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The Honourable Frederick Blake Jr, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

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YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**Monday, June 1, 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 1:35 p.m.

Prayer

---Prayer

SPEAKER (Hon. Frederick Blake Jr.): Thank you. Item 2, Ministers' statements. Minister of Education, Culture and Employment.

Ministers' Statements**MINISTER'S STATEMENT 46-19(2):
COVID-19 RESPONSE**

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The COVID-19 global pandemic has had profound effects on people around the world, including residents across the Northwest Territories. The Department of Education, Culture and Employment has been working tirelessly to adapt its programs and services to help lighten the economic, social, and emotional weights of the pandemic, and I would like to provide an update to the public about those efforts.

We recognize the essential role that licensed early learning and childcare programs have for our youngest residents and their families. As a result, ECE has continued to flow existing funding for licensed programs to daycares and day homes, regardless of whether they have chosen to close or remain open, since the start of the pandemic. In addition, ECE helped coordinate with the NWT health authorities to match parents working within the healthcare system with childcare as well as coordinating an online list of open licensed early learning and childcare programs throughout the NWT.

To provide further support during this challenging time, we responded with an additional \$5.1 million in temporary subsidies, including a 33 percent subsidy for parents who are essential workers and an additional wage top-up of up to \$1,000 a month for childcare staff or family day home operators providing care during the pandemic.

Mr. Speaker, ECE continues to work closely with licensed early learning and childcare programs to

pass on regular information updates from the Office of the Chief Public Health Officer, including best practices for early learning and childcare, to ensure programs that are open remain operational and ones that have closed are able to reopen quickly.

In our junior kindergarten to grade 12 education system, significant efforts have been made by educational staff, students, parents, and guardians to accommodate the rapidly evolving COVID-19 situation. On March 24, 2020, based on my recommendation and the initial recommendations from the CPHO, all elected NWT education leaders made the decision to keep schools closed for the remainder of the 2019-2020 school year and to proceed with plans focused on a distance-education approach for the continuity of learning for all junior kindergarten to grade 12 students.

On March 30, 2020, we released the NWT Education Bulletin, which set the framework for continued learning. Since releasing the NWT Education Bulletin, ECE has provided additional support to teachers on all aspects of at-home learning, including providing distance supports for students with complex needs, course completion processes for high school students, and at-home Indigenous language learning, amongst others.

ECE is providing guidance to support Indigenous language instructors during the COVID-19 pandemic as part of our ongoing support for continued learning. Some language instructors have been collaborating with other-subject teachers to incorporate language into their units, and many schools are using social media and school websites to promote and teach language and culture during school closures.

Mr. Speaker, on May 12, 2020, the Emerging Wisely plan was released, which contained a recommendation for the reopening of schools. On May 13, 2020, education leaders, with my support, decided that the challenges faced by schools due to the pandemic would make it impossible to reopen now and that the focus needed to be on planning for the upcoming 2020-2021 school year. The Department of ECE continues to work closely with education bodies and the NWT Teachers' Association on continued learning for all NWT

students for the 2019-2020 school year and on planning for the fall.

Mr. Speaker, for grade 12 students who have worked so hard towards graduating and planning their next steps for them, career and education advisors are reaching out to students by telephone, email, and video conferencing to ensure they are aware of the supports available to them. These advisors will continue to offer their support to all interested grade 12 students from now until September, to support those dreams of where their adult lives would take them. I send my congratulations to all NWT high school graduates. You have worked hard, and you made it.

For post-secondary students accessing student financial assistance, their funding continued for the remainder of their winter semester, and for those repaying loans, we deferred all payments to the end of September 2020, with no interest accrued during this time period. Student case officers also reached out to every single student receiving student financial assistance to ensure they had information on how to return home safely, including contacts for travel agencies, information about self-isolation requirements, the self-isolation plan, and the orders of the Chief Public Health Officer. For students who will not have the opportunity to work to repay loans or save, the Student Financial Assistance program provided information on accessing income support and federal benefits.

Mr. Speaker, to ensure the most vulnerable residents have enhanced supports for themselves and their families, the Income Assistance program made a number of temporary changes beginning in March.

- We provided a one-time emergency allowance for income assistance clients registered in March. Individuals received \$500 and families received \$1,000 in order to ensure they could purchase the necessary supplies to self-isolate for two weeks, if necessary, and to encourage physical distancing.
- Monetary donations, such as gifts from friends, family, benevolent organizations, or Indigenous governments intended to provide support during the pandemic have been exempted from the calculation of income assistance benefits, through the end of June. We also made the decision to exempt the one-time Special GST credit for low and modest income residents, the one-time special old age security and guaranteed income supplement payments for seniors, the Canada Emergency Response Benefit, and the Canada Emergency Student Benefit for students.
- Administrative processes were streamlined to

focus on quick responses and turnarounds for clients, including payrolling all clients through the end of June so that they do not have to report each month.

- The "productive choice" reporting requirement was also removed, and all clients were directed to engage in only one productive choice: taking care of themselves and their families.
- Finally, all clients were automatically assessed for both basic and enhanced needs.

Seniors receiving the Senior Home Heating Subsidy received a modest increase to their benefit beginning in April 2020 and automatically had their applications renewed for the 2020-2021 year to allow them to maintain physical distancing.

Mr. Speaker, labour development and standards programs and services at the department include the labour market programs; apprenticeship, trades and occupation certification; employment standards; and the NWT Nominee Program. These programs provide a range of financial supports to students, apprentices, employees, employers, communities, and organizations. Clients have been advised that funding will continue as planned until the end of their programs, tuition refunds would be provided as required, training costs reimbursed, and funding for community and organization training and employment projects would continue.

In the areas of culture and heritage, Mr. Speaker, the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre and NWT Archives closed to the public on March 16, 2020, due to the serious health concerns posed by COVID-19. Focus was placed on ensuring the public was aware of the museum's extensive virtual exhibits and online resources. Staff worked hard to ensure delays in funding to NWT artists have been minimal and that accommodations are in place for arts projects impacted by the pandemic, and archaeological permitting and land reviews have continued with minor delays. Phase 1 of emerging wisely recommends museums and art galleries reopen. While reduced hours and reduced public programming are expected, the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre is gearing up to open its doors to the public before the end of the month.

The Francophone Affairs Secretariat worked quickly to streamline services available to our francophone population. Services TNO positioned itself as a hub for all non-health-related information for our French-speaking residents and provided them with a single point of contact for all requests. The secretariat also provided 24/7 translation services to ensure that our francophone residents had timely access to the vital information being shared by the Office of the Chief Public Health Officer, the Department of

Health and Social Services, and every other GNWT department involved in the COVID-19 response.

I want to thank the staff of ECE and the NWT education authorities for their incredible work in adapting to COVID-19 since the start of the pandemic. The situation created by the pandemic has been unprecedented and so has the response from our staff. I want to personally thank them for all their efforts and hard work.

Mr. Speaker, everything we have responded with over the last few months has come about through an imperative to support Northerners, to make sure all Northerners had answers to their questions quickly, and critical programs were modified to meet their needs. As we move to adapt our programs further, the residents and communities of the territory are our primary concern, and we commit to continuing to provide the supports and services residents need during this difficult time. 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 HISTORY OF INDIGENOUS GOVERNMENT IN THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Northwest Territories is home to approximately 45,000 people, with just over half of the population being Indigenous. The other half of the population consists of people who come from elsewhere.

For thousands of years, the Indigenous people of what is now the NWT governed themselves. Indigenous people possessed governmental jurisdiction over lands, including property rights. European settlement, colonization, and commercial interests resulted in the erosion of those rights. Fortunately, those rights were never extinguished, and yet today the Indigenous people are forced to negotiate for much less. This injustice has to be corrected, and it requires this government's support.

Mr. Speaker, the point I want to make is that, prior to contact, Indigenous people survived in the harshest of conditions and governed themselves. It was only after European contact did the tide turn, when the government of the day decided they would make the lives of our ancestors better. In reality, the eradication of a people and a history was nearly realized. A way of life was almost lost, children were scooped up, languages were beaten out of those in residential schools, and communities were relocated for various reasons, all to the

detriment of those whom Canada and this government had promised to protect.

Today, many Indigenous people are living in poverty, living with addictions, finding themselves homeless, are being incarcerated at elevated rates, losing their children to the system, looked at as government freeloaders, passed over for employment and procurement opportunities, and being beaten down at every turn. Life is not getting better.

Mr. Speaker, the Charter of Rights and Freedoms allows for special consideration of disadvantaged individuals or groups. Based on that, this government has adopted policies that give priority to Indigenous peoples of the NWT. However, it does not go far enough. We need to extend that same preference to our procurement policies, to our healthcare and housing system, to our education system, and to ensure Indigenous people are treated fairly and provided every opportunity. It is imperative we start to fulfill the promises that others have neglected to do.

Mr. Speaker, when I look around this Chamber, I know all of the Members consider the NWT home, but, when I look deeper, I see those who look at the NWT as more. It is their history; it is their way of life; it is the place their ancestors are buried; and knowing that, one day, it will become their legacy to their children and future generations. Thank you Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON LOCAL LEADERSHIP RESPONSE TO COVID-19 PANDEMIC

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today, I want to talk about my leadership in my riding of Nunakput over the past COVID-19, the 40 days that we went through as a leadership in our communities. It has created unprecedented challenges to our government and the people across Nunakput. Our remote communities fear the community spread of the virus is limited to our medical support made the challenge for COVID-19 even more daunting in our riding. Today, I would like to acknowledge the leadership of my work to keep my community safe for my leadership.

I want to acknowledge the hard work of the following mayors and their hamlet councillors, Mr. Speaker. Mayor Erwin Elias, Tuktoyaktuk mayor, thank you for all the hard work you have done. Ulukhaktok Mayor Laverna Klengenber, Paulatuk Mayor Ray Ruben, Sachs Harbour Mayor Norman Anikina, you did a lot of hours and a lot of concern

for the people, and you really showed awesome leadership during this pandemic. The pandemic is still on, also. I also want to acknowledge the community corporations, the chairs in our government, and our federal government for helping assist people to get through this pandemic and providing food and the extra funds they were getting through the federal government and through our ECE. Thank you very much. These leaders have kept the level of hardship during this crisis, the recommendation to the Chief Public Health Officer and so on.

So far, we have been fortunate. We have stopped COVID-19 in our communities, and we have to keep making sure that we stay vigilant in regard to this, Mr. Speaker. I want to remind the people in my riding that we are still in the midst of a pandemic. Do not let our guards down because round two is coming. Governments across Canada are bracing for a possible second wave for COVID-19. We are washing our hands, practising social distancing, being careful to prevent the spread of this virus, and watching for upcoming weeks, what that brings us. I want to extend my thoughts to my elders. Thank you for your guidance and wisdom on the impacts of COVID-19. This made life difficult for our elders, and they are not alone. I want to let them know that. Thank you to the family members who did watchcare for our elders. Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement. Thank you.

---Unanimous consent granted

MR. JACOBSON: Again, I want to thank the family members who took watchcare over our elders during this pandemic. I am here for the people of Nunakput, and I encourage you to keep reaching out to me so I can bring your issues and concerns to our government and so we all work together and get through this pandemic. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON GOOD LEADERSHIP

MS. MARTSELOS: Mr. Speaker, today, I want to speak about the attributes of good leadership. "Leadership is lifting a person's vision to higher heights, the raising of a person's performance to a higher standard, the building of a personality beyond its normal limitations," a quote from Peter F. Drucker, who is an author and expert on management.

Mr. Speaker, that quote is from the book titled "Leadership, a Practical Guide to Leadership Principles and Strategies." That book was gifted to

me by someone in my community after I entered into leadership as chief of the Salt River First Nation about 13 years ago. I found many of the concepts outlined in that book to be very useful and accurate, both in theory and in practice.

Mr. Speaker, the reason I am sharing this with you is because I want to see good and strong leaders in our government. I want to see the attributes of great leaders to be present in our leadership here in this House, whether on the Cabinet side or the Regular Members' side. For that reason, I want to highlight some key attributes outlined in the book which I just referenced, which I consider most important in leadership.

Mr. Speaker, good leaders have a strong platform to stand on, which includes five integral pillars that all great leadership rests on. These pillars include vision, authenticity, integrity, influence, and self-confidence. Great leaders also have humility, focus, people skills, and communication skills. Other aspects of a good leader which I consider very important include forgiveness, not taking things personally, not dwelling on issues too long, and being open to constructive feedback.

Mr. Speaker, for some, these types of skills and attributes may come natural, but for many they must be learned and practised. They must be constantly improved and modified as time and experience dictates. To conclude, Mr. Speaker, I will end with a quote. This was a quote that was given by my father, who knew this man. His name was Harold Cardinal. He was a great Metis leader of Alberta. He said, "We must be able to set aside the principles of division, the principle of meanness, and the principle of greed. We must replace them with our traditional values of generosity, inclusion, sharing, and love. All of us people must be, should be, and ought to be able to work together." Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON REFLECTIONS ON THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FROM A DENE PERSPECTIVE

MR. BONNETROUGE: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. I would like to reflect on the actions of last week in which there was a motion put to the floor of the House to remove the Cabinet Minister. While I am six months into my term as a rookie MLA and still learning the ropes as to procedures in the House, procedures for committee meetings, procedures for dealing with Cabinet Ministers, and a host of other procedures, policies, regulations, and legislative acts, Mr. Speaker, of course I am not new to the political arena, having served terms on local government counsels, the Dene Band, and hamlet

councils, but nothing can prepare you for life in the big House. This arena has one collaborating with colleagues from all the regions of the Northwest Territories on a host of issues affecting their respective ridings. One thing is for sure: we even agree to disagree. At times, frustrations and anger take the place of common sense. Perhaps it's the pressure of knowing that the whole of the Northwest Territories is watching our every move. Are we going to be rock stars and solve all our territorial problems overnight? Or, failing that, perhaps we can take it out on a Minister or two, or three, or four.

I shared with my colleagues an event in my past life while attending the Deh Cho First Nations assemblies during the summers. At the beginning of the assemblies, there's a fire feeding ceremony. The significance of the fire feeding ceremony is the release of unhappy memories, fears, negative emotions, anger, and anything that you are holding onto that doesn't serve you well. Fire also keeps you warm. The event that I recall is an elderly Dene woman speaking before feeding the fire to tell all the leaders that they should not fight amongst each other. "You have work to do for your people." Those are powerful words spoken by an elderly Dene woman, especially in that setting, the fire feeding ceremony. Perhaps we need to adopt more of the Dene culture and traditional practices here in the territory.

Mr. Speaker, I spoke to two Dene women who broke the glass ceiling effect in their bids for top leadership positions. They both do not have an easy ride in their roles but are strong in their convictions and will not be bullied. I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement. Mahsi.

