



NORTHWEST TERRITORIES
**LEGISLATIVE
ASSEMBLY**

2nd Session

Day 27

19th Assembly

HANSARD

Wednesday, June 3, 2020

Pages 1011 - 1034

The Honourable Frederick Blake Jr, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

Members of the Legislative Assembly

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(Deh Cho)

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YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**Wednesday, June 3, 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 1:31 p.m.

---Prayer

SPEAKER (Hon. Frederick Blake Jr.): Item 2, Ministers' statements. Minister responsible for the Status of Women.

Ministers' Statements

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 48-19(2):
ONE-YEAR ANNIVERSARY OF THE RELEASE
OF THE FINAL REPORT OF THE NATIONAL
INQUIRY ON MISSING AND MURDERED
INDIGENOUS WOMEN AND GIRLS

HON. DIANE THOM: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge the one-year anniversary of the release of the Final Report of the National Inquiry on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. The previous Minister responsible for the Status of Women, the Honourable Caroline Cochrane, tabled the report entitled "Reclaiming Power and Place" in the Legislative Assembly on June 4, 2019. The report is split into two volumes with three main sections:

- Section 1 presents a comprehensive person- and community-centered understanding of the crisis of violence experienced by Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQ+ persons.
- Section 2 takes a deeper look at topics that present distinct issues or perspectives. It also describes opportunities to demonstrate, within a distinctions-based approach, how culture, health, security, and justice can create particular challenges for specific groups, institutions, geographies, or other circumstances.
- Section 3 focuses on different models of healing and Indigenous-led best practices.

The report ends with the presentation of the 231 calls for justice covering a wide range of topics and themes, including culture, health and wellness, and human security. The Government of the Northwest Territories prepared an initial response to the calls for justice entitled "Doing Our Part." While the GNWT did not respond to specific calls for justice in

Doing Our Part, we did provide a list of thematic sections related to each of the calls for justice, highlighting the work we are already doing or can build upon. We also set out a number of high-level questions that will need to be considered more fully by our government. Then-Minister Cochrane tabled this report in the Legislative Assembly on August 22, 2019. To date, the GNWT remains the only jurisdiction in Canada that has prepared a response to the final report.

The Government of the Northwest Territories has also made a commitment to work with Canada on the development of a national action plan in a coordinated manner that involves all stakeholders. The Minister of Crown-Indigenous Affairs had committed to having the national action plan developed by June 2020. While that deadline has been pushed back due to circumstances related to COVID-19, the Government of the Northwest Territories remains committed to working to move this work forward.

The GNWT has set up an interdepartmental working group for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls to coordinate our response to the calls for justice. This working group is chaired by the special advisor to the Minister responsible for the Status of Women and includes appointed representatives from the Departments of Executive and Indigenous Affairs, Health and Social Services, Justice, Housing Corporation, and Education, Culture and Employment. Other departments are invited to meetings or asked for input, as required.

Mr. Speaker, the GNWT is aware that we cannot do this work alone. Our government is committed to working with all Northerners and with partners across Canada to support the work needed to address systemic causes of violence, inequality, and racism, so that Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQ+ people are able to feel safe and empowered in our territory and also in our country.

According to Statistics Canada, the Northwest Territories has the second-highest rate of violence against women in the country. As a government, we need to take the necessary steps to address the systemic causes of violence, inequality, and racism

that contribute to the problem in the Northwest Territories.

The final report shares stories we all need to hear; stories about someone's sister, someone's niece, someone's mother, someone's child. Sadly, Indigenous women and girls in the Northwest Territories continue to live these stories. Trying to put the pain that loved ones and communities deal with into perspective is difficult.

The Northwest Territories may be large geographically, but the events in one community can affect us all. That is why it is so important that we work together to address the ongoing violence being experienced by Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQ+ people. It will require many people willing to work together to explore ways in which we can end violence that continues to have a negative impact on the lives of many Northwest Territories residents. I recognize that change will not happen overnight, but change must happen.

Mr. Speaker, violence against Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQ+ people is not an individual problem or an issue only for certain communities. This violence is rooted in systemic factors woven into the fabric of Canadian society, like economic, social, and political marginalization, as well as racism, discrimination, and misogyny. As the previous Minister responsible for the Status of Women so eloquently put it, "We must keep this issue at the forefront of people's minds and consistently convey another truth: that Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQ+ individuals are valued, loved, and worthy of justice."

To conclude, I would like to acknowledge the courage and strength shown by those who agreed to share their truths with the National Commission. I offer my thoughts, my prayers, and my gratitude. Quyanainni/mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Ministers' statements. Item 3, Members' statements. Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes.

Members' Statements

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON MISSING AND MURDERED INDIGENOUS WOMEN AND GIRLS

MS. SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, one year ago, I sat in the front row at the Canadian Museum of History in Gatineau, Quebec, while the report for the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women was presented to the Prime Minister. Although he didn't use the term "genocide" that day, he told a crowd the next day in Vancouver, we accept the findings, including what happened amounts to genocide. The families and

lost loved ones were acknowledged that day for the injustices against them. Last week, we learned that the federal action plan in response to this Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls final report has been delayed, Minister Bennet citing due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mr. Speaker, while I can certainly appreciate that we've all been busy dealing with this pandemic, I must say I was terribly disappointed. I was insulted to hear the news of this delay for a national action plan and using COVID-19 as an excuse. They've had ten months since they received the report, and it's not as if they had not heard the request over and over again. The families and the victims across the country have fought hard to ensure that a national plan would be developed and that governments would implement the calls for justice outlined in the final report and take steps towards real lasting positive change. One aspect to this change was the federal government to develop this national action plan.

Mr. Speaker, this delay in the development of the action plan concerns me deeply. We, as Canadians, as a government, as an Indigenous woman, as a mother, as an aunt of Indigenous women and girls cannot afford any more delays when it comes to the safety and protection of our women and girls and to 2SLGBTQQIA people. I truly hope that the Prime Minister will rethink this delay and give our women and girls and everyone waiting for this action plan the respect and justice that they deserve. I urge this government to push the federal government to develop an action plan now, not later.

Mr. Speaker, while this is occurring, I fully expect and encourage this government not to wait and to develop our own action plan and lead the way and make this a reality. As I mentioned, we cannot afford to wait any longer, have any more blood on our hands, lose any more loved ones, violence in our homes and our communities, silence of the issues of our Indigenous women and girls and 2SLGBTQQIA faith at the rate higher than anyone else in Canada that will continue as a result of not implementing the calls for justice. I will keep this issue at the forefront for everyone, in everyone's mind, and I will have questions for the Minister responsible for the Status of Women. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes. Members' statements. Member for Hay River South.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON ARTISANS

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have noticed on social media the availability of

Indigenous traditional artisan products has diminished, and I am not sure why this is. For myself, I do not have the talent or vision that these traditional artisans possess. However, the creativity of these artisans truly amazes me. It is important that this government provide meaningful support to the artisans of the NWT. Not only do they create beautiful products, they keep Indigenous history alive.

