a department that is very set in its ways is actually a really good thing, I think. I already see Dr. Dragon's influence in changing how things are going. I see the people who he has brought in, has promoted to an ADM position, an Indigenous, Aboriginal person, and that person has more than excelled during COVID-19. I see those impacts of new leadership in the Department of Infrastructure already. I commit that that is going to continue on for the next three years. Thank you.

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

**MR. ROCKY SIMPSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I guess I just want to touch on what MLA Bonnetrouge alluded to, which is, you know, fairness I guess in the department when it comes to advancement, job opportunities and that type of thing. We are in the smaller communities. We know the BS that goes on. We know the reality of what happens. The fairness, sometimes it's there. A lot of times it's not. It can still be an old boys' club, for lack of better words, and I would like to know how your department is looking at addressing that. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. The last 13 years of my life, I have been a woman in a non-traditional role, and I now am in charge of a department that is full of those exact people. That is the profession that I have been trying to change, myself, personally, for many years, so I am well aware of that. Unfortunately, a lot of these technical positions are traditionally male-dominated positions. We have problems with getting Indigenous people into sciences, and it's not from a lack of capacity or ability. It is a lack of our education system. This is all the conversation we are having around, and I am not trying to throw the ECE Minister under the bus. We are all new. I do not hold him responsible for that.

However, this is a problem that is very systemic to the Northwest Territories and a conversation that I have had since the first day I got up here: if we want to have a successful North, we need to have Northerners making the decisions and doing the work, and that includes in the technical and the

skilled sets, too, not just the labour. All I can say is, again, this is a huge, I don't want to call it a pet, but it's a huge focus of me and why I'm sitting in this seat, and I can tell you that those guys sitting over there are going to be hearing it for the next three years about getting rid of that old boy's club and changing that mentality. Sorry, Joe. All I can say is commit to you that it is going to be ongoing. I will actually task the department right now re: coming back to the Member with what are they doing to increase diversification in the department. Let's make it more politically correct. Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

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

**MR. ROCKY SIMPSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I wasn't pleased about the comment you made about the Minister of ECE.

---Laughter

Anyway, one thing that is important, though, is service. One thing that I've noticed the government lacking is that we tend to forget that we're there to provide a service to the people of the NWT and not the other way around. I'm hoping to see that change over the term of this Assembly. I'm just wondering: how do you see that? How do you see us providing that service and how can we change it so that we're there to help them solve problems and assist them in building capacity, assisting them, getting contracts, and that type of thing? You can comment. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm going to hand this over to Dr. Dragon. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Minister. Dr. Dragon.

**DR. DRAGON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I think one of the reflections that I can give to committee in coming into a large department like Infrastructure, first of all, very much regionally based. The department is, I think, 53 or 54 percent regionally based in terms of positions. A lot of the money that we have in Infrastructure is regionally based funding. I think it's a very positive picture, there. I think one of the big reflections that I have is that, within Infrastructure, we have a lot of really dedicated employees that continue to do an exceptional job at their specific area. However, we're not strong on communications. It's one of the big things that I'm looking at in the department, how do we create more opportunities to see what the department is doing.

Again, as the Minister was mentioning, we have a lot of very specific professions. We have engineers; we have very specific tradespeople. We're looking at training programs so that we increase the Indigenous representation within our workforce, but right now, again, overall workplace representation within Infrastructure and Indigenous-Aboriginal is 45.2 percent. It's a strong one in terms of the numbers and, if you talk about in terms of our number of employees, total, we get close to, if you talk about all the revolving funds and everything, we're at about 600 employees. That's a lot of Indigenous-Aboriginals that we're putting into a lot of these categories.

The last thing I'll say is, when we're bringing in summer students, on average, we're bringing in about 60 summer students. This year is a little lower just because of COVID, but what we're seeing now is a representation that's more of a 50-50 in terms of women and men, which is a very strong, positive change. In terms of the old boys' club, I'm not sure if it's an old boys' club or just a lot of people trying to do really good work. I'll leave it at that. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Dr. Dragon. I'm just going to give it to the Minister to have just one last comment and then we're going to move on.

**HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY:** My apologies, I remembered what I was going to say. One of the things I've had a conversation with Joe about is that I would like to see some of the pathfinder-type service that we do in ITI start up in Infrastructure. I think we can learn some lessons. ITI does a very good pathfinding program, particularly around our mineral and resource sector. I'm going to look to have Dr. Dragon start implementing that. I also told him that, even if it's painful, people have to start answering their emails, because this has actually been something I have had from a lot of people, that a lot of Infrastructure is not great at answering emails. That is a directive that I have given to Joe and Joe has given to his staff. If they don't want to answer emails because email conversations are becoming adversarial, then they can escalate that to us in management and we will take that role on, because I'm not going to subject employees to that. However, they can't just ignore the situation and that is a conversation we have been having. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Minister. All right, we will now turn to page 231, Infrastructure, corporate management, operations expenditure summary, 2020-2021 Main Estimates, \$11,263,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.



**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. We will move on to programs and services, beginning on page 234, with information on pages up to 238. Questions? Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

**MR. NORN:** One answer I think that is going to probably have a big bearing on a lot of other departments and even Infrastructure, I notice here, is fuel services. One of the little bit of bright light and good news that we got through all this is the effect of the market forces on fuel prices. We've seen that go down quite a bit. Right now, we're going to be looking at delivering fuel to our isolated communities. It affects places like Lutselk'e right up to Nunakput, all that area up the river. It affects GNWT vehicles right across the board. So many places this will affect. My quick question is: have these forecasts been adjusted for new fuel prices as they are right now because of the low fuel prices? Masi cho.

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

**HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. No, because, as mentioned before, this is the snapshot pre-COVID. It hasn't been adjusted at this point. I think you could expect that you would see an adjustment in next year's estimates based on COVID. Further to that, if you would like to have a further conversation on the fuel services, I would commit to offering my department for that. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Minister. Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

**MR. NORN:** I do know that, also, we did have some online conversations about the fuel prices in Lutselk'e. I know that there was a point of contention, I guess, with the community, that their prices were so high like everybody else in the North and pay the lower price, and there are a lot of factors that go into that, and I know that they get fuel delivered once a year. Again, I just want to see if we get some commitment from the Minister and the department that we can see favourable change to these prices in the near future, I guess. Thank you.

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

**HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes, we buy at market, we sell at market, so you will see that change. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Minister. Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

**MR. NORN:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Nothing further.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Are there other questions under the programs and services? Member for Frame Lake.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Madam Chair. I'm looking at page 236, the contributions, Low Carbon Economy Leadership Fund. There was an amount for last year for active forestry carbon sequestration, \$414,000. What did we actually get for that money? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. This one I will ask Dr. Dragon to answer, please.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Dr. Dragon.

**DR. DRAGON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. The active carbon sequestration in forestry is done with the Department of ENR. This looks at efforts intended to maximize forest growth and, over the next five years, we'll have 120 hectares that will be selected for forest regeneration and 60 hectares for thinning. In terms of the season, I know that they got a late start last year. They're looking for more of a robust season this year. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Dr. Dragon. Member for Frame Lake.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Madam Chair. I guess we're fortunate the deputy minister knows the deputy minister who served before in ENR. Is this like a scientific study, and who is actually carrying out the work? Thanks, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Member. Dr. Dragon.

**DR. DRAGON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. This program is actually being utilized, I think they're using one of the universities, as well, to be a part of this project, but it's a contractor that they are having going in. Again, the site assessments occurred last year, and then the one for thinning and the other one for planting, the majority of the field work, if we look at one of the considerations of COVID, this might be it. Whether or not we could still do the field season or not, I think that's getting an update from the Department of ENR. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Dr. Dragon. Member for Frame Lake.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Madam Chair. I guess I would like to be kept in the loop. If the Minister could commit to providing an update as to whether

that work goes ahead or not, I would appreciate that. Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. We commit to doing so. Thank you.