---Unanimous consent granted

MR. BONNETROUGE: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker, and mahsi, colleagues. Having told my story to my colleagues and the fact that this Assembly is the first in Canada to have a gender-balanced government, and the fact that we now have more women in Cabinet positions, and the fact that they are working tirelessly, I stated I do not support the motion to remove the Cabinet Minister.

Mr. Speaker, I apologize to the House for the disruption caused by the past week's activities. The harm this has caused the Members on the other side of the House. I truly look forward to getting down to business and the deliberations for the benefit of all the residents of the Northwest Territories. Mahsi.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON INTERPRETATION SERVICES IN LONG-TERM CARE

MS. SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Over the past few weeks, throughout Canada, we have watched our seniors' homes be the hardest hit by the pandemic. The number of deaths and the truths about the care that they have received in private seniors' homes is heartbreaking and should not happen in a country like Canada.

I am grateful that the Northwest Territories cares for our elders and puts their health at a high priority when they are in one of our long-term care facilities or living at home. When the NWT began to make decisions to protect our residents, they took into account our elders and our most vulnerable. They closed visiting to long-term care facilities and they limited travel to the small communities to decrease the risks. They found ways with technology to connect them with their families, and I want to thank the health authorities for that.

Mr. Speaker, one area that we seem not to be able to put a high priority on is having translators in our long-term care facilities. Some of our elders who have to live in long-term care, English is not their first language. In Inuvik, we have elders from all over the Beaufort-Delta and the Sahtu living there. We have amazing staff and programming there, but what they are missing is translators. Some of our residents have dementia, and family members often report their loved ones with dementia sometimes live in the past, even reverting back to their first languages. What I have been told by family members, as well, is that, when their family members are upset and confused, it is someone who can speak to them in their first language who can usually calm them. However, it's not just dementia patients; it's all patients who come into our hospitals. They should have the opportunity to have someone speak to them in their first language. We have 11 official languages in the Northwest Territories, and we need to give them that same level of respect as we do the French language, not because it's law, but because it's the right thing to do. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'll have questions for the Minister of Health.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON IMPACT OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON THE ECONOMY

MR. NORN: Marsi cho, Mr. Speaker. Today, I want to speak a bit about the COVID economic situation in the territories that is affecting the entire country. There is no doubt that a lot of businesses, large

and small, have been taking a huge hit financially. Unfortunately, it is very likely that we will see some of these companies go under as a result, and a lot of jobs, too, with it.

Mr. Speaker, most economic experts are saying that this recession is actually worse than the 2008-2009 great recession that we endured 12 years ago. COVID-19 has induced a global economic recession that we have not seen since the Great Depression in the 1930s. This is concerning, and I believe that this government needs to take proactive steps to address this issue. On that note, I'm going to go back 90 years, as I mentioned, about the Great Depression and a tool that the United States used to dig themselves out of that Great Depression, and that was the New Deal. During that time, President Roosevelt enacted a number of economic reforms. He took reform measures in areas of agriculture, reforestation, infrastructure, housing, finance, and labour, and a lot of those infrastructure projects are still in existence today, in terms of highways, bridges, dams, and that sort of thing.

Mr. Speaker, how is this relevant to our situation now? Right now, our economy is very interdependent on the mining sector. They create a lot of jobs directly through their mining operations, and indirectly through contractors and subcontractors. Theoretically speaking, if all our mining operations were to cease right now, a figure that I dug up was the unemployment rate would be 37.5 percent. That's shocking. It's a startling figure. I also want to mention that such a cease of operations would affect contractors such as the De'ton Cho Corporation in my riding, and the Denesoline Corporation.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, what can the GNWT do if faced with such a crisis? I believe we can turn to history and enact our own version of the New Deal by creating employment through investments in our infrastructure, reforestation, and housing. It's something to think about. Marsi cho, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
SUPPORT FOR ENTREPRENEURS AND
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT POLICY (SEED)
FUNDING DELAYS

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. The Support for Entrepreneurs and Economic Development, or SEED, program is promoted as "one part of the Government of the Northwest Territories' ongoing investment in a diverse, sustainable economy." This is obviously

increasingly important as we move towards economic recovery from the pandemic.

The Assembly passed an interim budget that included the first quarter of operational funds for each department on March 16. Some departments also received all of their grants and contributions funding, including Industry, Tourism and Investment. This was done in anticipation of the economic downturn and to ensure that the GNWT could quickly respond with financial assistance, including the SEED program.

A constituent complained to me about a response received from ITI on March 24 regarding his SEED application. "ITI is working with other departments to develop a coordinated response to the COVID situation. Until that response is finalized, we have been instructed that we will not be accepting any new applications to SEED for the 2020-2021 fiscal year."

My constituent did not receive any further communication from ITI on the availability of SEED funding for 2020-2021 by April 22, so I contacted the Minister for an explanation. Six days later, the Minister replied that guidelines would be completed within a week to ensure coordination of SEED with federal programs and a focus on COVID-related recovery. I replied immediately saying there was nothing on the ITI website to inform SEED applicants of this delay or on the amounts of funding for each of the eight SEED streams. After eight more days, the Minister responded to say that there was no firm budget for each SEED stream, and that the applications would be handled at the regional level. The guidelines were supposed to be forthcoming within a couple of days.

The much anticipated guidelines were finally released on May 11, eight weeks after MLAs approved the ITI budget. It's not clear why it took so long, too long, to open up the application process and develop a one-page, seven-principle guideline for funding approval. I'll have questions later today on why the SEED funding was delayed as this is clearly not how we wish to be approaching economic assistance and recovery. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
IMPACTS OF CAMPING OUTSIDE OF
CAMPGROUNDS

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The weather was lovely here in the North Slave this weekend so some people decided to go camping. I saw campers in sandy spots at the end of short

bush roads all along the Ingraham Trail, and I heard there was a big group of 20 trailers by the Cameron River Bridge. Mr. Speaker, this would normally be a good news story: Northerners get out camping in nice weather, but these campers are not in campgrounds. I wonder where their sewage is going, where their garbage is going, what they are using for fire pits. These are important questions if we want to keep the off-road areas free from the unwanted human footprint.

Further, Mr. Speaker, we don't want bears interacting with humans. The bears have recently emerged from hibernation, and they are looking for food. I saw one last week near the Prosperous Lake boat launch. A camper who is not careful with food storage and garbage could have some unwanted company, and a fed bear is a dead bear. As well, Mr. Speaker, having fires outside of fire pits isn't a good idea, especially at this time of year. The ground, until today, was dry, and the trees haven't leafed out yet. The deep lakes are still frozen and inaccessible to water bombers. I'm sure campers are being careful, but fire pits are the better option.

Then, there's the need for physical distancing. It's unlikely that 20 campers clustered together are following the social-distancing guidelines or complying with orders to keep outside gatherings to 25 people or fewer. In fact, those guidelines aren't being followed at all in the day-use area. There was the better part of 100 people at the Yellowknife River day-use area on Saturday. Mr. Speaker, all of these risks could be mitigated if the campgrounds were open. We have beautiful campgrounds with all the amenities and sites spaced well apart. What we need to do now is open them before freelance campers create unintended problems. I will have questions for the Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON POSTPARTUM DEPRESSION AND MENTAL HEALTH

MS. CLEVELAND: Mr. Speaker, I woke up mid-day to my husband standing over me. He took a deep breath and bravely said, "I can't do this anymore." After an awful pregnancy, we welcomed our third child. For his first eight months, he cried and never slept. Yes, eventually, our baby stopped crying and started to sleep, but I did not. Daytime became the hunting ground of my self-care, and nights became the slaughterhouse of my self-compassion. Mr. Speaker, I love my children, and I'm a good mom. Having a third child felt like being capsized at sea, gasping for air, and then, being passed a screaming and told, "Hold this." I felt shame. I felt

unworthy, and I felt defeated. I had evolved into a dark, empty shell of a human being. I was numb. I was debilitated by self-judgment and frozen by stigma. I denied myself a label that came with a solution because somehow it meant I wasn't a good mother, an honest business owner, or a valued community member.

I built a business around my happy family, selling people visual promises of their happy families. I mislabelled my emotional imagery at the happy imagery, and in my mind, admitting I wasn't happy violated the integrity of what I had built. That day as I lay in bed, my husband told me he couldn't watch me fade away. I had no fight left, but luckily, he did. That was the start of my self-care and compassion journey. I accepted a label of post-partum depression and a journey that included rewriting my definition of self-care from something as small as showering every day to as big as simplifying my support system.

If you have not yet battled your own brain, you know someone who has. According to the World Health Organization, depression is the leading cause of sickness and disability globally, yet there is still a cloak of silence that wraps itself around mental health because we feel warmer that way. Stigma becomes the monster of mental health that bullies us into silence, and silence is killing us. Today, as we battle COVID, we need to make sure people have the resources to stop battling themselves. We need to take off the disingenuous warmth that silence only temporarily offers. We need to get uncomfortable before we can get comfortable. Until this moment, I could count on one hand, the number of people who have heard my story. There is an underlying stigma of weakness associated with mental health, but having and sharing emotion is not weakness. I am not weak, and neither are those of you that are listening. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON INVESTING IN A POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As we head into what is likely to be a very large, global recession, I believe it is time for the Northwest Territories to double down in diversifying its economy and building a knowledge economy. I think one of the best ways we can do this is to continue forward in our path to create a polytechnic university; a polytechnic university that will meet our increasing skilled labour demands, which will allow industries in the North to build skills and experience to eventually compete for contracts, not just here in the NWT but across Canada and the world. Mr.

Speaker, I want to see a university with northern, southern, and foreign students all coming here to learn together. I believe, in the past, there have been many northern economy success stories, but where we often see as northern businesses who get too successful, grow too large, and they pack up and move their headquarters. We need to break that cycle.

Mr. Speaker, I don't want the diversification of the economy debate to be an anti-mining debate. I think that is a false dichotomy, and we must build upon what we have. We are about to spend a billion dollars on Giant Mine remediation. I believe we have to build the skills to make sure that we get every dollar out of that contract. Mr. Speaker, we are leaders in geoscience. We are leaders in mining logistics, ice road building, and so many of these knowledge economy skills that we can build from the resource sector, Mr. Speaker. These are all things we can and should teach in our new polytechnic.

Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt we are government economy, and as the recession comes, this is, in fact, a good thing for us, to have a stable flow of government money into our economy. I have no issues with this, but every single dollar we invest must grow our economy to be more diverse and more resilient, such that in further economic downturns, all of our companies can find alternative means to succeed. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will have questions for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment to make sure our plan to establish a polytechnic university is still on track.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON IMPACTS OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN LONG- TERM CARE CENTRES

MR. LAFFERTY: Masi, Mr. Speaker. There is no place in the NWT more vulnerable to COVID-19 than our long-term care and seniors' homes. To illustrate, Mr. Speaker, in Canada, these homes account for an incredible 80 percent of all COVID-related deaths. That equals more than 3,000 deaths in Quebec; and in the case in Ontario, more than 1,500. That's as of May 20, 2020. Mr. Speaker, this raises critical concerns about the ability of our seniors to cope with an outbreak of COVID-19 in our territory. At the appropriate time, Mr. Speaker, I will ask questions of the Minister of Health and Social Services regarding the precautions of our seniors' homes have taken against the threat of COVID-19. Masi, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON PASSING OF JUDY LAFFERTY

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to take this time to express my deepest condolences to the family of Ms. Judy Lafferty who had passed away peacefully Sunday morning in Fort Good Hope. She was surrounded by her loved ones. Ms. Lafferty is well-known across the Northwest Territories for her exquisite, very well-detailed handcrafted art, sewing, and traditional practices, and delicately preparing flawless moose hide, providing tanning workshops throughout the Northwest Territories.

Ms. Lafferty's art is well-designed. Her moose hide jackets, slippers, bead work were bought across Canada and throughout the Northwest Territories. Attending fashion symposiums, and also displaying her talent in New Mexico where she shared her talent, her traditional knowledge, and language with the Navaho Nation. Ms. Lafferty is a national treasure. It is saddening, and it is a huge loss to the women of the arts for the Northwest Territories. Ms. Lafferty proudly displayed her unique designs representing the Northwest Territories at the recent Arctic Winter Games set up for arts and crafts in March of this year. Ms. Lafferty mentored several women, passing on her traditional knowledge and skills to empower Indigenous women throughout the Northwest Territories to rebuild their skills and provide the importance of guidance to empower each other.

With her kind heart and deep compassion for people and willingness to see the good in everyone, her passing will have a significant impact on our traditional arts and culture for the Northwest Territories. Today, I want to acknowledge Ms. Judy Lafferty's family, friends, and the community of Fort Good Hope, include my constituents of the Sahtu region, in her legacy, contributions through arts and crafts and leadership throughout the Northwest Territories. Thoughts and prayers are sent to the family. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Sahtu. Our thoughts are prayers are with the family and the community. Mahsi. Members' statements. Member for Yellowknife South.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON POSTPARTUM DEPRESSION AND MENTAL HEALTH

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One of the indirect impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic has been on people's mental health. Today, I want to speak to the fact that it can take strength, courage, and sometimes both to seek help for illnesses that may not have obvious physical symptoms.

Eight years ago, when my daughter was born, I experienced postpartum depression. It has taken me years to even be able to say those words, postpartum depression, and it still makes me uncomfortable. At first, I insisted that my behaviour and feelings were from a lack of sleep, but as weeks turned into months, I slept less and less until I was unable to sleep at all. I became increasingly irritable, distant, and angry. Always seeing myself as a problem-solver for others, I insisted that I could think my way out of this. I read every book there was about infant sleep and, still running my own law practice, threw myself back into work. I tried to rationalize my behaviours away, and I continued to blame myself for what I was feeling or, some days, not feeling.

My spouse finally put a label on what was happening and insisted that I speak to a professional. At first, that label made me angry, but ultimately, this is what gave me permission that it was okay for me to not be okay. I came to accept that it was not my fault that I was experiencing a mental illness, that I had not failed, and that I deserved help from others. That's a hard list of acceptance for many of us, Mr. Speaker, particularly when we prize characteristics such as strength, problem-solving, and independence, and it is hard to admit when the thing that defines you can, in fact, be holding you back from getting help.

Over the last several months, the world has been through rolling shutdowns as we've watched COVID-19 march across countries and decimate healthcare systems. It is okay to not feel okay throughout this, or with the impacts that this is having on individual lives and communities. Mental health wellness resources are not just there for someone else; they are there for everyone. Do not let a misperception about what mental illness is make you hesitate about whether your feelings warrant checking out the available resources. For those who work for any level of government, Mr. Speaker, there is a good chance there are some great resources out there in the human resources systems. Many large private corporations have mental health and wellness services, and the GNWT has a variety of programs available for all different kinds of mental health support. If someone stops for even a moment to wonder whether they should check into these options, I sincerely hope that they do. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Yellowknife South. Members' statements. Item 4, recognition of visitors in the gallery. Item 5, returns to oral questions. Item 6, acknowledgements. Sorry, we didn't have notice for acknowledgements, so we'll do that tomorrow. Item 7, oral questions. Member for Hay River South.