Mr. Speaker, over the years I have had the privilege of meeting many of the artisans whose creations are displayed, not only in this building, but in buildings throughout the NWT, Canada, and the world. Many artisans attend my office, and I am always grateful to listen and talk with them. Many of them are unassuming and go about their business but are always willing to share their stories. You can sense the passion as they discuss their creations. They want you to know who they are as an Indigenous person. They want you know the cultural significance of keeping their artistry alive.

For Indigenous peoples, education means much more than sitting in a classroom, it includes developing on-the-land knowledge and preserving artistic traditions through art. Many people appreciate the work created by the Indigenous peoples of the NWT, and it is sought after by many collectors throughout the world. There are many who may not appreciate the time, work, and passion that go into each creation, and we have a responsibility to change that line of thinking.

Mr. Speaker, I am very concerned that this creativity will be lost if we do not seriously address some of the shortcomings with respect to the support we provide. Artisans are willing to pass their knowledge on to their children, grandchildren, and others. It is these artisans that need our support. This government, in cooperation with Indigenous governments, needs to take a collaborative approach with the artisans to ensure this history and art is not lost.

Mr. Speaker, it is time for all governments in the NWT to engage with those in the communities who are keeping Indigenous culture and history alive. What better time to support our artisans while developing our youth who may be out of school for an extended period due to COVID-19. With school out, let's take the opportunity to expand our artisan base by teaching our youth. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Hay River South. Members' statements. Member for Tu Nedhe-Willideh.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
THANKS TO CHIEFS AND FRONTLINE STAFF
DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

MR. NORN: Marsi cho, Mr. Speaker. For my Member's statement today, I would like to take the time here to thank all my constituents in my riding, in Tu Nedhe-Willideh. COVID-19 has caused a lot of grief and disruptions for people all across this country, and in the North, there's no difference. As I mentioned before, we as Northerners are resilient and came together and helped those who were in need and made sure that our basics necessities were all covered.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to personally thank all the chiefs and councils in my riding, and please notify me if I leave anybody out. I want to recognize the chief and councils of Ndilo, Detah, Deninu Kue, and Lutselk'e. Also, I want to thank all the Metis leadership, the Hamlet of Fort Resolution along with the Mayor, Pat Simon, and his staff. As well, a big thank you to some companies such as the Deninu Kue Development Corporation, Denesoline Corporation and Deton Cho Corporation and its subsidiary companies for helping to give back to the community.

Mr. Speaker, there have also been a number of private citizens who stepped up during this pandemic. For example, I'll give some names to this: Joanne Tsetta of the Yellowknives Dene First Nation for donating food hampers from Ndilo, Detah, and Lutselke. People like Grace Shearing (ph), Saniz Catholique, and Becky Broderick-Basil who all worked on monthly food hampers. In Deninue Kue, Bess McKay who worked tirelessly to help maintain community morale by hosting a talent show on Facebook. I think the town should remind us it's important for us to keep us entertained, laughing, and remain in good spirits as we can, and laughing is the best medicine. In our language, we call it nineteenezo (ph) because laughter is the best medicine. It really is, and let's not forget that. Through that, I just have some questions later on for Madam Premier regarding the funding of checkpoints in the Deninue Kue. Marsi cho, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
HEALTH SERVICE CONCERNS

MR. BONNETROUGE: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. I would like to point out that the Minister of Health and Social Services filed away my healthcare services issues letter and notified the House yesterday of such. I am disappointed to say the least, specifically disappointment to the residents of the Northwest Territories that no actions will be taken to address health centre concerns. I did receive a copy of that letter dated June 1st after answering my question about the healthcare

services in my community of Fort Providence. Those questions were raised on February 28, 2020, related to my Member's statement of the same concern.

Mr. Speaker, my Member's statement at the time was a concern that patients were being misdiagnosed for their ailments. There had to have been a level of misdiagnosis. The patients kept going back to the health centre three, four, and even five times for the same ailment. Each time, they were given a pill and sent home. Only when their condition was at a critical stage, then the medevac crew was summoned. I know of one instance where a patient never came home alive. God bless her soul.

My question raised at the time was: does the department conduct investigations into complaints made against health centre staff? The reply from the Minister was, "Absolutely, we do." During a recent Committee of the Whole session with Health and Social Services, I stated the same issues and the fact that a former complaint was made to the Registered Nurses Association of the Northwest Territories and Nunavut. I should note, the complaint at the time was copied to the Health and Social Services chief executive officer. The CEO had requested a copy. This was back in November 2019, and to date, nothing has come of it. Health and Social Services does have a copy of all of the complaints. The only ones they do not have are all the other complaints sent through RNANT/NU and to the chair of the health leadership council. It was at this forum, at Committee of the Whole, that we understood that Health and Social Services was detached from RNANT/NU, so there is no mechanism in place to follow up on complaints made to anyone. I believe this is a very serious problem within the department and needs to be addressed. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON SUMMER STUDENT HIRING

MS. MARTSELOS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In any normal given year, by this point in time, the Government of the Northwest Territories would have already hired hundreds of students within the Summer Student Employment Program, employing students from all across the territory from mid-April until the end of August. However, COVID-19 has derailed virtually all employment opportunities that would normally be afforded to our northern student population. Mr. Speaker, according to a News North article from May 18, 2020, the Government of the Northwest Territories has so far hired only 98 summer students for the 2020 year. That is quite a difference from the 351 who were hired in 2019, the

344 in 2018, or the 306 in 2017. The reason for this hiring shortfall is because of the decision by the Department of Finance to initiate a hiring freeze for summer students due to COVID-19 disruptions.

Mr. Speaker, as we approach phase 2 of Emerging Wisely, I would certainly hope that our government makes it a priority to increase and to fast-track the number of students hired for summer 2020. COVID-19 or not, our students need to continue to be supported with employment opportunities and work experience. All NWT students, whether high school age, those of Aurora College, or those returning from southern institutions, they all deserve equal employment opportunities as residents of the NWT. I will have questions for the Minister of Human Resources later today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON EMERGING WISELY ON THE LAND

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Emerging Wisely across the territory: the Chief Public Health Officer recommended residents of the Northwest Territories spend time out on the land to reduce the risk of exposure to COVID-19 as part of the Emerging Wisely plan and the current COVID-related health restrictions, to strengthen family bonds, to improve mental health, and participate in traditional lifestyle out on the land. The schools are closed. Hunting season is going on right now with goose hunting back home and fishing. The season started.