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Madam Chair. I also have some questions about the large-scale commercial and industrial something-or-other related to the Low Carbon Economy Leadership Fund. As I recall, there was some kind of proposal submitted to basically give money to industry that did not meet initially with Environment and Climate Change Canada's approval the first time around, so they had to go back and renegotiate something. What is this program all about? If they have to provide details offline, I guess I would appreciate it, but I don't, sort of, ever recall seeing a request for submissions or applications or proposals or whatever. What is this program all about? Who is administering it, and has it actually started to roll out publicly? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I will pass this one over to Dr. Dragon, as well. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Dr. Dragon.

**DR. DRAGON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. The LCELF, Low Carbon Economy Leadership Fund agreement, is providing \$31.2 million over four years to fund projects and initiatives that reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the Northwest Territories. All six of these initiatives were proposed by the Government of the Northwest Territories and will directly support the implementation of the 2030 Energy Strategy. The combined proposed initiatives have the possibility to leverage up to \$74.2 million, all of new programs, if fully subscribed.

In terms of the six initiatives, the first one is energy efficiency upgrades for public housing; the second one is energy efficiency upgrades to GNWT marine vessels; third, government greenhouse gas fund; fourth, buildings and industry grant program; fifth, enhance Arctic Energy Alliance programs and services; and finally, the last one is the active carbon sequestration in forestry. We could provide those details if the Member would like. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Dr. Dragon. Member for Frame Lake.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Madam Chair. Thanks for the explanation. I was aware of that. Just, there's this line item here, "large-scale commercial and industrial." There seems to be maybe a word missing, but I had understood that there was going to be some kind of grant or program to big emitters. I'm just wondering: is this it? Last year, we spent \$2.5 million on this, and I guess I am trying to understand what we got for it and some description of what the money is actually for and how it's rolled out, how do people access it, and so on. If they have to provide that later, that's fine. I just want some details of that particular initiative. Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY:** We will commit to taking this away and getting more details for the Member. Thank you.

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Madam Chair. I'm just trying to find in the budget here, how does Arctic Energy Alliance get its funding from Infrastructure? Is it somewhere else in the budget, or is this the portion to ask questions about it? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes, it is. Thank you.

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Madam Chair. There was a review of Arctic Energy Alliance. It's adjusted some realigning of some of their work, and I am just wondering how we are making out with that. There is a lot of additional funding that is coming from the federal government that is going into Arctic Energy Alliance. How is that work progressing, and have they realigned their programs according to the evaluation that was carried out? What's happening? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes, this is the area for Arctic Energy Alliance. It was part of the priority to give them more funding. I am going to pass it over to Dr. Dragon for the more detailed explanation. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Minister. Dr. Dragon.

**DR. DRAGON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Arctic Energy Alliance, in terms of their funding, they get \$2.74 million in core funding that is ongoing from the GNWT. We have also been able to leverage \$3.07 million. That's a combined program through that LCELF program, as well as GNWT, for a total funding allotment of \$5.8 million.

In terms of their review, and as they're looking at programs, some of the key projects that they're currently working on right now are diesel generator replacements in Sachs Harbour and Lutselk'e; conversion of Fort Simpson from diesel generation to natural gas; hydro power overhauls that they are working on with the existence of Taltson and Snare systems; the Inuvik wind project and the Fort Providence transmission line; and finally, some energy retrofits.

They are an arm's-length group from us and have their own board of directors, but I believe that they have taken those lessons learned and applied it to these programs. All of my feedback from this funding, and in terms of the programs that they have, is they feel very complemented with the amount of funding that is provided in this fiscal year. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Dr. Dragon. Member for Frame Lake.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Madam Chair. I see that the clock is ticking down, so I am just going to make a couple of comments here. Look, Arctic Energy Alliance, I think they do good work. Personally, we have accessed them a couple of times for energy efficiency work on our own home. Part of the difficulty is the programs that they offer, you have to have the money to be able to invest to do the upgrades, and it's often expensive work. They need to find ways to broaden their programs for people who don't have the cash up front and make the programs more accessible. That is a suggestion.