Oral Questions

QUESTION 262-19(2): GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES BUDGET AND SUPPORT FOR INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will direct the questions to the Minister of Finance, and possibly the Premier. As this government was initially put in place to govern the territory and support the Aboriginal inhabitants, I am curious as to the amount of funding on a per-capita basis spent directly on Aboriginal people through the various departments and also the total amounts in labour directed at Indigenous government employees. The first question I have is: can the Minister confirm what amount this government will receive in revenue for the fiscal year 2020-2021 from Canada through territorial financing and other revenue sources? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wasn't actually sure if the question is simply the total revenues, which, of course, is \$2.1 billion; but alternatively, if we're looking to remove from that general revenues of non-renewable resource revenue at \$33 million and the tax revenue of \$277,000, then that would leave the remaining amounts, which is the amount that we get from Canada, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Yes, the total amount is good. Can the Minister confirm the total estimated expenditures for all departments for the year 2020-2021? She can either break them down by department, or she can give me the total.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: For reference, I am looking at the summary of operations expenditures page, which is in the main estimates binders, and that does have a breakdown by department and also by expenditure category, showing a grand total of expenditures of \$1,895,865.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Of those amounts for each department, what amount by department goes directly to support or care for Aboriginal people in the NWT? I am looking for a number, a per-capita number, I guess it is. The reason for this is that I want to know what we're doing with the money that is coming in from all sources, and how much is actually going to assist or to support Aboriginal people in the Northwest Territories.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: I suppose one answer is that every dollar spent, to a degree, supports the Indigenous people in the Northwest

Territories insofar as it provides the day-to-day functioning, programs, and services of the Government of the Northwest Territories that help all of the residents of the Northwest Territories, including Indigenous people. To the extent of breaking it down per capita or by demographic, certain programs and services, certainly, I will make an effort to go back and see which programs and services are targeted specifically to Indigenous groups in the Northwest Territories, but as far as breaking down program by program, again, so many of them are so intertwined that that would be an impossible task. I won't be able to do that to the extent that I gather the Member is actually seeking here.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the Minister for that answer, and I would still like to see some numbers. I don't want it to the penny. I just want a general number. The reason why is that we do have people who come up from the South to support what this government is doing with respect to Aboriginal people. At the same time, they bring family members down, and they're taking beds away, possibly, from Aboriginal residents, say in extended care, or whatever. I guess I just want to know what's going on. In saying that, it seems that we just continue on, and I want to know from the Premier or the Minister if it's going to be business as usual. Are we going to really direct some of our energy towards making sure that Aboriginal and Indigenous issues are dealt with in a timely manner, and that we are actually providing support for them, and that we are actually receiving the funding that we require from the federal government and other sources to make sure that we are addressing their concerns? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Mr. Speaker, this seems to be a whole-of-government response. I think, perhaps, it is appropriate that I turn it over to the Premier.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. Honourable Premier.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are a couple of things. It definitely isn't going to be business as usual as the last Legislative Assembly. I mean, we don't even have the same Cabinet here, so it couldn't be business as usual, Mr. Speaker. However, I heard the question, and it's an interesting question. When he asked about breaking it down by department, it would be almost impossible, Mr. Speaker, because it would be identifying, as well, how many Indigenous people are in public housing, how many Indigenous people are taking post-secondary education, how many identified at post-secondary education. I'm not even sure that my own children,

who are Metis, identified as Metis when they applied for post-secondary. Those are questions that are out there. It is a lot easier if you say "how many Indigenous people are hired in the government"; that we have statistics for, and I watched that very closely over the last Assembly, as well.

Hopefully, it won't be businesses as usual. I know that, in the last Assembly, when I was watching around HR, human resources, hiring for the GNWT, I was adamant about the number. In all honesty, I was the Minister of Status of Women; I was advocating about how many Indigenous women. One thing that I never got to is how many are in management positions. Hopefully, that is something that we will be looking at. I know I am a strong advocate. I know my Cabinet are strong advocates. We will be looking at that as we go forward.

The best answer is: do we have enough money for Indigenous governments? Absolutely not. We don't have enough money, Mr. Speaker, for this government. Land claims and self-government agreements, those are the answers for Indigenous people. The more that we can get those through, not pushing them through, but work them through, actually will give the power to the Indigenous governments, and therefore, Mr. Speaker, we will have a huge impact on Indigenous people. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 263-19(2):
IMPACTS OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN LONG-TERM CARE CENTRES

MR. LAFFERTY: Masi, Mr. Speaker. No one is more vulnerable to COVID-19 than elders living in long-term care and seniors' homes. COVID facilities in these homes have become a national scandal. In light of the alarming death rate in such homes, I have a number of questions for the Minister of Health and Social Services. The first question I have is: what special COVID-related training have staff at the territorial long-term care and seniors' homes received in anticipation of a possible outbreak of the virus in our territory? Masi, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. DIANE THOM: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On March 12th, we began implementing preventative measures several days before we had an active case. We did things like prohibiting visitors, stopping day programs, using social distancing, screening staff before and at the end of their shifts, wearing masks continuously, cleaning common

high-touch areas, following 14-day isolation protocols. These are all some of the preventative steps we have taken in preparation for this pandemic. Staff are all trained. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. LAFFERTY: In light of the documented danger of long-distance airborne transmission, what consideration has the government given to retrofitting the territorial seniors' homes? I am referring to the virus-scrubbing systems of the type being integrated into the hospital's HVAC system.

HON. DIANE THOM: I am not sure the specific details on the question, so I can get back to the Member.

MR. LAFFERTY: My third question, obviously, is at the systemic level. What is the Minister doing to improve entry-level training standards and staff retention at our elders' care facilities? What steps have been taken so far, to date?

HON. DIANE THOM: I am not aware of what exact measures have taken place. However, I do want to let the Member know that we don't anticipate easing any of our current preventative practices right now in the long-term care centres. We are just going to continue with some of the processes that we have been doing.

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

MR. LAFFERTY: Masi, Mr. Speaker. I may have to do a written question because I need more information pertaining to this. These are questions that have been asked by the seniors and family members in my community. The next question I have is in follow-up to my last question, Mr. Speaker: what systemic steps is the Minister taking pertaining to another very vulnerable segment of our population? I am referring to those disabled adults residing in group homes and other residential support programs, Mr. Speaker. Masi.

HON. DIANE THOM: I heard the Member say that he would be willing to share some of his questions and send it over to me. We can respond as a department. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 264-19(2):
INTERPRETATION SERVICES IN LONG-TERM
CARE

MS. SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Minister of Health. Is the health authority actively looking at hiring translators in the hospital in Inuvik? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. DIANE THOM: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Right now, in Inuvik, the Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority in the Beaufort-Delta region is actively recruiting for a Regional Indigenous Wellness Coordinator. This position will lead the incorporation of Indigenous languages into programming and service delivery. Thank you.

MS. SEMMLER: That's the first I have heard of that; I am starting to hear some good news. Will the health authority find ways to work with our Indigenous groups to have translators, in the meantime, in our hospitals and long-term care?

HON. DIANE THOM: The idea of the Regional Indigenous Wellness Coordinator is to be able to work with stakeholders, residents, and staff to determine what are some appropriate means to support languages and also have translators in our centres.

MS. SEMMLER: One last question for the Minister: will she commit to having her department resolving this issue immediately, at least for the residents who are in our long-term care now?

HON. DIANE THOM: The Inuvik Regional Hospital and the long-term care in the Beaufort-Delta will work with current healthcare practitioners who are able to speak additional languages. Currently in the hospital, in the Beaufort-Delta, we have a list of translators who can be called upon for translation services when required. We also have access to interpreter translator from Ulukhaktok via FaceTime and phone. We do have some of these services that are available, and I hear what the Member is asking to commit to. Right now, our department is committing to this position. Once we get the position, we can start to roll out how we continue to work with Indigenous groups.

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

QUESTION 265-19(2):
SUPPORT FOR AND COMMUNICATIONS WITH
LOCAL LEADERSHIP

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today, my statement was on leadership in regard to the mayors in the communities of my riding. Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to know from the Minister of MACA: what are we doing in regard to our weekly meetings with our mayors and chiefs across the territory? Is that still happening? The information is flowing on COVID-19 and the pandemic moving forward on the potential round two of COVID? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Nunakput. Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We were meeting since March, the beginning of March, when COVID-19 first hit us. We were meeting weekly with both the municipal governments and the Indigenous governments every Friday, in fact. When the session started a week ago, two weeks ago, we asked them if they would take a break for session and meet with the officials because of course I will be in session. They were going to take a break, but, Mr. Speaker, I just saw an email come through my desk that they are actually having a meeting this Friday, as well. My understanding is that the mayors and the Indigenous governments will continue meeting with officials until session is over, at which time they will reinstate meeting with me.

MR. JACOBSON: No, that is good to hear. Things move forward without even us being there, so that is a good thing. It shows true leadership in our territory. What is our Minister looking at our emergency plans now, on the go-forward with this pandemic? I know that this is all new to us. We had everything but pandemic in our emergency plans. I want to know and make sure that the Minister is making sure that we go forward with all of our communities, all 33 communities, with an emergency plan with a pandemic stage on an upcoming pandemic in regard to, I said, COVID-19 second go-around, so making sure of the safety of our communities.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Some work has been done with the municipalities. Some work needs to be done. When COVID-19 first hit us, we focused on the immediate needs, making sure that people understand the orders and how to address the orders. That was our main focus, but as we move forward, we realize that even in the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs, when we did our emergency management plans for each community, they did not include a pandemic. They talked about forest fires, and they talked about flooding. Absolutely, that work is going to have to be done for 33 communities, and it has to be done for us as a Government of the Northwest Territories. That is work that goes forward. The other thing that is huge for municipalities right now is we are still advocating with the federal government to see what relief they will come through. We have been compiling the costs for the municipal governments. However, the Canadian association of municipalities actually sent a request to the federal government, asking I don't know the amount of money, but it was billions of dollars, for all municipalities. We are advocating, lobbying for that money, and watchful to see what comes out of that.

MR. JACOBSON: I thank the Minister for that. In regard to our communities I represent, I have one on the highway and I have three with airline services. It has been a tough 40 days in regard on the go-forward. Working with our first 10 days of working with my mayors, that was non-stop and long days. The essential travel part, now, for our communities, to keep peace of mind for our elders in our communities, where does that fit in regard to essential travel? Are we making sure that the communities of Sachs Harbour, Ulukhaktok, and Paulatuk for essential travel, has that been the criteria yet with COVID-19, or did that loosen up in regard to that?

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: If I am on the wrong track, the Member can meet with me after and correct me, but I am thinking he is asking about essential travel as to workers going into the communities. That is the same as it was when COVID-19 first hit. The only people who are into the Northwest Territories are the essential workers, from out of the community. However, we do allow people from the Northwest Territories to still leave the territories, go South, as long as they have a self-isolation plan when they return. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. No. Thank you, Minister. That was what I wanted to hear in regard to action plan. Now, that being said, for those three communities that are fly-in, for my home community of Tuktoyaktuk in regard to the check stops that we had in our communities, is this government going to support my community of Tuktoyaktuk in regards to helping them pay, or is the federal government COVID-19 going to pay the funds that was expended in regard to a check stop, when it put people's minds at ease and it calmed everybody down? I am hoping this government will support that in paying that bill for the community of Tuktoyaktuk. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: At this point, we have not been paying for any of the check stops that have happened in communities. We do have border patrols. We do have EMO that is on it, the enforcement and task force that are on it already. These are extra precautions that the communities, some communities, have taken upon themselves. At first, we were concerned about the health and safety of not only the people who were patrolling the check stops but also the people going through. We have not condoned the action, but we have not taken it down. I do know that we have given money to Indigenous governments. They can use that money as they wish for COVID-19, and I do know that the municipalities are seeking federal money. We are also getting them to compile their

expenses. However, at this time, until we figure out what is happening with the federal government around municipal funding, we have not put any resources into municipalities, only on the Indigenous government side. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 266-19(2):
MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORTS DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions today are for the Minister of Health and Social Services. Mental health experts have cautioned that the fear of COVID, mounting death toll, economic downturn, and uncertainty is fueling a mental health crisis. What I would like to know is: how has the Department of Health and Social Services changed mental healthcare through COVID?

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

HON. DIANE THOM: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Community Counselling Program continues to be available in the Northwest Territories, including locations here in Yellowknife, but during this pandemic counselling services have changed. We are now providing these services through telephone or by using virtual options like Zoom and FaceTime. I do want to note that wait times for counselling across our system have been eliminated, and residents can access same-day appointments. In addition, the federal government is also providing virtual options for all Canadians. The Wellness Together Canada is a free online portal with a variety of e-mental health apps focused on things like anxiety, depression, and stress, so the health and social services system is working to promote these options to the residents of the Northwest Territories so that they can have more options that are easily accessible from home through this pandemic.

MS. CLEVELAND: While I appreciate the Department of Health and Social Services looking for new ways to provide mental healthcare to Northerners, the reality is that not every single person has access to using apps or video conferencing for mental health appointments. Many residents of the Northwest Territories simply do not have the minutes on cellphones to be able to access telehealth. What I would like to know is: will the Department of Health and Social Services still provide in-person counselling to people who simply cannot access these supports?

HON. DIANE THOM: The Community Counselling Program has shifted. I understand the Member's concern about not being able to have the one-on-one. However, there are times when individuals may need to be seen by a health professional in person, so these are situations that we assess on a case-by-case basis.

MS. CLEVELAND: Bringing home a new baby today would bring a whole new level of fear and anxiety with it for new moms, heightened anxiety as parents work to keep their tiny infant safe, increased stress as parents are potentially further isolated from their support networks. How has support for new moms changed since March?

HON. DIANE THOM: Supports that were in place for new moms before this pandemic are still available. These are things like the Community Counselling Program, the Healthy Family Program, public health Moms, Boobs and Babies. These are some of the initiatives that we have available for moms. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are lucky that COVID-19 hit Canada as the sun was starting to come back in the North. Now that we are in phase 1, people are able to get outside and spend more time together while social distancing. Mr. Speaker, I am concerned that our second and potentially third wave will come as we are heading back into winter and that the mental health of Northerners will be further at risk. Self care for people includes exercise, eating properly, establishing a support network. What I would like to know is: what is the plan for the Department of Health and Social Services to help keep Northerners safe as we potentially might end up re-entering the containment phase as winter sets in? Thank you.