Dr. Kandola's orders are to spend time in the great outdoors. However, that costs money, Mr. Speaker. People in our communities spend three times as much more for gas or food to go out and sustain themselves out on the land while hunting traditional foods. Mr. Speaker, remote communities in Nunakput pay \$1.71 for gasoline, and it's a \$1.17 here. It all adds up. Our Community Harvester Assistance Program funding to local communities, to renewable resources councils assist local hunters and trappers to defray the capital operating costs of their harvesting activities.

Mr. Speaker, since we are still under COVID-19 and now it's going into summer, in regard to that, are we going to be getting any more assistance from the federal government for funding for traditional hunting and keeping people out on the land, at their cabins, so they will not get sick with COVID-19? Alternatively, the additional funding can provide for community governments and to the municipal and community affairs to provide assistance for the neediest residents to get outside. Mr. Speaker, I will have questions for the Premier later today. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
DOMINION DIAMOND CREDITOR PROTECTION

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. On April 22nd, six Dominion Diamond affiliates applied for creditor protection in Alberta. I will not speak to the merits or details of this proceeding, but it does raise serious concerns and issues for the Northwest Territories as the Ekati Mine is a major employer and economic driver here in the Northwest Territories. Creditor protection has been extended until at least June 1, 2020. According to the list of unsecured creditors, Dominion Diamond owes NWT businesses over \$13 million, much of this to Indigenous economic development corporations. The pension fund for the unionized employees is also in a deficit of over \$20 million. To say all this has serious implications for the NWT economy would be an understatement. The GNWT holds \$295 million in financial security for the closure and reclamation obligations at Ekati Mine. Almost all of this is in the form of surety bonds issued by insurance companies rather than irrevocable letters of credit issued by Canadian chartered banks. These surety bonds are a relatively new and untested form of financial security for the Northwest Territories.

Until Regular MLAs asked, there were virtually no communications from Cabinet on what GNWT is doing or not. It was not clear that the GNWT was participating in a legal proceeding and, if so, to what ends until the ITI Minister responded to questions yesterday in this House. It has not been publicly reported whether the GNWT is owed any money from the operation and production at the Ekati Mine. I have asked about the financial security that is in place and continue to have concerns about its adequacy. I will have questions later today for the Premier as this matter cuts across several portfolios. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
OPEN GOVERNMENT

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As we return to this House in the midst of COVID-19, I can start to feel something in the air again, and that is the entrenchment of the status quo creeping back in. However, when you are in the eye of a hurricane, you often cannot feel the whiplash around you. I can feel a sense of complacency sneaking into this House. There will be another wave of COVID-19. We are heading into one of the

largest depressions in any of our lifetimes. Let's not also forget that we are in the midst of a climate emergency, which will cost alone on our infrastructure billions of dollars which we do not have. I know there are problems in the North. Often, you can simply look at these problems, and they can seem insurmountable, so it's best to just push them aside. However, we cannot let that mentality creep back in. During our COVID-19 response, I was truly honoured to be a part of this government. I was passionate, and I saw a government that moved quickly although not perfectly, and I believe this should be our government motto.

Mr. Speaker, the quest for perfection is a false one, and as the bureaucratic trenches and thinking and processes are pulling us all back in and the risk aversion that has plagued this government for decades is re-emerging, we must resist it. I see the old and tired political debates start to divide us again. I see the same decisions to do nothing start to be made again. I see Ministers' statements resorting to platitudes once again. My dream is that I could sit in this House and I could be a conservative, that I could sit over here and I could have Ministers and I could say, "Whoa, slow down. Did you think about that? What are you doing? Did you plan that out?" However, instead, on this side of the House, we repeatedly ask for things, and we are repeatedly told "no," Mr. Speaker. "No, we can't do that."

I honestly do not believe any one of us ran to implement a department strategic plan. We were passionate, and we were all excited MLAs. I have seen the response to COVID-19 bring that out. Mr. Speaker, now is not the time to become complacent. Now is the time to make quick and brash decisions that may not be perfect but that will get us through the impending crises that we have to come. I believe we can do this. I believe we can bring the people of the Northwest Territories together to overcome the challenges, but let us not become complacent simply because the weather is nice outside. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
MISSING AND MURDERED INDIGENOUS
WOMEN AND GIRLS

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Because of the swift collective response from this government and the people of the Northwest Territories, COVID-19 has not taken the life of a single Northerner. Sadly, the same cannot be said for Indigenous women and girls. Today, I stand in solidarity with advocate, colleague, and my friend,

MLA for Inuvik Twin Lakes in condemnation of the number of Indigenous women and girls who have gone missing or have been murdered in this country. Almost 2,400 Canadians shared their personal, gut-wrenching stories for the June 2019 Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls report, believing their pain would spark action and change. One year later, the federal government has announced its response will be late.

Mr. Speaker, we have lost an entire year of action. We must demand change now. While we are focused on the response to COVID-19 and with achieving the priorities we have set out for this Assembly, the genocide of Indigenous women and girls cannot be allowed to continue in the face of inaction. We cannot wait for COVID-19 to end, and we cannot wait for the federal government. We must take action today. There are calls for justice within the report that we can accomplish now. We need to just start, just begin, Mr. Speaker. I am urging the Premier and her Cabinet to take all necessary steps to start implementing the calls for action without further delay. Examples might include:

- action 1.8, which calls on governments to create specific and long-term funding available to Indigenous communities and organizations to create, deliver, and disseminate prevention programs, education, and awareness campaigns designed for Indigenous communities and families related to violence prevention and combatting lateral violence;
- action 2.7, which calls on all governments to adequately fund and support Indigenous-led initiatives to improve the representation of Indigenous peoples in media and pop culture; or
- action 3.5, which calls on all governments to establish culturally competent and responsive crisis response teams in all communities and regions to meet the immediate needs of Indigenous people, families, and communities after a traumatic event;
- action 5.8, which calls on all provincial and territorial governments to enact missing persons legislation.