The other thing that I continue to hear complaints about in Yellowknife, and I understand why they did this, is they don't support solar projects in Yellowknife anymore, because there is some concern about Yellowknife already being a hydro-based community. Why would we give people money to take themselves off the grid when hydro provides the power here? I know that that's a low carbon economy fund issue, as well, but I understood that they were going to try to find some other ways to support solar. It's also tied up with the bigger issue with getting rid of big grids, period, in the Northwest Territories and building energy self-sufficiency in individuals' homes, but all of that to say, Madam Chair, I guess I would like to get the

Minister to -- SCEDE can do this on its own, but we need to have Arctic Energy Alliance come in and talk to us about the programs that they offer, especially with this injection of new money, and how they're looking at redesigning that and making their programs more accessible. Thanks, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Member. I'll take that as comments, and I will go on to the next person. Member for Hay River South.

**MR. ROCKY SIMPSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I guess there was, I think, some discussion on fuel and fuel prices. I am just wondering, with transporting fuel, how do we arrive at a price for that? Is it based on some real numbers, or is it based on what MTS requires to break even? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I would hope that everything in my department does is based on real numbers. I hope he doesn't mind, but I will let Dr. Dragon answer this one, too. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Minister. Dr. Dragon.

**DR. DRAGON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes, very much based on real numbers, and very much based on market prices when we're getting them and buying them. Buying that quantity of fuel from the South, and then it has to either get trucked or trained up, and then put on barges, and then supplied to the 16 communities that we provide fuel through MTS. Again, we are looking at various options when we're looking at fuel pricing. There are different options right now, given the price of fuel. We've looked at options of, actually, maybe coming from the North versus coming from the South, and in fuel services, we're looking at trying to maximize the dollar for the taxpayer. We're currently looking at those two options. We haven't landed on those, but we do have, again, this capacity to bring fuel into the North in different methods and we're exploring those. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Dr. Dragon. Member for Hay River South.

**MR. ROCKY SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm not sure where you're buying the fuel from, where we're buying it from, if it's a rack price in Edmonton or where it is. Have you looked at, I guess, the rack price in Edmonton versus rack price say, in Vancouver, and rack price somewhere else overseas, and coming up through the North? I'm not sure what the rack price is. You might be able

to give us a number. It doesn't have to be a solid number, just maybe a range of what we are paying for rack price and where. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Member. Dr. Dragon.

**DR. DRAGON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes, that's rack, wholesale plus. We do look at every single option in terms of buying fuel. In terms of the purchasing of fuel, because we buy so much of it, we need to look at opportunities where we can try to save on that purchase, but like anybody, every day sometimes, the fuel prices are changing. In terms of looking at how do we maximize that, our fuel services team, that's what they're doing right now, trying to figure that out and trying to maximize all the time. Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Dr. Dragon. Member for Hay River South.

**MR. ROCKY SIMPSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Do you have an example of a rack price in Edmonton? Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Member. Minister? Dr. Dragon.

**DR. DRAGON:** Thanks. In terms of an exact price, one of the things that we do with the rack, wholesale plus, we get a discount to the wholesale published price. Then, we add the cost of trucking or barging, plus a margin to administer. We negotiate a discount to rack, and we are definitely considering other options than Edmonton. Right now, it's Edmonton, and I'd have to get back to you with that price. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Dr. Dragon. Member for Hay River South.

**MR. ROCKY SIMPSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I guess in the news in the past, we saw negative oil prices. Has that affected the price that the GNWT has been paying for fuel or gas? Because that's a question that constituents ask: why is the price at negative whatever, and we're still paying \$1.00, \$1.20 a litre, and in Edmonton, they're paying 50 cents a litre? I'm just wondering, and I understand that we're buying bulk and we have to kind of have it ahead of time to get it on the barges and move it north. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. That is correct. We have bought it at an earlier time and, therefore, we turn around and we sell it back. At the time when we're selling it, we sell it for what we purchased it for. We don't make any profit off the fuel sales. Unfortunately, there is a lag