HON. DIANE THOM: While we anticipate there will be a second wave of this virus, we really have no way of knowing what course this pandemic will take; however, the Health and Social Services system is actively working to ensure residents are aware of services and supports available to them. This is being done through traditional media platforms, website, Facebook pages, and sites. Also, it includes a focus on the wellness and ways to cope and take care of yourself. This type of information is important at all times, especially during this pandemic, and we will continue to provide support. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 267-19(2):
INVESTING IN A POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I believe now more than ever, we have to ensure that our plan to create a polytechnic university is on track, and ideally, I'd like to see it sooner rather than later. My question is for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. Is the current timeline as set out on the mandate to establish a polytechnic university on track? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. All the activities planned to be completed in this Assembly are still on track to be completed in this Assembly. Like everything else, the last two months has been exclusively focused on COVID-19. We are about two months behind in a lot of ways, which has pushed some of the things I was hoping to have done this summer back a few months. Other than that, things are on track. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. JOHNSON: I think one of the most important conversations we're going to have regarding a polytechnic is whether there is a flagship programming; what new programs will come out of it? I understand this is the work that will be done as part of the strategic plan that I hope to see soon. I recognize two months' delay is understandable during COVID. Can the Minister update us on any decisions that have been made in regards to new programming for the polytechnic university?

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: No. This isn't the forum where those would be discovered. There won't be decisions made behind closed doors that someone has to ask me about. It's going to be a much more transparent process than that. What's happening right now is that there is a plan in place, and it's been refined. A lot of the work has been done, and I spoke about this, not in the last sitting necessarily but the first part of this sitting which we had back in February/March. I had a plan, and I was taking it to Cabinet so it could then be shared with the Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight. I am just bringing it to Cabinet this week, and then hopefully, the standing committee can see that plan Thursday or Friday. It will lay out the steps that we are taking.

MR. JOHNSON: I look forward to seeing that plan and the timeline for it. Another big, key question in getting this polytechnic off the ground is getting the capital funding, specifically, the capital funding from Ottawa. I know there was work to be done at the Fort Smith campus, work to be done at the Inuvik campus. Yellowknife is looking at the possibility of a

new campus. Can the Minister update us on any progress that has been made towards obtaining the capital to building new infrastructure for the polytechnic?

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: That's part of the work that we'll be undertaking in the coming months. We need to come up with a facilities plan. There is clearly work that needs to be done at all the locations, and then, there's work that can be done in the communities as well in terms of the community learning centres and the different types of access we can have there. We are undertaking that work, creating a facilities plan to let us know exactly what we need. I'm anxious to get that money, too, but it's hard to go to the feds and say, "We know we need something, but we don't have a plan for you just yet." They don't want to give you money without a plan. Once we get that plan, then I'm confident the money will start rolling in.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One of my concerns is that, as Aurora College kind of sits in this limbo, we don't seem to be investing in new programming because we want to wait to get the strategic plan in. I get that, but I'm a little concerned that we're not building the programming we have as we grow into a polytechnic. Can the Minister update us of whether there's any plans to introduce new programming into Aurora College, whether due to COVID-19 and the inability to have classes in the fall, will any programming be cut; how the programming looks due to the situation we're currently in. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: I don't know if this is necessarily the time to be introducing new programming. The landscape has changed, and we went from in-person to distance learning in the matter of weeks. The focus right now is on preparing for distance learning, at least for the first semester. There is no plan to add new programs. However, the Member is right that we do need to grow our programming, and that's part of the transformation work, part of the strengthening of the foundation, ensuring that the administrative processes we have in place support the growth of programming. Maybe we take some of the administrative burden off of teachers and faculty. That's the type of work that's under way, as well.

We also have a new program review process, one that is nationally recognized. It lives up to national and international standards. Programs will be added or removed based on that. We're not just going to cut a program to save a couple of bucks. We're going to make sure going forward that we are doing this like a university would. This is going to be a world-class institution, and we're going to do

things like we're a world-class institution. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 268-19(2):
SUPPORT FOR ENTREPRENEURS AND
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT POLICY (SEED)
FUNDING DELAYS

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. My question is for the Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment. Earlier today, I raised the issue of the eight-week delay in accepting SEED funding applications for 2020-2021 from the time that we approved the ITI budget until the release of a new guideline to assist with economic recovery. Can the Minister explain why there was an eight-week delay in opening SEED program funding for 2020-2021? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment.

HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. ITI SEED program was announced on May 11, 2020, five and a half weeks into the new fiscal year. The SEED program began taking applications for the 2020-2021 year with an increased budget of \$4 million. A new guideline was announced at this time, and all the SEED programs are available for funding. However, priority was given to supporting business development opportunities that are forward looking, supporting local employment, and have a plan that reflects our new economic realities. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. O'REILLY: I don't want to get into a debate with the Minister, but it certainly was eight weeks since this House actually approved a full contribution funding for the department. There seems to be little clarity around the amount of funding for each of the eight SEED streams, and whether that money is divided regionally or some other way? Some of my constituents have said that that uncertainty is not very helpful. Can the Minister tell us whether there is any allocation of SEED funding by stream, region, or any other means, and how this will be communicated to the public?

HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY: As mentioned, SEED has a funding, or sorry, a pot of \$4 million this year. It is my understanding there are not allocations to the different programs, but rather, we evaluate each application on a case by case merit. They are regionally evaluated. However, it is my understanding, there aren't certain amounts allocated to the regions. However, I will confirm that with my department.

MR. O'REILLY: I want to thank the Minister for that. Maybe that information might be posted to the ITI website so that members of the public would actually know, as well. The one-page, seven-principles guideline for 2020-2021 SEED funding is for a range between \$30,000 and \$75,000. The new guideline is not reflected in the application form or the ministerial policy that was approved in 2019. It seems to me to be a little bit behind the times. Can the Minister explain why the SEED application form and the ministerial policy has not been updated to reflect the new guideline?

HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY: It has been a very busy time over the last while. I did want to confirm that I have received confirmation from my department that there are regional funding allocations for the SEED program, and we can provide that for you. I do believe there is information available on the website. I can't really tell you exactly why that particular piece of information hasn't been updated, other than the fact that updating a ministerial directive, which is an overarching theme for my department, was not my priority at the time. My priority was to get the funding out to people. I will commit to the Member that we will update that immediately.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. I want to thank the Minister for that. I pointed this out weeks ago to her, so the delays in developing the new guideline and opening the SEED program application are difficult to understand. I think we have to be able to do a lot better. I listened to my colleague from Kam Lake ask questions last Thursday on the Minister's responses on the SEED applications to date. Can the Minister tell us whether there are any plans to seek additional funds for SEED or modify it further in light of the pandemic and need for economic recovery? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY: Yes, my department constantly advocates and lobbies with the federal government for more funding for our programming, including SEED. We have numerous ongoing conversations with CanNor and with federal ministers in my FPT tables. Every time, I raise the issue of needing more business supports for Northwest Territories businesses, that we do fall through the cracks, and that the majority of our businesses are small businesses, which are already having economic uncertainty prior to COVID. Yes, we always look for more funding. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 269-19(2):
OPENING OF NORTHWEST TERRITORIES
CAMPGROUNDS

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment. As I said in my statement, there was a lot of freelance trailer camping going on, on the Ingraham Trail on the weekend. I do appreciate that we wait all winter for a chance to be outside, but gathering in places other than campgrounds presents some risks to people and the environment. What is the risk to people of opening the campgrounds immediately? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Yellowknife Centre. Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment.

HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Chief Public Health Officer recently released Emerging Wisely and has identified certain permitted activities under the various phases. The opening of campgrounds is a permitted activity under phase 2. We are working toward opening campgrounds when the Chief Public Health Officer does move the Emerging Wisely plan to phase 2 to allow for overnight camping. I would like to emphasize that not all services will be open due to ongoing risk assessments, such as with the shower buildings. All parks are different and require different risk assessments. These will help identify what is the capacity or the use of that park. I will take this moment to reiterate: there is no compromising safety, and that is our number one priority for our staff, contractors, and the public. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. GREEN: Thanks for that little sermon. What kind of oversight is your department providing over freelance camping? Is anyone talking to campers about bears and fire risks, for example?

HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY: A working group of ADMs from Lands, ITI, and Infrastructure have been considering approaches to deal with pressure on the land and outside campgrounds. I will ask that ENR also be looped into this process. Departments will be working on a joint communication approach on the subject, in the event that there is freelance camping beyond the campgrounds. Departments' inspectors are cross-appointed between health and departmental programs for compliance and enforcement under land and resource management legislation.

The GNWT recognizes that people will be enjoying social distancing out on the land this summer, but we will be encouraging residents to enjoy the land in a way that is safe, respectful, and does not interfere with others' enjoyment. We understand

staycations will be popular alternatives in the NWT for the foreseeable future, to be safe and be responsible, know where you can temporarily use the land. You are permitted to camp on untenured territorial Commissioner's land short-term; two or three nights is acceptable. If you meet up with others, observe the two-metre rule. Leave no trace. Pack your garbage out with you and limit your stay at a popular spot so others can enjoy it, too.

MS. GREEN: The Minister makes this sound like a hypothetical question. This is not a hypothetical question. People are camped all over the Ingraham Trail. The bears are active. The lakes are sometimes still frozen. We have some very significant risks to having people have fires, garbage, sewage outside of the campgrounds. I haven't heard yet what the risk assessment is of that dynamic versus all of the words you've given us about safety first.

HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY: I would not want to overstep my authority. I only have authority to administer within the parks. If there are issues with things happening on lands, those go under other departments. I believe the Department of Lands would also be involved, or you can call the RCMP, if you're finding that people are not treating things properly.

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

MS. GREEN: No, thanks.

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

QUESTION 270-19(2):
MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORTS DURING COVID-
19

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am slightly concerned that we might be putting too much emphasis on digital supports when it comes to helping people with mental health. My first question for the Minister of Health and Social Services is: we've heard of extreme benefits, even in this House from different Members, of connecting with knowledge keepers in times of need. I'm wondering if the Department of Health and Social Services has looked into on-the-land mental health clinics for Northerners during COVID. Thank you.

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

HON. DIANE THOM: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, our department provides \$1.8 million to Indigenous groups for on-the-land programs. Thank you.

MS. CLEVELAND: I appreciate that the Minister spoke to we're not quite sure what the fall will bring. We aren't sure what the fall will bring. We aren't sure what will happen with kids this fall with the second or third wave, and if kids will end up back at school, but we have heard wonderful things about the child and youth care counsellors who will be going into schools this fall. What I'm wondering is: even if our kids don't return to school, will these child and youth care counsellors still be accessible supports to the kids of the Northwest Territories?

HON. DIANE THOM: The answer is yes. The child and youth care counsellors are already working with schools and continuing to provide supports to children and youth, in their schools and in their communities. The child and youth care counsellors are providing services to children and youth using the telephone and virtual approaches. Also, they will continue to work through the summer and into the fall, regardless of whether schools are open or not.

MS. CLEVELAND: I appreciate that answer from the Minister. I would like to move on to our front-line workers, if possible. Compassion fatigue is a real thing, and I think that it is something that our front-line workers are experiencing throughout the Northwest Territories right now. Many of our front-line workers were recalled from March Break, annual leave was cancelled, and they've been working non-stop at a very high-stress time. With a limited number of mental health counsellors, nurses, and physicians that we have in the Northwest Territories, how does the GNWT intend to support the needs of Northerners while protecting the psychological health and safety of our front-line staff?

HON. DIANE THOM: All the GNWT front-line staff have access to their Employee and Family Assistance Program, the EFAP. In addition, the Northwest Territories Health Social Service Authority has implemented a staff support line and a crisis debriefs needed in all the regions. The Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority has also worked with occupational health and safety to create a wellness room in the hospitals for staff who may need to access their EFAP or support line during their shift. There are also plans to support vacation leave for health professionals over the summer.

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

QUESTION 271-19(2):
IMPACTS OF CAMPING OUTSIDE OF
CAMPGROUNDS

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Minister of ENR. As I mentioned in my statement, there is a lot of freelance camping that happened on the Ingraham Trail this weekend. I do appreciate that we wait all winter to get outside, but gathering in places outside of campgrounds presents some risks to both people and the environment. My question for you is: what kind of monitoring has your department done of the freelance camping on the Ingraham Trail in the last week? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Yellowknife Centre. Minister of Environment and Natural Resources.

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the Member for her question. The department does go out there and inspect various campsites and that. Unfortunately, right now, campsites are closed right now, so we have actually asked the public to advise us of situations so that we are aware of them and so that we can send staff out there to make sure that they are following the guidelines that we set out. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. GREEN: As I understand it, it's up to the public to police themselves in the matter of freelance camping, and there is no either proactive inspection or proactive education taking place with the campers about the risks of camping in wild places at this time.

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: We actually do get out there with the town people, being fire smart, being safe, looking out for the environment, don't feed bears, and stuff like that. Again, what we are trying to do is, because we are in a new environment, we do have stuff out there, but we don't have them out there on the weekends right now. We will look into this matter, and we will advise the public what we are going to be doing moving forward. Right now, we rely on the public because we are asking them to advise us of situations so that we can help them move forward. Wearing my other hat with the Minister of Lands, we do have inspectors out there, as well, but again, we are asking for people to work with us on this.

MS. GREEN: Thank you to the Minister for that. You don't inspect on weekends, so I'm going to say that that's when the most freelance camping takes place. How is your department keeping a lid on the potential risks of fires, sewage dumps, garbage dumps, bear interactions, and so on? How is your department keeping a lid on that if they don't go out on weekends?

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I guess I should clarify. They do do weekends, but right now, we aren't because we're

in a new environment. The campgrounds that are going on right now, freelance and that, we are working on that. We are looking at that situation. We do have our bear line up. We have our fire line up. We have those things there. As for the sewers and that, we have to work across departments. As the Minister for ITI spoke about, we have people who are cross-trained. We work together with these matters.

Again, we are asking the public to bring it forward to us if we have concerns. We have heard the Member loud and clearly here. We will get back and educate people on this process. To get the details, I don't have that with me right in front of me right now, but I will make that commitment to this Member right now and to the public. What we will do is we will get that information to you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Just a reminder to Members and Ministers, please direct your questions and answers through me, Mr. Speaker. With that, final supplementary, Member for Yellowknife Centre.

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the Minister for that response. When should I expect to see this follow-up action? Thank you.

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: As for follow-up, I know that the department is listening to us right now. Within five days, I am hoping to have that answer, if not sooner. Thank you, Madam -- Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Must have been a long weekend there, Minister. Oral questions. Member for Yellowknife North.

QUESTION 272-19(2):
TRANSFER OF LANDS WITHIN MUNICIPAL
BOUNDARIES

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Minister of Lands. Previously, the Minister of Lands said that he will have a process set out for transferring land within municipal boundaries to municipal governments. Specifically, my concern is with the City of Yellowknife and transferring the vacant Commissioner's land, not the land that is currently withdrawn. Can the Minister provide an update on any process that has been made on this front? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I have said in the House here before, we are working with Indigenous governments in the

City of Yellowknife to move the process forward. We have had a number of meetings, and we are trying to work with them to come up with a process that works for everybody involved, including the City of Yellowknife. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. JOHNSON: One of the concerns here is that, before the Department of Lands divests itself of lands, there needs to be section 35 consultation. I recognize that there are going to be multiple meetings and there are a number of processes here involving EIA. Can the Minister of Lands commit that they are doing the section 35 consultation, or is that work the responsibility of the city? I'm trying to figure out which party is actually responsible for the Section 35 consultation here.