Mr. Speaker, this government represents a population that is 50 percent Indigenous. I believe that puts an additional onus on us to show leadership to the rest of Canada on this issue. Implementing the calls to action even in the midst of this pandemic will demonstrate that the GNWT truly cares about the health and wellness of all its residents, regardless of the threat. If we are truly actively listening and want change, Mr. Speaker, then we must respond now.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON HIGHWAYS DANGEROUS

MR. LAFFERTY: Masi, Mr. Speaker. Behchoko and Yellowknife, few communities in the Northwest Territories are more closely linked than Behchoko and Yellowknife. This shows the flow of vehicles between them. Daily, hundreds of cars and trucks make the hour journey in both directions. At any given time, the number of travellers can exceed the entire population of the Hamlet of Fort Liard. Yet in this interconnected age, Mr. Speaker, when those drivers leave their municipalities, the boundaries, they are on their own. There is no cellphone coverage in that area between Behchoko junction and Yellowknife. In the event of an emergency, an accident, or a breakdown, which we have seen in the past, or a death from community members, there is no way of calling for help. Mr. Speaker, we are talking about one of the busiest, most accident-prone roads in the territory.

There are communication towers throughout Highway No. 3 corridor, yet ironically, no cell coverage. The phone company simply cannot be bothered. Mr. Speaker, I would like to find out what either the Minister of Infrastructure or Finance can do about this intolerable situation. Mr. Speaker, I have questions for the appropriate department at a later time. Masi, Mr. Speaker.

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

Oral Questions

QUESTION 283-19(2): EMERGING WISELY ON THE LAND

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My Emerging Wisely across the Northwest Territories: has the GNWT considered providing additional funding through the Community Harvester Assistance Program or other means to assist families to go and get out on the land? I will ask Madam Premier. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Mahsi Member for Nunakput. Honourable Premier.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My understanding is that ENR will be looking at the monies that they give for the harvesting program, the harvesting assistance program, to see what they can do to support it, but there is also other funding that has come in.

Indigenous governments were given money through the federal government for COVID-19. Health and Social Services gave money for the At Home on the Land initiative to Indigenous governments. There may be some flexibility within other programs, as well, so there are various streams of monies that are coming for the Indigenous governments. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. JACOBSON: I am really happy to hear that. I need to know. It was all front-end loaded in regard to when this happened and everybody, and the money was flowing in regard to the communities and for the Inuvialuit, the Gwich'in. Everybody got their funds to go and get out on the land, but now I guess we are mid-COVID-19. Is there any more funding that is going to be announced to our local communities or to our local hunters and trappers and harvesters?

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: As spoken, we are in the process, ENR is in the process, of reviewing the harvester assistance program to see how we can make that more flexible, but the key thing is that the Indigenous governments did receive federal money. I do not know, Mr. Speaker, how much that was, respectfully. It was given directly to the Indigenous governments. However, my understanding from the department is that the federal government is looking at perhaps supporting more money to the Indigenous governments for COVID-19.

MR. JACOBSON: I think they ran out of money. Even a modest bump in funding, Mr. Speaker, would help our community and the lowest income people who need to get out on the land. The GNWT has done an analysis to determine how much funding would be needed to assist residents to comply with public health orders to getting them back out on the land and supporting them.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Absolutely, any Indigenous governments that need help in any areas, if it's within our powers as the Government of the Northwest Territories, then definitely we would be willing to sit down with them to help them to fill out applications, to understand the processes, to find out where resources are. Call and we will answer.

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

MR. JACOBSON: I have your cellphone number.

---Laughter

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just am really thankful for that, the Premier committing to help and assist and making sure that the Cabinet and herself commit to getting additional funding that might be available for this coming summer as soon

as possible because we are still in the midst of COVID-19. We are still in a pandemic. People are still really scared in regard to COVID-19, and just making sure that they are taken care of. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. That is more of a comment. Would you like to respond, Honourable Premier?

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Absolutely. Like I said, our job, especially with Indigenous affairs, is to help the Indigenous governments. However, I do need to clarify that the Indigenous governments, and I am respectful of them, have asked me to not interfere with their federal funding, that they wanted it directly. I have advocated and lobbied the federal government that that money should go directly to the Indigenous governments, so it's a fine line. I am careful of how I lobby. I will lobby for additional money, but I will not ask where, how much, or to whom because I think we are crossing a line at that point. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 284-19(2):
SUMMER STUDENT HIRING

MS. MARTSELOS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As we enter phase 2 of Emerging Wisely, I would like to know if the Minister has plans to end the hiring freeze and hire more summer students this year. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Thebacha. Minister of Human Resources.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's not so much that there was a hiring freeze, but the program that is administered by the Department of Finance certainly did put a hold on new offers to students. Any offers that were in place, those ones have been honoured, and those students have been employed. The reality was, Mr. Speaker, that bringing on several hundred potentially new employees at a time when our own employees are struggling to adapt to the current conditions and now are having to be asked to find a way to slowly return back to their workplaces, this is not a time to be bringing on a large group of new students. It's not only about supporting them financially. We want to ensure that, when they are coming to work as summer students and interns for the GNWT, they are getting a meaningful and positive experience. Right now, Mr. Speaker, the priority has to be on ensuring the safety and well-being of all of our own staff, ensuring the safety and well-being of the people who we serve, and it's not a time, unfortunately, when we can bring on a large number of students.

That said, if there are departments, boards, and agencies who have the capacity to hire a student and want to hire a student, they can come to the Department of Finance and indicate that. There's not a set freeze, per se. If there is a match that can be made, then the student can still be hired. It's just that, at this point, as far as a formal program, this isn't the time. There is also the casual pool and, to the extent that students want to apply to the casual pool, there certainly are positions available, frankly, as a result of COVID, that can be filled from that pool. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. MARTSELOS: Would the Minister commit to prioritize the hiring of summer students wherever possible across the Government of the Northwest Territories?

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: I know it's not popular, but I can't make that commitment right now. I can't make the commitment to hire students specifically. What I can say is that, again, there is the casual pool that I would certainly encourage the students to apply to. There are positions that need to get filled. There are tasks that need to get done, in large part arising from the needs of our COVID-19 response. While that's not exclusive to students, those positions are there, and we would certainly want the students to put their names into that casual pool, if available. At that point, the hiring process undergoes the usual processes that it does within Human Resources.

MS. MARTSELOS: I think a positive message is important to the students of the Northwest Territories. What message does the Department of Human Resources have for the territory's students who have missed out on potential job opportunities by the Government of the Northwest Territories this year?

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: I share the view that there should be a positive message in all of this. COVID-19 has been a very unique and unprecedented challenge. At the risk of saying what is being said department after department about the nature of this being unprecedented, for the students who aren't going to be getting the positions that they wanted or hoped for, again, if they are able to get a position through the casual pool, they will undoubtedly get an experience unlike anything they were otherwise going to get prior to the pandemic. If they don't get hired, again, we do have a number of strong programs in place to hire students when they do return to the Northwest Territories after their schooling.