where, if we had bought the fuel and shipped it up the previous year, it's still being sold at that same price. We did have some conversation about whether or not we could equalize and look at reducing the prices now. There needs to be a more fulsome conversation, but the gist of that is: can we burden the future consumer with that extra price? So it's a bit more complicated than that. The short and basic of it is, we bought it at that price last year, and that's what we're selling it for now. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MR. ROCKY SIMPSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. The other issue I guess with fuel is the barging of the fuel and it's going north. I've been to Sachs Harbour when the fuel has actually showed up and it had to get turned around and sent back because it didn't meet spec. Do we take that into account, those types of things into account, during delivery or in our costing? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. If you're referring to a couple of years ago when that all happened, no, just in general. Well, I'll refer to that incident anyway, where fuel was not good when it showed up. The department looked at that. They took a look at their procedures through that, and they implemented measures afterwards, to not have the bad fuel sale again, and they did put in more controls. I don't know if Dr. Dragon would like to add to that, but I'll give him an opportunity to do so. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Minister. Dr. Dragon.

**DR. DRAGON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes, in terms of going through and figuring out the fuel that's coming up, there's a very rigorous process that come in where they test fuel based on the shipments. The situation the Minister was talking about, we got into a situation where we couldn't bring rail cars through because of the fire and high level, so we ended up having to truck. Every case that you do in terms of that testing amount is in the thousands of dollars, and so, as you go through and test those carloads of fuel to make sure that it has spec and it meets spec, along the way, we do that to ensure as we're transferring fuel. I would say that, even where we had that fuel that was under spec, the folks in fuel services were able to get some engineers on that fairly quickly, and actually made all that fuel right back up to grade, and we were able to do that very efficiently. There was no wastage of any fuel. At no point did anybody not

have access to fuel during that situation. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Dr. Dragon. Member for Hay River South.

**MR. ROCKY SIMPSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Another question that comes up with constituents, of course, is the price of fuel. They want to know: why is it so high? What are the components that make up the cost of fuel, the taxes, the freight, and those items? Can you provide to have the information to me? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I think the Member answered his own question. What makes the fuel price? It's the transportation. It's the storage costs. It's paying contractors, the distributors. All of that does add to the cost. I do believe there is supplementation, and that not all of those charges are passed back to the consumers. I don't know that there's really more to add. How about this, that we commit to having a bit more of a detailed outline on the fuel services for the Member, if that would satisfy? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MR. ROCKY SIMPSON:** No further questions. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Are there any other questions under programs and services? No. We will turn to page 235, Infrastructure, programs and services, operations expenditure summary, 2020-2021 Main Estimates, \$34,366.00. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Noting the time, I am going to go to Mr. Norn.

**MR. NORN:** Thank you, 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 and non-debatable. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried.

---Carried

I will have the Sergeant-at-Arms escort the witnesses out of the Chamber. Please put on your masks.

**MR. SPEAKER:** May I have the report of the Committee of the Whole?

### Report of the Committee of the Whole

**MS. SEMMLER:** Mr. Speaker, your committee has been considering Tabled Document 30-19(2), Main Estimates 2020-2021, and would like to report progress, and, Mr. Speaker, I move that the report of the Committee of the Whole be concurred with. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Do we have a seconder? Member for Hay River North. All those in favour? All those opposed?

---Carried

The motion is carried. Item 22, third reading of bills. Mr. Clerk, orders of the day.

### Orders of the Day

**CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer):** Orders of the day for Wednesday, May 27, 2020, at 1:30 p.m.:

1. Prayer
2. Ministers' Statements
3. Members' Statements
4. Returns to Oral Questions
5. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery
6. Acknowledgements
7. Oral Questions
8. Written Questions
9. Returns to Written Questions
10. Replies to Commissioner's Address
11. Petitions
12. Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills
13. Reports of Standing and Special Committees
14. Tabling of Documents
15. Notices of Motion
16. Motions
17. Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills
18. First Reading of Bills
19. Second Reading of Bills
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. This House stands adjourned until Wednesday, May 27, 2020, at 1:30 p.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 7:57 p.m.