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Both. The City of Yellowknife needs to work with Indigenous governments, but we also need to work with Indigenous governments and the City of Yellowknife right now. We are working together. We are having numerous meetings; we are collaborating; we are having these conversations. Again, it's about people working together. We are trying to do what's right in a timely manner. I know it seems to be drawn out, but we are working together, and we have had a number of meetings.

MR. JOHNSON: I am glad to hear that they are working together. I am hoping that I won't be hearing that in three years and this issue won't be resolved. Another key issue in this matter is that, before the land can legally be transferred, the surveying costs for land of this size is significant. Can the Department of Lands update me on any efforts to find funding to conduct that surveying, and who is ultimately responsible that cost?

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: When it comes to surveying lands, it is actually the municipality's responsibility, not the department's. I am hoping that, within three years, it will be done, but again, it's about people working together. If they are not going to be able to work together, that is our challenge. Right now, from my understanding in talking with the YK Dene chiefs and the Mayor of Yellowknife, people are working together. They are working to come up with an agreement.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I respect that, and I know that land issues in the Northwest Territories are extremely complicated and that they can often get held up because they get tied into other, much larger, reconciliation issues. My final question is: can the Minister of Lands update me to any conversations that are ongoing with the North Slave Metis Alliance in regard to this transfer? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: From my understanding, there have not been any conversations yet with the North Slave Metis, but we will confirm with the department and the city and get back to the Member. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Oral questions. Item 8, written questions. Item 9, returns to written questions. Item 10, replies to Commissioner's address. Item 11, petitions. Item 12, reports of committees on the review of bills. Item 13, reports of standing and special committees. Item 14, tabling of documents. Minister responsible for the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation.

Tabling of Documents

TABLED DOCUMENT 121-19(2): NORTHWEST TERRITORIES HOUSING CORPORATION 2020-21 CONSOLIDATED OPERATING BUDGET

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following document: Northwest Territories Housing Corporation 2020-2021 Consolidated Operating Budget. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Tabling of documents. Item 15, notices of motion. Item 16, motions. Item 17, notices of motion for the first reading of billings. 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: Bill 6, An Act to Amend the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act; and Tabled Document 30-19(2), Main estimates 2020-2021, the Department of Infrastructure, with the Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes in the chair.

Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): I now call Committee of the Whole to order. What is the wish of committee, Mr. Norn?

MR. NORN: Marsi cho, Madam Chair. Committee wishes to consider Tabled Document 30-19(2), Main Estimates, Department of Infrastructure; and also further, Madam Chair, we wish to consider Bill 6, An Act to Amend the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Mr. Norn. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, committee. We will have a short recess and will

resume with where we left off with Infrastructure, regional operations.

---SHORT RECESS

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): All right, committee. I am going to call committee back to order. Committee, we have agreed to consider Tabled Document 30-19(2), Main Estimates 2020-2021. We were at the Department of Infrastructure, and we were going to start regional operations. Does the Minister wish to bring witnesses to the House?

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

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Sergeant-at-Arms, please escort the witnesses into the Chamber. Would the Minister please introduce her witnesses?

HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. On everyone's left if we are looking at the back of the room is Dr. Joe Dragon, my deputy minister, and on his left, our right, is Mr. Gary Brennan, director of corporate services. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Minister. All right. We will start with regional operations, beginning on page 239, with information items up to page 242. Questions. Did I miss something? There are no questions. Do we have questions? Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. Are we also dealing with the revolving fund pages that follow that? Thanks, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): We are dealing with pages 239 to 242, and then we will go on to the next following sections, technology service, after, so up to 242 right now, regional operations. Member for Yellowknife North.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I am just looking at the line item "highway operations," \$80 million. Can I get a sense what that money is for? Is that all of our road maintenance costs, or does that also show up in the capital budget? If I could get a sense of which part of road maintenance is in this budget versus capital? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY: Excuse me, Madam Chair. I am a bit lost. Are we still on page 240?

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): [Microphone turned off]

HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY: Okay. [Microphone turned off] ...his question. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Member, can you please repeat your question?

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I am looking at the item "highway operations" specifically, \$80 million, and I would like to get a sense of what this line item entails and where exactly road maintenance falls within the operations budget versus the capital budget. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. I think this is one that I will ask Dr. Dragon to answer.

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

DR. DRAGON: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes, this allotment of \$80 million is looking at all of our highway operations across the regions. Looking at a number of activities that we have within that program detail would look at resurfacing, bridge rehabilitation, culvert repairs, that type of activity that goes right across the Territory. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I understand there is bridge rehabilitation and then if we need a brand-new bridge that would be in capital. I get that this \$80 million covers road resurfacing, but if we go to the capital budget, there are a number of existing kind of infrastructure projects related to highways. I was hoping the Minister or her deputy minister could just help me flesh out why some road maintenance ends up in operations and others end up in capital. Ultimately, I'm looking to get a sense of how much we spend maintaining our highways. 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 this question, thank you.

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

DR. DRAGON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just wanted to let the committee know that, in terms of this, anything above \$50,000 that's not included in terms of our capital, we have a very detailed list of

all the activities that we have across the North going from all the different highways. It's quite a bit of detail to be able to do here, but more than willing to provide that to the Member because it's two pages of very detailed work on all of the activity that we're doing on all the major highways. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yeah, I recognize perhaps the level of detail. I'm looking forward to breaking down this \$80 million figure and looking at what is in capital is a bit too much to ask right now. If I could have the department provide it to me? Ultimately, I'm looking to try and get a sense, I know we've done some of this capital planning, but how much we currently spend on road maintenance, whether that is in per mile and what the future looks like for our road maintenance. I know a number of our highways are in really significant need of repair. I don't believe this \$80 million comes anywhere close to maintaining them. I guess I just want to get a report, if I could, from the department on how much we spend on road maintenance and what the future of our ability to continue to maintain our highways looks like. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. We actually do have an annual report that is available on the website, but I will commit to giving the Member a more fulsome briefing on our highways. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. JOHNSON: No further questions, Madam Chair. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Are there questions related to regional operations? Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. I've got a couple of questions about some line items on page 240. Maybe I'll just start with utilities. Back in 2018-2019 there was \$38 million for utilities, and now, it's down to \$35 million. Can somebody tell me why that bounces around a bit? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. The difference in the utilities there is: we've seen the new Stanton Territorial Hospital utilities. It was originally an estimate. We had no other

building in the North to compare it to. Now, we have actuals, so that's some of the change. We have \$250,000 of marine utilities. We also have a sunsetting, not the right word, but for the Lafferty ferry upgrade, we're spending less there on utilities, now.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. The line before that, travel. I know this is a big department. I guess people are travelling all over the place, but \$850,000 for travel. What kind of travel are we talking about there? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. There would be travel around to do different types of maintenance, I would imagine, between communities if we have people in regional centres that need to go out to something specific in a smaller community. However, I think that I would like to pass this to Dr. Dragon to just explain more fulsomely why we are travelling so much in the Department of Infrastructure. Thank you.

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

DR. DRAGON: Thank you, Madam Chair. In looking at our travel budget, we look at monies that are transferred here. We had a seasonal project officer transfer so transferring that money, that was one, that was for \$22,000 in terms of the difference. We also have, from time to time, increased travel due to activities in certain regions. In this case, we had increased travel in the Deh Cho region that had a lot of our teams going into that region based on projects that were identified there. That's it. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. Okay. I'm just trying to get a sense of this. Is this money for regional staff to travel or is headquarters included in this? Is this related to the maintenance of facilities or, say, if we have a capital project and someone needs to go out and check to see what is happening, travel related to that? Does that come out of this project? What does it really cover? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. There would be definitely lots of different

types of travel involved. I think I will go to Mr. Brennan for a more fulsome response. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Minister. Mr. Brennan.

MR. BRENNAN: Thank you, Madam Chair. Some of the travel line item here would be for all of the regional staff for operation maintenance purposes. It includes building maintenance, highway maintenance, those types of work, and would not include any capital expenditures. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Mr. Brennan. I'll move on to Member for Kam Lake.

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I'm just looking at contract services under the expenditure category of regional operations. I'm wondering if the Minister can give us an idea of what type of contracts would come out of this for a main estimate type budget for regional operations? Thank you.

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

HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. The contract services include things like leases and maintenance for the long-term care facility, Highway No. 8 maintenance, the seasoned project officer transfer that was already referred to. The Wek'eezhii land use planning office, the Norman Wells Health Centre maintenance. Highway No. 8 maintenance, we've seen some decreases there. We've seen a decrease in the Inuvik-Tuktoyaktuk Highway operations and maintenance as well as a decrease in marine maintenance. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Just looking at this line item and the substantial value of \$66 million, I'm wondering how much of that ends up going to northern companies and staying in the North when we're hiring people to either do that maintenance or we're paying companies for office leases and such. Thank you.

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

HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. I don't have that percentage in front of me. I will check with my team to see if they do have that. Dr. Dragon does indicate he does. Thank you.

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

DR. DRAGON: Thank you, Madam Chair. In the 2019-2020 fiscal year the GNWT awarded 45 contracts valued at \$95 million for construction and maintenance and A and E services. Of those, 87 percent were to northern businesses. One of the things that we're looking into right now in the discussions around procurement and the procurement review is: how do we publish those numbers effectively to make sure that we are looking at northern businesses, but also what do we do with our BIP clients and being able to see metrics so we're able to effectively look at all the different parts of contracts and where are they coming from. Are they coming from the North? Are we having southern companies? Some of the things that we're looking at right now. Again, for the 2019-2020 fiscal year, we're looking at about 87 percent of those contracts going to northern businesses. Six of those contracts or 13 percent were awarded to southern firms. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Dr. Dragon. Member for Kam Lake.

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much. I think I'm crossing over to my same line of questioning as last time now, so I'm going to be careful. We talked last time about whether 87 percent went to northern companies, but did 87 percent actually end up staying in the North and benefiting northern workers? I just want to reiterate that that's my concern with that one. The definition of a northern company is a concern. Also, what is actually the benefit retention to the Northwest Territories? Thank you.

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

HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. As we all stated, this is a priority to have this become a more meaningful use of our procurement dollars to retain them in the North, so that is part of the focus and what I have directed the department to do. We are going to be coming back to the AOC with a procurement presentation and the conversation around the plans going forward for input on how we can do procurement better. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just want to start off with the ferries. Most of the ferries are up there in age, and I know that we're spending money to keep them up to standards. I'm just wondering if the department is looking at, just on a cost basis, if it's worth to continue doing repairs and trying to keep them up to standard for Transport Canada, or are we going to be looking at

possibly building new ones for the ferry system? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. As any department would have, we do have a preventative maintenance program, an asset program, where we would be looking at items like the ferries and others to determine if they are near the end of their useful life, and whether or not replacement would make sense than continuing to retrofit. Currently, we're going to be applying for funding under our low carbon energy efficiency fund. I think I've got that right, but the LCEF, and we'll be looking for our money there to work on our ferries and potentially purchase new ones. Thank you.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just want to move over here to marine operations, which I'm not sure if MTS is part of that. Anyways, what I'd like to comment on here is: in Hay River, a good portion of the operation is there. The facility is there, and ships are there. One of the problems we run into is the access out of the harbour. I'm wondering if there is any consideration given by the department to take a look at possibly dredging that harbour to reduce any cost associated with damage to the vessels because I know that this spring, I think MTS set one, there's one boat that start sailing out of the harbour. I wasn't sure if the department was trying to save money because it was unmanned, but they were able to bring it back. If it wasn't for the sandbars out there, it might have gone out a little further. Thank you.

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

HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. That does not include MTS. It's its own revolving fund, so that is the ferries. We do have an application in under the Oceans Protection Plan to dredge the harbour, so we're waiting for a word back from the federal government if we were successful in that funding. Thank you.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. Back to the ferries, I know, looking through some of the documentation, that we've been able to reduce the cost of operating by swapping out engines with a different brand and that. Are we looking at doing that for all of them? If we are, are we looking to making sure that we're buying the same brand for each of them so that, in terms of parts and

maintenance, we're not having to keep parts for this brand, parts for that brand? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. We're always looking at ways that we can better optimize. I think the Member's points are very good. Why buy five types of engines that we would then need five different types of people to service or parts for? Your comments are noted. Definitely. If my department is not already thinking along those lines, then we'll definitely be having a conversation afterwards that they should be. I would assume they are. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just want to go to highway operations. I'm thinking about Highway No. 1 from the border into Enterprise. There's no shoulders on that highway. I'm wondering if the department is looking at widening that portion to ensure that we have a highway that's safe and allows the amount of traffic that goes over it, to go over it safely. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. It definitely depends on the different types of risk, so each section of the highway is evaluated for those types of risk. I think I'm going to ask Dr. Dragon to just provide whether or not the Highway No. 1 in that specific area is coming up on our list. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

DR. DRAGON: Thanks, Madam Chair. The Minister is very much correct in terms of looking at all the different highways and looking at priorities on those highways. Right now, identified for Highway No. 1, we have chip seal resurfacing from kilometre zero to 70, and kilometre 135 to 170, looking at doing that. We're also in Highway No. 1, looking at the Trout River Bridge rehabilitation, and that's at kilometre 324, as well as culvert repair that we have at kilometre 510. Again, I've noted the widening as an opportunity for future work, but right now, that's the priority that we have set for Highway 1. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just want to move onto road licensing and safety. Right now, with dealing with COVID, it seems like the staff that looks after the highway system, they are basically managing the border. Are we going to be putting them back onto the highways and doing inspections of vehicles that are going over the highway, big trucks and that? I know that there have been instances and concern about speeding now that trucks know that there's no enforcement. I'm just wondering what's happening with that? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. As they are at the checkpoint, they are actually kind of somewhat inspecting vehicles as they go by them. I would imagine they're looking for any deficiencies as they sit at the checkpoint. Maybe not. I saw you shake your head "no." I do believe the idea is that we would not be sacrificing highway enforcement for the people at the borders. We still have our shifts covered for the highways. If people are speeding, that's also an RCMP issue. We would definitely be communicating if we're hearing instances of that to the police. I'm just going to ask Dr. Dragon if he has anything to add to that. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

DR. DRAGON: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes. In looking at responding to COVID and getting the borders up really quickly, we had a lot of our HTOs, highway transportation officers, that were assigned to those checkpoints. Initially, I would say, we were trying to just focus in on that. What we've been able to do now is really move towards kind of a hybrid system, so having some of our inspections that are taking place at the border. It's a little bit tricky now that we've moved the border operation to right at the border versus Enterprise. We look at operations at Enterprise picking up. It also depends on region and where we have them coming in from B.C. and where we have them coming in from the Yukon. The one thing I would say about this line item: it's very much our road licensing system. This is where we would renew our licences, our registrations, that sort of thing, not necessarily our HTO officers. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just want to go back to the ferries for a minute. The Johnny Berens, that one, it looks like it should probably be replaced, and the Abraham Francis. Is there any consideration or any work done to bring

that up to 64,000 kilograms? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. That is a pretty specific question, so I think I will pass that one on to Dr. Dragon, as well. Thank you.