The federal government does have a program in place right now to encourage students to go out and, firstly, to have private hiring with companies, but also to go out and do work and public work and volunteer-type services. I would encourage

students to go and look into that. The last option, again, as someone in human resources, is go out and build your resume in a way that maybe doesn't involve a formal employer. There are a lot of people out there who need help right now, and I know that's not the kind of funding that students want to get, but it's just not the right time for the Human Resources to be rolling out those programs. However, we are still going to be here looking for students to come back to the North as this pandemic passes us by.

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

MS. MARTSELOS: Mr. Speaker, as our government prepares for the second wave of COVID-19 and for future pandemics, will the Department of Human Resources commit to making a contingency plan for the future that is more mindful of summer student employment? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: I can certainly say that the Department of Human Resources will be looking at all of the programs that rolled out, looking at the way in which we supported our employees and looking at the returning to work plans that we have. Frankly, it's beyond simply looking at students, but looking at the way in which Human Resources was responding to the pandemic. We will undertake that project in order to be even better prepared for whatever emergencies we may face going forward. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 285-19(2):
ARTISAN FUNDING ASSISTANCE

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've got questions for the Minister of ITI. Can the Minister tell me: what is the departmental budget for assisting artisans working from home, more specifically those who create artwork and traditional crafts? Also, is there an equity requirement to access grants, and is there a requirement to have a business licence? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Hay River South. Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment.

HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. ITI supports the business of arts to the tune of \$1.6 million every year for a variety of projects. Our regional program delivery routinely includes support for the marketing, promotion, and delivery of arts initiatives. In addition to providing funding support, our regional offices provide regular

marketing support for artists, such as making business cards, helping to update online profiles, and assisting during craft fairs in a non-COVID era. We have a micro-business program under SEED that provides funds to purchase materials, up to \$5,000 over three years, and no business licence is required, just proof that they are commercial artists.

Recently, we provided artists with the opportunity to take advantage of the Creative Industries Economic Recovery Funding. We are now considering these proposals. Up to \$3,000 is being made available to successful Northwest Territories artists or commercial film and media arts producers; up to \$5,000 is being made available to successful and registered Northwest Territories arts businesses, not-for-profit organizations, and collectives. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: I'm not sure I have any more questions after that. Anyway, the main issue for artisans in the South Slave is access to materials such as beads, stroud, and, more importantly, naturally tanned moose hide. This government has talked about a tannery building for a number of years, but this has not become a reality. I ask the Minister: is her department willing to identify and work with a proponent in the South Slave to build a tannery?

HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY: ITI is in the business of helping Northwest Territories businesses and the Northwest Territories economy grow and prosper. If a Northwest Territories resident has a legal and viable business plan and meets the required qualifications, ITI supports, programs, and services are there to be accessed. When it comes to a tannery, I understand that there is an initiative being pursued by our South Slave regional office and a project that Fort Providence is leading. The department has supported a pre-feasibility and business plan for this work.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: That's good to hear. I know that's been ongoing for several years, so hopefully, it will come to fruition. The next question or comment: in some of the regions or smaller communities, one common theme is a location where artisans can showcase and make their work available to the public. Fort Liard is a community that has a beautiful building where local art is showcased and placed for sale. We need that type of facility in every community. Will the Minister commit her department to work with a community organization willing to provide space for artisans to work out of and showcase their art?

HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY: ITI and ECE share responsibility to support the arts and fine crafts. We are currently working with ECE to finalize an updated strategy to guide and inform our government's support of the arts sector in the

future. We do have a variety of commercial operators who sell and showcase art. We also showcase regional artists in our artist displays at the airports and in our parks. I do commit to the Member to have a conversation with my department about ensuring that there is commercial space in every community.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is important for Indigenous people to pass down traditional knowledge. Would the Minister commit to work with the Minister of ECE to support and develop the grant program beyond what is in place, without a requirement, to artisans willing to teach their children or grandchildren or extended family the craft? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY: I am certainly willing to follow up on this matter with Minister of ECE. ITI, and I personally, recognize the value of our traditional arts and crafts. I have been supportive of our jewellery makers for quite a while now. Passing on the traditional knowledge is a very valuable and needed thing in the Northwest Territories, and I'm very happy to support initiatives like this. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 286-19(2): HEALTH SERVICE CONCERNS

MR. BONNETROUGE: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. I hope I'm not crossing any lines or anything in my Member's statement and in my questioning regarding the sensitive nature of the subject that I bring up related to health centre concerns. If I do, I apologize to the House. When complaints are not taken seriously by the Department of Health and Social Services, I believe the residents of the Northwest Territories are in serious trouble, especially in small communities with no doctors nor specialists. My question to the Minister is: how serious is the department about the serious health crisis concerns of the residents of my community and to the people of the Northwest Territories? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. DIANE THOM: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Health and Social Services authorities have a complaints process in place where clients are encouraged to talk with their local healthcare or social service provider as a first step. If they're not satisfied, there is also a follow-up step with the regional quality representative. For serious private

practice concerns, confidential investigations are carried out by the NTSSA, with the support of the Department of Finance and the Department of Human Resources. In all investigations, principles of due process are followed to hear from everybody who is involved in the complaint, including the staff. The employer can then determine what action is required to address the concerns. Complaints of misconduct can also be submitted to the complaints officer of the regulatory bodies for nurses, doctors, dentists, pharmacists, social workers, and midwives. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. BONNETROUGE: Mahsi to the Minister for that answer. That's pretty much the standard process, and I believe we've gone beyond that. We've already filed a formal complaint, and there have been other formal complaints filed that have gone unheeded. Northwest Territories residents, especially the Indigenous residents of my community, should not be treated like the treatment they receive at the local health centre. They should also not be treated with racist overtones just for being Indigenous. Comments such as, "Just because you are Treaty," and, "You Indians are a bunch of drunks," should never have to be heard. My question to the Minister: when are you ever going to take the concerns of the residents seriously in regard to the complaints against the health centre nursing staff?

HON. DIANE THOM: I followed up with my department to confirm my understanding of the process. Unfortunately, because there was a complaint filed with the Nurses' Association, it is not appropriate for the Minister to meet and respond to the specifics of the complaint because I was told that we can't be seen as interfering in any judicial or quasi-judicial process that is currently under way.