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

DR. DRAGON: Thank you, Madam Chair. We have four ferries that we currently run. One of them, we do own forces. The other three are done by contractors. A lot of times, we look at, again, very much a regulated activity by Transport Canada. When we look at various upgrades to that, that system, we look right across the board in trying to maximize. As the Minister mentioned, we are trying to access some funds from the CLF fund that would allow us to upgrade. However, we have not heard yet whether or not we have been successful in that. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Dr. Dragon. I will move on to the Member for Thebacha.

MS. MARTSELOS: Thank you, Madam Chair. On page 240, I am just wondering about the allocations for the airport operations. I have always been interested in airports lately, and I guess I was wondering if I can get a detailed allocation for airport operations.

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

HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. If you would like a breakdown, a budget breakdown of the airport operations, we are going to have to provide that as a return, if that is okay with the Member. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MS. MARTSELOS: Another line that I am interested in is the regional operations, the leases, the \$29,191,000. I am wondering if I can get a breakdown, a detailed breakdown of those.

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

HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. All of our leases are office space leases, all those prices, so they are those costs. They are in all the different regional communities, the Yellowknife area, your community, as well. We will provide a breakdown of those by each community,

if that is what the Member would like. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MS. MARTSELOS: The other thing that I am interested in is the regional projects. What does the \$2,951,000 entail?

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

HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. Actually, sorry, Madam Chair. I am going to pass this one over to Dr. Dragon, as well. Thank you.

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

DR. DRAGON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I am going to just give you the money that is changing from the 2019-2020 mains to the 2020-2021 mains. For regional projects, mainly that increase is for collective agreement wage increases, but I would turn it over to Mr. Brennan to be able to go through that in detail. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Dr. Dragon. Mr. Brennan.

MR. BRENNAN: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes, so the regional projects line item is essentially the money that is spent in the regions by staff working in the regions, building maintenance and other minor projects that do not fit the capital definition per our Financial Administration Act. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Mr. Brennan. Member for Thebacha.

MS. MARTSELOS: I could not hear him. Could he speak loud and clear so I could just hear what he said? Please, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Mr. Brennan, can you repeat yourself?

MR. BRENNAN: Okay, Madam Chair. I will try to speak louder. Regional projects is the money that is allocated to the regions for -- higher? Okay. It's for building maintenance and other small projects in the region.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): [Microphone turned off] ...the earpiece switch, you will be able to hear him. All right. Sorry for cutting you off, Mr. Brennan. Let's try this one more time.

MR. BRENNAN: Okay. Can you hear me now? All right. Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes. The regional projects budget is again a regional budget allocated

to the maintenance staff in the regions, to the minor projects on buildings and other items. It's for work that does not meet the capital definition as per the Financial Administration Act. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Mr. Brennan. Member for Thebacha.

MS. MARTSELOS: Madam Chair, so it's more discretionary I take it?

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

HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. It would definitely be dependent on each office and what was needed at the office. I do believe that, under certain amounts, there would be regional authorities that could go ahead and do a small project without having to escalate it up the chain, but there would be thresholds in which there would need to be senior and then, I would imagine, up to my level, ministerial approval. Because those are the smaller ones, I would imagine a lot of it is done regionally. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MS. MARTSELOS: I guess, Madam Chair, my concern with that would be making sure that it's neutral, objective, and making sure that the Aboriginal groups are contacted in this case, even at a regional level or at a community level because many times, a lot of the groups are looking for extra employment and opportunities. I would like to make sure that the department takes that into consideration when this happens because it's really important that we include everyone. Inclusiveness is extremely important, Madam Chair.

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

HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. I commit to the Member to have that conversation with each of my regional offices, to re-emphasize the direction I have given to the deputy minister to maximize and utilize northern and Indigenous businesses more. As well, we will have that procurement review and input from you on that so that we can make these changes and make sure we are doing better. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MS. MARTSELOS: The other one I want to just ask a further question on is kind of on the same lines as one of my colleagues asked, Madam Chair. That is the \$66,444,000, the contract services. It was stated that 87 percent of it went to Northerners. The

big list that we got on one of our documents, there was a lot of businesses on there that are BIP, but I would not consider them northern, myself, if they are not owners in the Northwest Territories. I am just wondering: how is 87 percent quite possible? Like, I want to make sure because there is a concern about northern content. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. I agree. I definitely have had a lot of conversations over the last eight months, with you included, about better maximizing and ensuring that people are not saying one thing and doing another, so again I commit to the Member that this is going to change in my department and that we are going to ensure that more northern and Indigenous businesses are winning contracts and working, through COVID-19 and beyond. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MS. MARTSELOS: [Microphone turned off] ...questions, Madam Chair. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): I will move on to, then, Member for Nunakput.

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. No. Just a question in regard to: I brought up a Member's statement this week in regard to the Sachs Harbour Airport and the situation that there is too much saturation in the community to land small aircraft for medevac planes and only allowed Twin Otters with thunder tires, which the airline does not have at this time. They are working towards getting a plane up there to service the community. Where does that fall in under 2018 main estimates? It was put in there, and then why hasn't it been done, or what is the plan coming to get this situation for Sachs Harbour sorted out? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. The Sachs Harbour, the drainage improvements are actually under the capital budget, so they will be addressed there. As I mentioned in the House yesterday, we do have the excavator coming this summer to do the work, but I believe that's all under our capital budget. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. There must be an excavator in the communities. Why are we having to wait this long? What could we do in the interim for the safety of the community of Sachs Harbour to try to get that runway opened up, or is the department going to be helping the airline for the \$58,000 a month to bring that aircraft into the community? It's not the airline's fault; it's our government in regard to not providing adequate runway service to the community. Where does that fall under? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. It's my understanding they are doing snow removal right now on the runway so that the planes can land. It is under our climate change adaptation strategy to deal with some of these airport drainage issues. How about I will commit, as well, to the Member to have a discussion about that particular airport after? Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Minister. We will move on to the Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

MR. NORN: Thank you, Madam Chair. I have a couple of questions. One of the things that kind of stood out for me was the line item on amortization. For 2021, it's at \$58.4 million. I looked through the entire book just to make sure, and it's quite high; it's almost pushing half of the entire GNWT's expenditures. I'm just wondering why that is. I'll start with that, and then we'll keep on going. Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. Amortization is quite an accounting term, so I think I'll pass this off to Mr. Brennan and remind him to speak up when he answers. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Minister. Mr. Brennan.

MR. BRENNAN: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes. Amortization, I'll try to use some terms that are not too accountant-ese for you and for me. When we put an asset into service, a capital asset, it has a useful life of, say, 20 years, and that asset is depreciated over those 20 years. The amortization shows up every year, and it is representative of how many assets we put into service. It gets charged over the life of the asset. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. NORN: Marsi cho, Madam Chair. I'm glad there was a little bit of clarification, because my next question was: if you had to explain the accounting term to an elder, how would you do that? I guess you kind of caught a little bit of it. Thank you for that explanation. Why is this amortization for this department so high in relation to other departments? Marsi cho.

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

HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. I would believe that has to do with just the sheer size of the Department of Infrastructure and the number of assets that we do manage. We have a lot of the GNWT buildings for other client departments. We have the roads. We have airports. Everything sort of tangible or a lot of tangible things fall under the Department of Infrastructure compared to, say, Finance, which maybe doesn't have as much brick and mortar as we do. Thank you.

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

MR. NORN: Marsi cho, Madam Chair. Just to clarify, those assets could be, like you mentioned, buildings, equipment, and those sorts of items. Correct? Marsi cho.

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

HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes, that is correct. Thank you.

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

MR. NORN: Moving along, are we doing page 241? We are? Band council subsidized leases. Madam Chair, can the Minister just describe what Indigenous groups this would be applicable for, what group this applies to? Marsi cho.

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

HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. I don't have the group names in front of me, and I will pass that off in a second. I just wanted to state that the Department of Infrastructure no longer has any agreements with land councils for subsidized leases, so the practice has been discontinued. A submission has to be prepared to reduce the Infrastructure lease budget by \$140,000. The accounting offset is included in revenue, so that's why it's showing up. After this, it will no longer be involved in our budget. Thank you, Madam Chair. Sorry, I want to just pass to Dr. Dragon. He can tell us which ones those entail.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Dr. Dragon.

DR. DRAGON: Thanks, Madam Chair. Unfortunately, I don't have that information with me, but the Minister is correct. We are no longer providing that service, so we're actually moving it out of the books. My apologies for not bringing it today. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. NORN: Marsi cho, Madam Chair. Just so I have my head wrapped around this, you're saying this is discontinued, so this assistance won't be available to whatever band that this help was meant for, Madam Chair?

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

HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. I believe there were agreements in place that had end dates, and that's why these have ended. I wouldn't be able to tell you what the prior Minister reasoning was of that, but I do commit to coming back to the Member and finding that information and providing it. Thank you.

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

MR. NORN: Marsi cho. That would be much appreciated. I have nothing further.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): All right. Are there any further questions under regional operations? Member for Deh Cho.

MR. BONNETROUGE: Mahsi, Madam Chair. Under marine operations, we have resupply to the communities. There is the Mackenzie River communities, so I imagine they are serviced from the Port of Hay River. For the Beaufort-Delta, I'm not certain if they are serviced from Hay River or else the resupply is from Inuvik. Can you just clarify that? At the same time, too, whether we're seeing an increase in the resupply cargo? Mahsi.

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

HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. The marine operations listed here are the ferries only. The MTS has its own revolving fund, and it does have its own separate budget. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Minister. I think we will be getting to that in the next section, MTS. Sorry. Member for Deh Cho.

MR. BONNETROUGE: Sorry. I'm just wondering about capital projects, whether that's in the section, too.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): No, capital projects are not. We're just doing operation budget. Member for Deh Cho, do you have questions on the regional operations?

MR. BONNETROUGE: [Microphone turned off] ...marine operations. The Marine Training Centre, I was hearing about it. I'm not sure where the centre really is located and whether it is still operational and if you are getting a high attendance there. If not, would we consider southern students to fill any empty seats? Mahsi.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Just to be clear, I think that would be under MTS.

HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY: It is.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): All right. Anything related to MTS, we'll speak to it once we're done this.

MR. BONNETROUGE: [Microphone turned off]

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member for Deh Cho. I'll put you on the list first when we get to the next. Are there further questions in relation to regional operations on pages 239 to 242? Seeing that there are no further questions, please turn to page 240. Infrastructure, regional operations, operations expenditure summary, 2020-2021 Main Estimates, \$210,146,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): All right. Now, we will move on, starting on page 243, and I'll read off the title. If people have questions to that, once we get to it. The first one is on page 243-244, technology service centre. Are there questions related to that? No questions. Moving on, Public Stores Revolving Fund on page 245. If there are no questions on that, I will move on to page 246, Petroleum Products Revolving Fund. Questions in relation to that? Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. If you look at the bottom of the page itself, this fund is in a deficit of a lot of money. What is going on? Why does this fund have such a large accumulated deficit, \$1 million? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. That has to do with the fuel delivery issues of a few years back. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. If I go back to 2018-2019, it is still at an \$850,000 deficit. I'm trying to remember; was that after the fuel delivery problem? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. I do believe that it is still an impact of the missed year and having to fly fuel in. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. If I understand it, the purpose of this was to -- I'm just looking at the top of the page, of course, as well -- try to stabilize the price of fuel in communities and so on. Right now, at one point, you could take a barrel of oil and somebody would pay you \$37 to actually take it away. How do we use this fund in a way that tries to stabilize the price for our communities and takes advantage of when oil was really low there for a while? Are we that nimble or quick that we could actually use this money in a way to bring down the cost of fuel in our communities? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. The fund was set up through the Revolving Funds Act to provide working capital to finance the inventory, the accounts receivable, and the operating expenses required for the distribution of petroleum products. The idea is that the fund would then stabilize prices for the communities. It can significantly fluctuate, so by providing these flexibilities for these pricing guidelines approved by the financial management board and the ability to seek approval for pricing outside the guidelines, in the event of extreme or unforeseen changes in the cost, that's how we end up stabilizing the prices. The variance between the budget from which the components of the fuel prices are charged are based on the actual results. That's why we see a difference there. I am just going to ask if Dr. Dragon has anything that he would like to add to that. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

DR. DRAGON: Thanks, Madam Chair. Yes, in looking at this revolving fund, we purchased approximately 35 million litres of fuel each year. Based on that, we look at how do we transport

them, either by marine, which is tug and barge -- that's about 17 million litres of fuel -- and transferring by road, which is tanker truck, so around 14 to 17 million litres of fuel. Again, looking at this fund, we are not trying to make any money off the fund. We are just trying to deliver that fuel and provide it for resupply into the 16 communities that are served by the petroleum products program.

As we look at the price, and in the last session that we had, looking at the price that we buy fuel, typically, we purchase the fuel, it comes in, and then we deliver it all through the North. We actually have to recover that cost of fuel when it was bought at that time. As the Member had mentioned, now we have a reduced price. We would look at buying prices now, at this new price, but until we are able to find that equilibrium of being able to lessen the amount of fuel prices, we are currently working with the Department of Finance to see what options we have in order to take advantage of that. It is something that this group within the fuel division looks at all the time of how we reduce the cost of this fuel to taxpayers because we not only resupply those communities, but we also resupply NTPC and all of the fuel that they have in those communities. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. I am just trying to figure this out. The day when Texas crude went to negative \$37 a barrel, could we actually buy enough on the stock market so that we could give away fuel in the communities? Could we bulk purchase that far in advance? Can we store the stuff somewhere? I have no sense of how this actually works. If the witnesses need to go back and get somebody else to help them answer that, I am fine with getting an answer later. Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. We are currently looking to improve our volume, our capacity of storage for fuel, and we have made some applications for funding for that. I will commit to coming back to the Member with some more information at a later time. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Minister. Are there any further questions on the Petroleum Products Revolving Fund? Member for Hay River South.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just going off of what Kevin was saying: what analysis was completed with respect to purchasing the petroleum products at the best possible price?

Have we looked at not only taking the fuel down the Mackenzie, but also coming around the coast? I think we talked about rack price before, and I think that price there can go anywhere, depends where you're buying it, from 15 cents up to whatever. I am just wondering: what analysis and how much work did this department actually put into it? Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member for Hay River South. Please talk with either the Member's riding or last name. Minister.

HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. We are very hampered, at times, with our ability to be able to just go and purchase fuel when it is at its cheapest. That would be due to things, like I said, like storage capacity, as well. We have very specific times in which we need to be able to do our resupply. It does make a bit of a difference about when we can go ahead and purchase that fuel. As for your other questions about how much analysis has been done and whether or not alternate routes have been explored, I would have to come back to you with that information. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: I'm good.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Any other questions on Petroleum Products Revolving Act? If not, moving on to Marine Transport Service Revolving Fund, and I will give the floor to the Member for Deh Cho.

MR. BONNETROUGE: Did we switch pages already? Okay. Getting back to my question, we have a resupply down the Mackenzie Valley for the Mackenzie Valley communities that don't have the road system in the summer months. I know that they are being serviced from the Hay River port with the tugs and barges. The Beaufort-Delta, which is up in the Arctic Ocean communities, my question there was: are they being resupplied from the port in Inuvik? I'm wondering the frequency of the deliveries during the summer months, whether we're increasing in the resupply and the resupply of cargo. I guess I'll start with those ones. Mahsi.

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

HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. I don't know, specifically, myself, off the top of my head whether or not the resupply of the Beaufort-Delta is from the ocean or whether it's up the Mackenzie. I believe it's up the Mackenzie, but I'm going to ask Dr. Dragon to clarify.

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

DR. DRAGON: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes. Right now, in terms of the resupply, we've been coming up through Hay River and into all the communities going up all the way up to Inuvik. We are looking at opportunities right now, and it speaks to the question of "Have we looked at other opportunities?" We have in terms of our team looking at where we can purchase fuel. Very important as we look at the purchasing of fuel, making sure that we have the right quality of fuel, and in terms of timing and when we get it into these ports. We have a full sailing schedule that goes from Hay River and then all the way to all those communities up in the North that are available online. We can provide it to the Member, as well. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. BONNETROUGE: Thanks for that. To me, it seems like it's quite the long trip up the Mackenzie River. There are lots of hours in there, and there is a lot of fuel being burned. I thought we may have learned our lessons from, was it the 2018 fiasco with the fuel resupply? There were lots of comments that it's probably more prudent to have a resupply set setup in Inuvik to supply the Beaufort-Delta communities for fuel and cargo. I'm wondering what the department's thoughts are on that. Mahsi.

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

HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. Within the department we are always looking to better optimise our services. I know that the opening of the Arctic Ocean, the Arctic passage is a relatively new thing. There are concerns about shipping through the Arctic, as well. It's definitely something that I know we'll be looking at going forward, and we note the Member's comments. As well, with my other hat on, it's not that department, but ITI is exploring LNG and such within the Beaufort-Delta. My hope is, one day, we will not be sending fuel up the Mackenzie to the Beaufort-Delta. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. BONNETROUGE: I look forward to that report tomorrow.

--- Laughter

Okay. We'll leave that there. It's in the capable hands of the Minister and her staff. That's something I would really, really want to have

considered. It saves a lot of wear and tear and everything all around. It could be beneficial in savings in the future. The Marine Training Centre, I'm not sure if that one is in Fort Smith or Hay River. I'm wondering if it's being used to full capacity with people from the North, and if not, would we look at accepting students from the South? That's all I have on that one, Mahsi.

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

HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. The Marine Training Centre is in Hay River. It's that one there. I just wanted to state that we're not training at the moment because of the COVID situation. It is a training centre for Northerners to create jobs and economic opportunities to support our fisheries and our economic diversification. We've had about 840 various certificate courses offered there in Hay River, Inuvik, and Tuktoyaktuk. Two hundred and fifty-eight students attended the courses in 2018-2019. Five programs had begun as of September 1, 2019, before we had COVID. Approximately 500 Transport Canada certificates have been issued and 350 other certificates, such as those issued by Industry Canada. During the 2019 sailing, six graduates took deckhand positions with the MTS tugboats, four on the operational tugboats and two on the Hay River. Four graduates also took work on the MTS supported Arctic Research Foundation vessel operation on Great Slave. We've had four graduates join the coast guard. Two graduates working on the local ships and two had an opportunity to sail on the ice breakers. At this time, I believe, the centre has actually been doing fairly well from an enrollment standpoint. However, if we were to find that we weren't having Northerners taking those positions I don't see why we wouldn't offer that opportunity to Southerners. That always gets us more people in the North and perhaps they stay, and we get more transfer payments. Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

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

MR. BONNETROUGE: No further questions.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. The first question I have is with respect to the charters. I noticed that, in 2018-2019, we had a revenue of just over \$1 million with expenses of around \$1.2 million. Now, in 2020-2021 estimates, we're looking at a revenue of \$200,000, and we're looking at charter costs of \$422,000. Can you explain to me that difference and maybe give a little

background on the charters? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. I think I'll pass this over to Mr. Brennan to answer. Thank you very much.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Minister. Mr. Brennan.

MR. BRENNAN: Thank you, Madam Chair. In terms of the charters themselves, that's when someone essentially leases a vessel. If someone wants a private vessel for whatever work they are intending to do, that's what we consider to be a charter. We charge them back based on a daily rate which includes costs of the vessel and the staffing of the vessel, as well. In terms of the numbers the 2020-2021 budget for charters is based on the number of charters that we anticipate receiving in this current fiscal year, now. We don't anticipate many charters this year. Therefore, the number is down, now. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. We're showing a revenue of \$200,000, but expenditures for those charters is \$422,000. We're losing a lot more than we're making unless I'm looking at something wrong. Thank you.

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

HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. I believe what he's saying is the charter costs are what they label when they do work on other peoples' boats, whereas the charter revenue is the money we receive to move goods around. Perhaps I would suggest that charter costs, under expenditures, is a poorly named item. It would probably be better to be "work on others," if that is my understanding from what Mr. Brennan has said. He's nodding his head "yes." Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. Talking about other items, what do the other items entail? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. The increase there is actually the money that we've gotten from the Oceans Protection Plan for

the four double-hulled barges. I believe that would be any revenues that we have received when we apply on any sorts of funding that we'd be looking for to do specific, either purchasing or other projects. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you for bringing up the double-hulled barges. Can you tell me whether that they are on budget? What the cost to build them and the cost to get them into Canada? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. As I mentioned in the House yesterday, they are on time. They will be delivered in August. Sorry. They were \$29 million. Maybe I will just ask Dr. Dragon to just fill in a little bit more of the information. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

DR. DRAGON: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes. That funding was \$29 million. That was 75 percent provided by the Ocean Protection Plan. They are on schedule and on budget. They are scheduled to arrive in Tuktoyaktuk between August 12th and 15th, and to this date, we get weekly updates from the manufacturer. Everything is on schedule as planned. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. With respect to these double-hulled barges, are they going to be used on the Mackenzie River, or are they only for ocean-going? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

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

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

DR. DRAGON: Thanks, Madam Chair. Our goal is to have the majority of our fleet as actual double-hulled barges. We have two double-hulled pre-owned barges that were purchased in 2017. We have four new double-hulled barges that will come online in 2020. We are also doing conversions right now, two new 1500-series conversions. It will allow us to have eight double-hulled barges that we will be utilizing throughout the northern environment. I

think it's one thing to be able to say you're delivering a product that, if we were to get in trouble on one of the ecosystems that we're currently travelling on, we could have a real issue there. I think, again, what we've been trying to do is make sure that all of our barging systems will be double-hulled. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. With double-hulled barges, are you going to be able to, with respect to petroleum products, haul the same volume as you would with non-double-hulled barges? I'm thinking here that, if you can't, that may increase the cost of petroleum products in the communities. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. I don't believe that the double-hulled barges are any lesser in volume than the ones that we already had. If anything, I do believe they are perhaps larger volumes. I see Mr. Brennan shaking his head "yes," so there is no reduced capacity with the new barges. Thank you.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. That takes into account lower water levels? Because my understanding is that, with double-hulled barges, you're going to have maybe two feet, maybe a little bit more, drawn. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. I would hope that, when the planning study was done in the former Minister's department, they did, in fact, look at water levels in the Mackenzie, as we have had a couple of years now of truncated shipping or barging seasons because of the low levels. I would assume that has been done as part of the studies when the purchases were made. I think that they are comparable, according to Dr. Dragon, so I don't believe that there should be an issue with the lower water levels. I can commit to coming back to you with a written answer on that. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. We're going to end up with some new barges. What are we doing about the vessels that tow the

barges? They are aging, as well. Have we looked at the cost of retrofits versus replacing them? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. Actually, part of that other cost is also to retrofit one of the tugboats under the federal funding the LCELF, the Low Carbon Economy Leadership Fund. As mentioned before, these would also have an asset management plan or a preventative maintenance plan where they would be looking at the life cycles of these assets and determining whether it is more cost effective to retrofit and continue to upgrade or to purchase new tugs. Yes, as part of the entire department's preventative maintenance program and asset management, they would be looking at the life cycles or lifetimes of the tugboats as well as the barges. Thank you.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just want to turn to MTC, now. Who actually owns that? Is that part of MTS? Is that part of this government, or are we in a joint venture with somebody from Nunavut? Can you just maybe elaborate on that? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes, we've entered a lease with the Nunavut Fisheries and Marine Training Consortium to establish the Marine Training Centre in Hay River. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. MTC is providing training to fishers for the Great Slave Lake. Are they hiring trainers who are familiar with inland fisheries and inland waters, or are they using trainers who are used to offshore fishing? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. We are using both. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: That's fine. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): All right. Are there any further questions on Marine Transport Service Revolving Fund? Seeing none, I will move on to the Infrastructure Yellowknife Airport Revolving Fund. Any questions? Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. I'd like to get an explanation of the growing accumulated surplus in this fund, which now stands, at the end of 2020-20201, at almost \$45 million. There was a lot of debate and discussion in setting this up as a revolving fund. I even voted against the bill because I think there was insufficient transparency and governance for this fund, stakeholder involvement, and so on. Why is the accumulated surplus going to be \$45 million at the end of this year? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. The surplus is to do capital improvements at the Yellowknife Airport. We are currently exploring a Yellowknife Airport plan to do upgrades to the terminal building, I believe, and other parts of the airport and the runway. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. Yes, I'm well aware of what the money is for. I want it out the door and being spent. I've been waiting for this 20-year capital plan for the airport for some time. Especially now, with the pandemic going on, here's an opportunity. Here's a pot of money that we could actually spend now to start doing some work at the airport. I know this is a complicated issue. People have been complaining about the lack of services, the line-ups, and so on, out of there for years. I know air transport is likely going to change and evolve with the pandemic, but to have a \$45-million surplus sitting there and not doing anything with it, this is not a good thing. When is this 20-year capital plan actually going to be finished? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. The true surplus of the Yellowknife Airport Revolving Fund is actually \$20 million. We do have a 20-year master plan, which is in draft discussion, but it does identify the capital needs of the airport, including the baggage handling area, the airfield lighting, runways, et cetera. Hopefully, we're going to be finalizing that plan. There are obviously going to have to be stakeholder inputs, as stated. It is a separate pot of money, a fund, a separate fund

than the rest of our projects, so it's not like I can take the \$40 million or whatever and put it into a building somewhere else. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. I'm not interested in having the money spent somewhere else. This was a big debate and discussion around setting this up in the first place that, if people were going to start paying fees to land and take off in Yellowknife, the money was supposed to stay in Yellowknife for the improvement of this airport. I still didn't get an answer: when is the 20-year capital fund going to be completed? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. As stated, the plan is now in draft and is working toward being finalized. When it is complete, I will share that with the Member. Thank you.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks for that clarification, the same answer as the last one. When is this money going to start moving out of the revolving fund and being spent on capital? Are we actually going to see any projects happening this summer at the airport? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. The airport plan was originally to be finalized this winter. However, this has not happened as a result of the department and others being on other projects, including on dealing with COVID. It is our hope that, early in this Assembly, we will be starting to move on the airport improvements. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. I don't think I got an answer to my question. Are there going to be any capital projects at the Yellowknife Airport this summer that start to draw down the surplus? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. I will pass this to Dr. Dragon. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

DR. DRAGON: Thank you, Madam Chair. The 20-year master plan, as the Minister mentioned, given we've run into COVID and dealing with that right now, one of the things to advise committee: we contracted a consulting firm that has been working with a number of different countries around the world, looking at market analysis, economic development, development of strategy of airports. We feel very well positioned to take advantage of this fund. This is going to be one that I think is going to be a really good news story kind of coming out of us actually bringing in these funds and having a targeted fund available to participate in any sort of program that the federal government will have having to do with airports. The Minister has been in a number of conversations with her colleagues about that.

I was just going to mention that we've done a lot of improvements to the Yellowknife Airport over the years when we talk about enhancements of the screening area, food and beverage services, looking a gate for mines that when they're coming out. We've had different things done, repairs to the south apron of the air terminal building. We also are looking at opportunities of cold-weather testing and looking at possible video development. We're hoping that that will be as a part of the 2020 Destination Canada aerospace brochure. We're also in discussions right now with the Korean aerospace industries with the hopes of hosting, possibly, a multi-year, cold-weather testing program for the new, light-armed helicopter. In addition, we're continuing to work with the Department of ITI to gather key data in preparation for marketing additional air service to and from Yellowknife. Finally, we're working towards gaining access to a program called Drives to better able to understand and put in an enforcement parking management of the short-term and long-term parking lots and the curtesy vehicle parking area. Just wanted to let committee know that I've asked my airport folks to see if they can do something about the guy that barks at you when you put your ticket in there. We're looking at that. Those are the initiatives that we're currently looking coming in the future before the master plan. We're really basing those on: we don't want to put more money into this airport if we're looking at doing a new airport, which we feel is necessary. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. I want to thank the deputy minister for the details that he provided there. I don't think I got an answer. Is any of this money going to be spent this summer for

capital improvements at the airport? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. I commit to getting back to the Member with that answer. Thank you.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Madam Chair, if I'm getting a bit frustrated, it's because I've raised this now probably for about three years in a row. I was here when this revolving fund was set up. I've seen the growth in this fund. I want the money spent. Yellowknifers deserve to have this money spent. Northerners deserve to have this money spent, especially at this time. Then I keep hearing that there's no plan. I can't even find out if any of this work is going to take place this summer. That's not a good place to be, Madam Chair. I hope that we're not going to be in the same place a year from now because I'll be back asking the exact same questions. If there is some frustration here, it's because I've asked the same questions three years in a row, and I would have thought that we would have been much farther ahead. If we're not going to spend this money, get rid of the fee and just run it the way that it was before. Thanks, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member. Does the Minister have any further comments?

HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. I can only speak for the year that I've been here. I'm sorry that the Member feels frustrated with this. There is a plan; it is being finalized. Once it is finalized, we will be moving forward on spending the money. I think that, particularly in light of where we are at in our situation and wanting to maximize our dollars, we have to make sure, when we do move forward, we're moving forward and spending the money in a good manner that maximizes benefits to Northerners. If we have to take a little bit more time in the post-COVID or during COVID to do so, I would rather my department did that. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Minister. Are there any further questions on the Yellowknife Airport Revolving Fund? Seeing none, we will move on to page 252, lease commitments. Any questions? Seeing no questions on lease commitments, we'll move to work performed on behalf of others. Any questions? Thank you, Members. Mr. Norn.