MR. BONNETROUGE: Mahsi for that answer. I think we had this discussion already, that there is a total disconnect by the department and the registered nurses' group, but the GNWT does the hiring of all nurses and doctors, and whatnot, and they are passed over to RNANT/NU, their governing body. Once we've done that, there is a line severed right there. They've got no control over any aspect of how they operate, those nurse practitioners and whatnot, and that's a big concern in our small communities. I don't know why the department does not have a mechanism in place to help the residents address these issues. My question to the Minister is: will she look into mechanisms to be put in place to help the residents of the Northwest Territories?

HON. DIANE THOM: Quality of care. We are working with the way we change and provide services in order to ensure that the practices are respectful to the values of residents. Through primary healthcare reform, we are focusing on

improving cultural and safety and relationship-based caring. The Member is asking if we will commit to that relationship? Absolutely.

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

QUESTION 287-19(2):
HIGHWAY SAFETY AND CELL SERVICE

MR. LAFFERTY: Masi, Mr. Speaker. [Translation] Cell phones, Mr. Speaker. I spoke earlier in my Member's statement about the cell phone services between Behchoko and Yellowknife. We have no access to cell phone services between Behchoko and Yellowknife. Again, this is an ongoing issue because there have been some issues happening between Yellowknife and Behchoko. [End of translation]

[Microphone turned off] ...asked about safety when I asked about the summer students, so I will continue with the safety avenue on Highway No. 3. Is the Minister of Finance aware of the number of people or of cars and trucks passing back and forth daily between Behchoko and Yellowknife? I'm just wondering if she has travelled Highway No. 3 lately. Masi, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Mr. Speaker, I can say certainly, in the last eight months or so, I have not travelled that road, but in my past life, for some 10 years, I used to be on that road quite regularly, attending court in Behchoko. I am well aware that there are some spots where there simply is no coverage, and it's a safety risk. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. LAFFERTY: I'm glad that the Minister identified it as a safety risk between Rae Junction and Yellowknife. From a risk management point of view, what can the Minister tell us about the danger of leaving commuters and truckers without cell coverage along such an important stretch of the highway? We're talking about the safety of our NWT citizens.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: I am not a risk analyst, and I'm not going to pretend to provide to the House or to the people who are on that highway my own personal views on what is or isn't a risk or how much of a risk it is, but I do acknowledge the point that's being made that there are people on that highway. It's a stretch of highway that, while frequently travelled, still has lots of parts where there are risks in terms of it being a highway. There can be an accident, and then there is maybe no one there coming along who has a phone or a satellite phone. I certainly acknowledge that that's a

reality and that there are some obvious risks associated.

MR. LAFFERTY: The next question I have is: would the Minister commit to calling Northwestel to convince the company to provide critical cell phone coverage that commuters and truckers need on the stretch of highway? One would assume that she has clout over them as the Government of the Northwest Territories is their biggest customer.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: I am certainly more than happy to phone Northwestel and have some engagement with them. In fact, I do think that that's an easy "yes." As far as what I can or can't convince a private corporation to do, I'm not going to be in a position to say "yes" or to make any commitment in that regard. Certainly, they are an important private sector partner in the Northwest Territories, and I'm sure they will want to have discussions and engagements with the GNWT.

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

MR. LAFFERTY: Masi, Mr. Speaker. In that case, I'd like to ask this government what their action will be on this particular subject. I was copied on a letter to the Minister of Infrastructure and ECE the other day, June 1st or 2nd, from both the chief of Behchoko and Whati in full support of this cell phone coverage in that area. If Northwestel won't do it, would the Minister of Infrastructure or Finance, in combination of both departments, commit to funding the extension of cell coverage to the Highway No. 3 corridor between Behchoko and Yellowknife? It is really badly needed now, Mr. Speaker. Masi.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: There are three priority needs that are related to broadband and telecoms that have already been identified from the GNWT. The 50 and 10 megabytes per second, that's the speed which has been spoken recently in the House; the importance of resiliency and redundancy in our networks which hasn't come up here but has certainly come up in the past in the House; but the third one is cell coverage. I certainly want the Member to know that I know that this is a priority. It's already a priority within my department. As far as providing that as a service that we have to increase the ability to have better cell coverage, I'm not in a position to say right now what we're going to do, but it's almost becoming a bit of a theme week for me that I hadn't expected. It's very clear that we're going to have to have a very clear plan to achieve those three goals. If ever it wasn't clear, then COVID-19 has made it very clear now how important those things are to being connected, whether it's education, health, or otherwise. Mr. Speaker, I certainly do expect that I will be making faster progress on this than maybe what would

have happened before COVID. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 288-19(2):
MISSING AND MURDERED INDIGENOUS
WOMEN AND GIRLS

MS. SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As per my Member's statement, I know I get very emotional. Whenever I talk about the missing and murdered Indigenous women, I remember the stories. I see their faces. It's never going to leave me. As mentioned in my Member's statement, I would like to ask the Minister responsible for Status of Women what the federal delay in development of a national action plan to address the calls for justice outlined in the MMIWG final report means for the NWT in terms of development of our own action plan? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes. Minister responsible for the Status of Women.

HON. DIANE THOM: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to be fair to the federal government and acknowledge that the work has been happening, but there are times like this through the COVID-19 where events have not been able to take attention to or have been slowed. Of course, the pandemic we've been facing is a priority for all governments, and face-to-face meetings have not been available or planned after recent government transitions since the report was tabled last year. We would all like to see our work advanced together so we can have the benefit of discussions and experiences from across the country. Having a national action plan provides the opportunity for more collaboration and leadership. This does not, however, prevent us from continuing our own work in the Northwest Territories and advance the calls for justice. We have been working internally on identifying further actions we require, and we'll continue to implement them and engage with Indigenous governments, communities, and others as appropriate. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. SEMMLER: I hear what the Minister says, and I disagree. With COVID, how many deaths have we had with COVID? We've had way more deaths with Indigenous women and girls, and it hasn't been taken as seriously. Mr. Speaker, will the Minister commit to developing an NWT action plan to address these calls for justice without waiting for this federal action plan?

HON. DIANE THOM: In my Minister's statement, I mentioned that the Northwest Territories has been a leader in responding to the report, and I can

commit to moving actions forward. My hesitation in suggesting that the Northwest Territories develop a wholly standalone plan is that we do not align in many cases with the expectations of Indigenous governments, communities, and particularly Indigenous women and girls. This requires collaboration. Much of that is occurring, and the discussion is happening throughout the development of this national action plan. I believe the inquiry recommended a national action plan because it recognized that the scope of the issues identified require Canadian society and all of Canada to be engaged. With that said, we've already undertaken actions in response to the inquiry's report. In our initial response, doing our part, we've identified things we're doing now, things we can do right away, and others we can continue to work on doing.