MR. NORN: Marsi cho, Madam Chair. I move that this committee defer further consideration of the

estimates for the Department of Infrastructure at this time. Mahsi cho, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Mr. Norn. The motion is in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

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

---Carried

Thank you, Minister, and thank you to the witnesses. Sergeant-at-Arms, you may escort the witnesses from the Chamber. We will take a short, five-minute.

---SHORT RECESS

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): I will now call Committee of the Whole to order. Committee, we have agreed to consider Bill 6, An Act to Amend the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act. I will ask the Member for Yellowknife North, the sponsor of the bill, to introduce it.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. Although this is a short piece of legislation, it is very much a historic legislation. I am pleased to provide opening comments on Bill 6, An Act to Amend the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act. Madam Chair, this bill will provide the Legislative Assembly authority to conduct all or a portion of our sittings by way of virtual means. The test for that will be in the hands of the Speaker, and we will sit virtually in exceptional circumstances.

Madam Chair, this bill was drafted in response to efforts to avoid face-to-face meetings of this House in a global pandemic, but its purpose is not limited to the current situation. Any number of natural disasters, travel restrictions, or territory-wide health and safety concerns could consider its use in the future. I want to say, for the record, that this legislation is not intended to provide Members with a convenient way to attend sessions of this House by virtual or remote means under normal circumstances. The default should always be that we attend our business in person, in this place, and in a public forum. The intention here is to provide the Speaker with another tool to ensure that the work of this place, including the passage of legislation, the approval of budgets, and the holding of the government to account, can continue, even under extraordinary circumstances. Madam Chair, this bill is about continuity of government in a time of crisis.

This bill authorizes a Member or a group of Members, with the Speaker's advance authorization, to participate in all or a portion of a

session by way of a conference call or a video conference. The Member participating in this fashion is included in the calculation of quorum for the Assembly and is considered to have attended the sitting day in question. When a Member is authorized to participate in one of these remote ways, their vote will be counted as if it were cast in person, Madam Chair.

I suspect that some of the details of this legislation and how it will operate, if enacted, will need to be fleshed out by the Standing Committee on Rules and Procedures in the days ahead, Madam Chair. The future remains very uncertain as to how this pandemic will play out. This legislation will provide us all the legal authority to meet by virtual means, in public, should it be required in the months and years ahead.

This concludes my opening remarks, Madam Chair, and I am happy to take any questions that Members may have.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member for Yellowknife North. Would you like to bring witnesses into the Chamber?

MR. JOHNSON: Yes, Madam Chair. I would like to bring in Tim Mercer, clerk of the Legislative Assembly, and Mike Reddy, director of legislation division.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Sergeant-at-Arms, please escort the witnesses into the Chamber. Member for Yellowknife North, will you please introduce your witnesses?

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'd like to introduce Tim Mercer, clerk of the Legislative Assembly, and Mike Reddy, director of legislation, seated to my left at the witness table.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Sorry. Could you repeat the last name?

MR. JOHNSON: Tim Mercer and Mike Reddy are the witnesses. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): I can't hear anything. Sorry. I've got Mr. Mercer.

MR. JOHNSON: And Mr. Reddy.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Mr. Reddy. Thank you. I will now open the floor to general comments on Bill 6. Member for Yellowknife Centre.

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Madam Chair. The Samara Centre for Democracy is a non-partisan think tank that is based in Ottawa, and it conducts research on strengthening democracy in Canada. Last week, the Samara Centre issued a report on how provincial and territorial legislatures are

adapting their work to the pandemic, and a key finding of theirs is that, "despite the rapid emergence of virtual parliaments throughout the world, few provincial and territorial legislatures have looked to technology to keep up with parliamentary business. Just three out of 13 legislatures in Canada have held virtual committee meetings, and only BC and Newfoundland and Labrador have authorized virtual sittings." The finding leads to a recommendation by the Samara Centre that virtual platforms should be embraced to enable legislative activity, and not only that, but participation by all Members, not just those who are in physical proximity to the Legislative Assembly building.

I bring this to your attention because I took part in a virtual news conference about this report and specifically talked about how the NWT has adapted. It's my analysis that we are well ahead here, by having virtual sittings of our standing committees since April. Videoconferencing has enabled us to speak to one another, if not to see one another. We have some people who are still only on phone access. As a matter of fact, as an aside, it has highlighted bandwidth issues in a number of communities, including Yellowknife, where people have struggled to stay online. All the same, we've made that effort. We've tried different platforms, and we are now able to include everyone in our standing committee meetings who wants to be there.

When we were discussing whether to return to this House in person, as a select few, or not at all, many of the Members were interested in a virtual sitting. I wasn't, especially, because of our technology issues, our bandwidth issues, but I do think that it's very important to set the legislative stage for this to happen when we get the digital issues resolved. I feel that we are well ahead with this piece of legislation, and I support it. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member. Are there other comments? Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. Yes, I, too, support the bill. After the House stopped our earlier sitting on March 16th, we had about one week off, but then we started to meet, at least as Regular MLAs, using different kinds of videoconferencing services. I think we found ways to make it work, and we got better as we went along, over the several weeks that we tried meeting virtually, at least as a committee. My preference would have been that we had attempted to do this sitting in that manner, as well, but this bill will help enable future Assemblies to have the availability of meeting by videoconferencing.

I think we still have a long way to go in terms of Internet access to the House. I've spoken about it

last week in the House, that we need to make sure that we have improved Internet access for all of our communities, including the remote ones, not just the ones that are next to or along the path of the Mackenzie Valley fibre link. It also means setting up distribution systems within those communities.

I'm happy to support this bill, but we also need to build improved Internet access across the Northwest Territories, and we need to go to the federal government, get the money to do it, and make that a priority. I do support the bill and leaving open the door for that kind of work to be done in the future by the Assembly itself. Of course, committees have the ability to set their own rules, and that's why committees were able to meet virtually over the last couple of months. Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

MR. NORN: Marsi cho, Madam Chair. When I first heard of this bill, the first thing that popped into my mind was you should always hope for the best and plan for the worst. I think, if a second wave for this COVID were to occur, this legislation would help with it; but, as the Member for Frame Lake did mention, it's important that we have really strong infrastructure in terms of Internet.

It brought up some concerns. Let's say, if I was visiting some constituents in Lutselk'e and, say, if I was staying at a bed and breakfast or at the Co-op and I wanted to go on the Internet, okay, we have a sitting that we need to go and I need to be seen and to do some committee meetings, or whatnot, or even theoretically have a session, it would not be good enough right now. Sure, we can use the phone. I'm not sure if that's going to be built into the wording, but I could probably get to that with my question. Those are some of the concerns that I have. I'm going to use my hands. Right now, what we're asking, the standard needs to be here, but for a lot of our small communities, it's much, much lower. We're right here. We need to bring our infrastructure in terms of Internet and communications up to where we need it to be so we can have proper communications if we're in the small communities. That's very, very important otherwise.

For me, like I said, it's all about parliamentary privilege. We need to be able to represent our communities properly and, if I was in, say, a community like Lutselk'e, it would be really difficult unless I'm on the phone and calling. I know that, in a lot of places, they build in authentication to prove who you are. I don't know if anybody can replicate my voice and impersonate me, but you know what I mean. There need to be those things kind of built

in. Those are just some of the things I'm thinking about on the fly. I guess my question is: will some of this wording be built in that, say, if I was on a telephone or on Internet, if it cut out, would there be something built in for me to represent my representatives over the phone? Marsi cho.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh. I will turn it over to the Member for Yellowknife North.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes. To the one point, the legislation permits both teleconference by telephone and videoconference appearances. I suspect, if a Member was in the middle of a key vote and cut out, we would do very much what we've been doing in committee meetings, which is to make attempts to reconnect with them. Then, at which point, if we were unable to connect, it would become a matter of privilege, subject to the Speaker's discretion, how to proceed. As stated before, we will bring this to the rules and procedures committee and work out the details for those types of scenarios, to make sure there is a plan in place.

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

MR. NORN: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you for that response. I guess that leads me to another question. Let's say, if there was that one deciding vote, and it could be any one of us, we could be somewhere in any of the small communities, for whatever reason, and all the attention was on us. All of a sudden, it was that one vote. Would there be something built into this bill stating that you would suspend the sitting until we heard the vote come through? Marsi cho.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. There is nothing built into the legislation to specifically clarify that decision. It would be up to the rules and procedures committee and subject to the Speaker, depending, you know, exactly what the scenario was. I suspect all efforts would be made to reconnect the Member and to find a way to make sure they could digitally cast their vote, should they be disconnected. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. NORN: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just one last comment. I think this is a great idea, but we just have to make sure that we always, like I said when I led in, plan for the worst, and make sure that we have as much built in so we have a protection for any of those worst-case scenarios. Marsi cho.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member for Tu Nedhe-Willideh. Member for Deh Cho.

MR. BONNETROUGE: Mahsi, Madam Chair. I see that this would be used in exceptional circumstances. I guess we are talking about, maybe, this situation as an example, the pandemic. I don't know what other circumstances there would be that we should be aware of, perhaps, because it just could be used at any time. There would be concerns with that, especially when we are looking at determining quorum for a circumstance like this. That's why we need to know what type of circumstances. If we had a list or examples of them in this legislation, or this act, it doesn't go far enough here. It's a broad stroke of the pen here. They can use it anywhere at any time, it seems like.

I would like to see more defined circumstances where this would be used, especially for quorum. The concern there is that it's bad enough that we can't be in person; we're going to be left out of whatever discussions are being discussed at the time. I'm assuming it would have to be an emergency thing, but what is deemed as an emergency? What is it? We need more details on this here so that it's not going to be abused. If we could get more clarification on that, especially for quorum, too, maybe we need more explanation underneath there, so you're not all of a sudden holding a meeting over here and you're leaving me out; that type of thing where we're leaving somebody out. I don't think that's fair if there are going to be discussions on any particular subject.

I am also wondering about the languages, also, whether there would be translation services provided for these. I know languages are very important. We are in the land of the Dene people in the Northwest Territories. I did express that I wanted to see every translator here for this sitting. I didn't get much support, because you didn't need 22; you could have still had 11. You could have accommodated them. It creates employment for the translators, plus it's being translated out there to the public. They are kind of assuring me that they are going to translate documents or translate them in some other fashion moving forward. I don't know if that's even going to happen. Those are questions that I have for this one here. Mahsi.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. A couple of points there; I would like to begin with the languages. The intention here is that we will put forward, if we use this technology, we will use software that allows simultaneous translation. All of the other rules that apply to the Legislative

Assembly still apply to the Members, the point of privilege, and the rules and procedures committee, as they have rules related to translation would apply in this case. It is completely the intention to allow simultaneous translation if and when we use this.

In regard to defining exceptional circumstances in the act, I want to point out that this is the enabling legislation in the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act. Not everything is contained within this act. There were further details in the rules of the Legislative Assembly, and following this, it is expected to be brought to the rules and procedures committee, and some parameters around exceptional circumstances are to be defined.

As I said in my opening statement, we are really thinking of scenarios similar to COVID-19. Other scenarios, if there were massive forest fire seasons and Members had an inability to travel, it would be similar. The issue of a quorum appearing digitally without Members getting notice and the Speaker attempting to do that is just not possible. It's not a concern that we are going to have some sort of on-the-spot digital sitting without Members having notice and those exceptional circumstances being explained by the Speaker as per the rules set out. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. BONNETROUGE: That's fine. Thanks.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I support this motion, as well. I think it's time that we take somewhat of a lead in the way we conduct business here in the NWT. We expect students to use video conferencing, and I think that we have to set the example. With respect to exceptional circumstances, and then, further down, we see the Speaker has discretion, there are two variances there in that meaning. I think, if that goes to the rules and procedures committee and gets dealt with, I'm fine with that. I don't really have any questions. I just wanted to make a comment and show my support for the motion. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Member for Thebacha.

MS. MARTSELOS: I want to go on the record, too, that I do support the legislation. I am not a computer person, but I seem to manage. I seem to get my view out there. I don't want to hold back. We have to be role models, especially when it comes to our younger generations at the high schools and

the colleges. I have done that in the community, and I continue to do that. I will never hold back progress. Thank you.

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

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I think this is a very much needed change in the legislation. I am proud of this Legislative Assembly for putting this forward. My one concern would be in terms of how this Assembly understands why we're putting this forward and what the intent of this is, but in future Assemblies, how do we ensure that the intent of this is consistent, both within this Assembly and to future Assemblies with different Speakers and a different team. I think I am satisfied that this is going to go forward to the rules and procedures committee where that will be discussed. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. I will take that as a comment. Madam Premier.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. I think this is a great piece of legislation. It's 2020, and I'm old. I struggle with technology, but my children and grandchildren pick it up from two years old. It's time that we got into the technical world. I am not worried about future Assemblies. I do believe, Madam Chair, that this is the way of the future. This is proactive, and we are part of that future. I adhere to that. I also know that, with COVID-19, we are looking at possibly a second wave in the fall. If that happens, it would be necessary for us to go right back into confinement. If we are in confinement, there is legislation that says we have to meet a certain amount of times in this House. This will actually address that and make sure that we are all obeying the law and able to perform the duties that we need to do as an Assembly. I am 99.9 percent in favour of this. The only half percent is my own inadequacies with technology. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Madam Premier. Are there any further comments to this bill? Can we proceed to a clause-by-clause review of the bill?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Committee, we will defer the bill number and title until after consideration of clauses. Please turn to page 1 of the bill. Clause 1, does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Clause 2, does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): We will now return to the bill number and title. Members, Bill 6, An Act to Amend the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Committee, to the bill as a whole. Does committee agree that the Bill 6, An Act to Amend the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act, is now ready for third reading?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, committee. Bill 6, An Act to Amend the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act is now ready for third reading?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, committee. Bill 6, An Act to Amend the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act is now ready for third reading. Does committee agree that this concludes our consideration of Bill 6, An Act to Amend the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member for Yellowknife North, and thanks to our witnesses. Sergeant-at-Arms, you will please escort the witnesses from the Chamber. Mr. Mercer and Mr. Reddy, thank you. With that, Mr. Norn.

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

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. 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? Abstentions? Motion is carried.

---Carried

I will now rise and report progress.

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

Report of Committee of the Whole

MS. SEMMLER: Mr. Speaker, your committee has been considering Tabled Document 30-19(2), Main Estimates 2020-2021, and Bill 6, An Act to Amend the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act. I would like to report progress with one motion carried and that Bill 6 is ready for third reading. Mr.

Speaker, I move that the report of the Committee of the Whole be concurred with. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes. Do we have a seconder? Member for Range Lake. All those in favour? All those opposed? Motion is carried.

---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 Tuesday, June 2, 2020, at 1:30 p.m.:

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

23. Orders of the Day

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. This House stands adjourned until Wednesday, May 27, 2020, at 1:30 p.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 5:39 p.m.