In addition, an interdepartmental working group was set up to coordinate the Government of the Northwest Territories response for calls for justice, and this working group includes representatives from two departments, like I mentioned. They are also tasked with doing an in-depth review and analyze the calls for justice. I appreciate that the Member does not want us to let the calls for justice found in the report to sit on the shelf and collect dust. We all need to continue our focus on making this change, but I don't think we need a separate standalone action plan to work on making that change.

MS. SEMMLER: The Minister has mentioned collaboration with Aboriginal organizations and women's organizations within the Northwest Territories to get this work done. Can the Minister explain to me if they have a working group now with the Aboriginal groups, and who are they collaborating with outside the government right now on this plan?

HON. DIANE THOM: Currently, the interdepartmental working group I referred to includes the Department of Health and Social Services, Justice, Housing, and we are working at looking at Education, Culture and Employment, Indigenous Affairs. There are a number of departments working together. The focus is to start to look at doing our part because we realize that a lot of our departments are doing initiatives and programs around the report.

MR. SPEAKER: Oral questions. Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes.

MS. SEMMLER: Sorry, Mr. Speaker. My question was: who outside the government have we been collaborating with? I guess I'm not going to get an answer to that because I want to ask if the Minister can tell us if we can expect some type of plan presented in this House and we can begin to

implement these justices to the 231 calls for justice? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. DIANE THOM: I appreciate the Member wants to hold this government accountable for taking meaningful action with this. Urgency is required. I will commit to providing more regular reports to the Member, and offer the same to the committee. I agree that we need to continue to focus on this work and make sure we're moving forwards with some actions. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 278-19(2):
FUNDING FOR COMMUNITY CHECKPOINT
DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

MR. NORN: Marsi cho, Mr. Speaker. Just going back to my Member's statement, the community came together during COVID, and a lot of communities in my constituency, they worked together. They did do work to protect themselves because of the highway going in. Just to give you a little context for the House, on a letter dated May 25, 2020, from Madam Premier's office to my office, there was a request made for funding to fund the checkpoint going into Deninu Kue. They did take the steps to protect themselves. In my humble opinion, that's the GNWT's job. They should be coming in and protecting our small communities. Further to that, in this letter, the letter stated that they will not fund this important safety measure. For me, this is not okay. My question to Madam Premier: can she explain why this funding request was denied? Marsi cho.

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The reason that we had to look at it carefully and, at this point, said "no" is because we have our own enforcement at the borders. There are some liability issues. The municipalities do not have authority to do that. We haven't come down hard on them because we understand the fear that they are facing. We're trying to support them, but we also have to recognize that there are legalities with that. The other major thing that has come with that and the request for funding is that Municipal and Community Affairs has been collecting the debts, the monies, that has been spent by community governments on the COVID-19. However, the Canadian Association of Municipalities put in a huge ask for \$10 billion to the federal government. Until we hear, that \$10 billion would be divided amongst all of the municipalities in Canada, so we're waiting for the federal government to hear if they're going to fund that

because it would be inappropriate. All along, the GNWT has been trying to work with the federal government, so it would not be appropriate for us to fund the municipalities here when they're already asking for more money and then having to figure out: do we claw that back? What does that look like? We are lobbying the federal government, as well, that municipalities need money, but we're waiting to see if the federal government rolls out with that \$10 billion bailout for the municipalities. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. NORN: Thank you, Madam Premier for that response. I'm just going back to the letter, too. There is a reference there that is a roadblock. It's not a roadblock. I said to the media before this is like a checkpoint. It's a self-isolation measure. Even though we have our security checkpoints at the borders, and I don't mean to point, sorry, they're still bypassing our four major centres where people are supposed to self-isolate. They're still getting into the small communities. These checkpoints in the small communities work. For my next question, just from hearing her: can Madam Premier commit to funding, or even partially funding, these checkpoint initiatives if the federal funding does not pan out?

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Some communities are working in partnership a little bit differently than other communities. Some communities are working with their Indigenous governments on their checkpoints. Indigenous governments did get money. They got money from the federal government for COVID-19 with flexibility on being able to use it. We want to help our municipal governments. It's not a matter of if we want to help them or not. We do want to help them. We are waiting for the \$10 billion ask to see what that happens with. We're still collecting the debts from our municipal governments, as well. We're looking at other options. We're actually looking with some flexibility, perhaps. The ECE program has a small community employment fund. The municipalities could look at adding that into their plans if they were willing to do that. All departments, including ECE, have been very flexible during the COVID-19 to try to make sure that our programs meet the needs of people.

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

QUESTION 290-19(2):
DOMINION DIAMOND MINE CREDITOR
PROTECTION

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. As I mentioned in my statement earlier today, there has been no communication from Cabinet to Regular MLAs on what GNWT is doing or not with regard to creditor protection proceeding on the Dominion Diamond group of companies. Can the Premier tell

us when GNWT began participating in the legal proceeding and what roles do we expect to play? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That doesn't go across all departments. It really is specified. On that, I would defer the questions to our Minister of Finance. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Actually, it works out well to have those two roles combined in this particular instance. The Department of Finance does have the lead in terms of monitoring the CCAA proceedings and does work with Justice in terms of providing legal counsel and coordinating instructions to our external legal counsel in partnership with ITI as they, of course, have relationships with this industry more directly. Back to the Member's question about when we got involved, we do have experienced counsel involved in CCAA proceedings based in Alberta. We were notified of the filing on the day it was filed, and that is how we got involved. Thank you.

MR. O'REILLY: I want to thank the Minister for that. The Ekati Mine provides a substantial amount of revenue to the GNWT in the form of payroll taxes, property taxes, corporate taxes, sometimes, when it files in the Northwest Territories, mining royalties, carbon and fuel taxes, and more. Can the Premier tell us whether any of the Dominion Diamond group of companies have any outstanding liabilities to GNWT and what are those amounts and types of liabilities?

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Again, that is within the Minister of Justice's department, so I'll defer the question to her. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Minister of Justice.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I suspect many of the other creditors might still be fully compiling some of the data, we are in no different of a position than many others in that regard. I can say that in 2019-2020 the GNWT did collect \$14.6 million in terms of taxes. Obviously, I'm not sure if that's necessarily the same. With COVID-19 some of the reporting dates have been deferred and delayed so that data is going to still have to continue to come in. We do, again, have the royalties that do come into us. Again, that reporting date was delayed. In addition to which, under regulation, I'm unable to break part the reporting of the royalties. They are reported in aggregate according to law. Mr. Speaker, it's just under \$2 million in general liabilities that are owed,

some of which have been invoiced but some of which we're still putting together. There certainly are some risks in terms of what is owed to the GNWT from Dominion Diamond. I would just note that CCAA proceeding doesn't mean that they would be unable to pay any of their liabilities to any of their creditors. Not to minimize the significance of the proceedings or the fact that we're monitoring them very closely, but it is simply an opportunity that we hope they will fully take to restructure their finances and be operational again.

MR. O'REILLY: I want to thank the Minister for that. I know I'm kind of skating close to the line here, but I do think that the public deserves to know what kind of liabilities are outstanding. I mentioned in my statement how GNWT now holds \$295 million in financial securities of the Ekati Mine to ensure it fully complies with its regulatory requirements around reclamation. I understand the Wek'eezhii Land and Water Board is still conducting a review of parts of the third version of the inner enclosure reclamation plan that was submitted in August 2018. Can the Premier tell us whether the financial securities for the Ekati Mine are up to date and cover all the environmental liabilities at the site? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. Actually, the question has to go to the Minister of Justice unless she passes it on to the Premier.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will certainly defer to you on the rules. I'm not quite there yet, but I'm happy to answer this particular question. Yes, Mr. Speaker, absolutely. The securities that are required by the land and water board are up to date, and we have every confidence that they are available to the GNWT if they are needed. They are in accordance with the reclamation plan that was approved by the land and water board. I suppose it's all good news in that regard for the moment. Thank you.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. I want to thank the Minister of Finance for that. I guess I'm not quite as optimistic as the plan. It's still under review. Until that's done and we get an up to date security estimate, I'm not sure it's fair to say that it is completely up to date. In any event, for the first time I can recall, GNWT accepted surety bonds as financial security at the Ekati Mine. Insurance companies don't stay in business by paying claims. Can the Premier or the Minister of Finance tell us with complete confidence that the form of financial security, surety bonds, from insurance companies, provide the necessary clarity and certainty to ensure full and final closure of the Ekati Mine? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: The short answer is "yes," Mr. Speaker. I would be naive to think that that is going to satisfy the nature of what is really being asked here. Surety bonds are a little bit different. A lot of times, securities are held with what is called an irrevocable letter of credit, but in this particular case, these surety bonds are more like an irrevocable letter of credit than what they might be in some other circumstances. Most importantly, Mr. Speaker, the GNWT has the ability to call in the bond if we had concerns about it. In addition, if, in fact, the bond were to be cancelled, again different from many situations with a surety bond would be, the GNWT has protection because there is notice of cancellation. Again, in such circumstances, the GNWT would have the ability to call in the bond. The Department of Finance takes it quite seriously. The Department of Finance monitors these insurance companies. These are not small companies. These are very, very large companies. Just as much as we would have confidence in a large banking organization, Mr. Speaker, we have confidence that these large insurance organizations are not going anywhere and that the bonds are secure. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 291-19(2):
OPEN GOVERNMENT

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Following this House electing the Honourable Caroline Cochrane as our Premier, she gave a speech on October 18, 2019, where a number of commitments were made. One of them was that the Department of ITI would be renamed the "Department of Economic Diversification and Development." Mr. Speaker, my question is: when can we expect to see that change?

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Those conversations, those are conversations we started, actually, as a Cabinet before COVID-19 hit. We were looking at all of our departments and how they fit, if they needed to be changed, et cetera. It was an idea I put out in my speech, but I also said that I am open to feedback on it. In honesty, Mr. Speaker, due to COVID-19, that kind of got put on the back burner, but I do know that, after this session, once we take a break and give our departments a break because everybody has been going 24/7, we will be starting those conversations again.

MR. JOHNSON: To be honest, I don't much care what the name of the department is, but I believe, when the Premier makes a commitment, it's

important that it be followed through with, especially if it's solely within her authority. Additionally, during that speech, the Premier committed to requiring a gender- and equity-based lens be applied to any new program or service delivery in the GNWT. When can we expect to see that implemented?

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: I am not going to take credit and say that, because there are nine women elected, we are doing that, but we are doing that right now. It was the right thing to do, whether it be women or men. In this House, it is the right thing to do.

MR. JOHNSON: I am happy to hear that we are applying a gender- and equity-based analysis to all new programs and service delivery. Perhaps the Premier could provide the Regular MLAs with how exactly that is occurring. Additionally, during that same speech, the Premier committed to amalgamating the Departments of MACA and Lands. When can we expect to see that change, Mr. Speaker?

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Again, those were conversations at the beginning. I did promise to have feedback from MLAs. Those are the conversations we will be having. I will not make that decision on my own; I don't think it's appropriate. I will be having conversations with our Cabinet, and then I will present to committee, the appropriate committee. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am quite confident that both the Ministers of MACA and Lands would be quite curious to know if their departments are being amalgamated, so I look forward to the outcome of those discussions. Additionally, in that same speech following being elected as Premier, there was a commitment to mandate public surveys for all priorities for each department. Has that work been done, Mr. Speaker?

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: I will have to meet with the Member after. I don't remember the commitment that I would ask for public surveys for every priority. I will have to look at Hansard and meet with the Member to understand what the meaning was behind that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 292-19(2):
WORKING GROUP ON MISSING AND
MURDERED INDIGENOUS WOMEN AND GIRLS

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In continuation of the questions posed by my colleague from Inuvik Twin Lakes, I would like to ask some questions of the Minister of Health and Social Services today. One of the questions that was asked by my colleague was in regard to working groups and who our GNWT collaborates with on those working groups, so what I would like to know is: who outside of the Government of the Northwest Territories does the Government of the Northwest Territories collaborate with on its working group for creating its action plan for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls? Thank you.

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

HON. DIANE THOM: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Department of Health and Social Services works with a variety of organizations and NGOs, including NWT disabilities and status of women.

MS. CLEVELAND: The Minister mentioned that the working group is currently doing an analysis on the calls for justice from Reclaiming Power and Place. What is the deadline for this analysis?

HON. DIANE THOM: At this time, we do not have a timeline. Once we do, we will let the Member know.

MS. CLEVELAND: The Minister has mentioned before that we are national leaders in aggressive COVID-19 testing and that we are national leaders in a very timely response to the Reclaiming Power and Place report. I would like to urge the GNWT to be both an aggressive and a timely national leader in its action to do with Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. Will the Minister commit to providing an annual report to this House on the status of its plans and timelines so we can be accountable to keeping all Northerners safe? Thank you.

HON. DIANE THOM: Yes, the department will be looking at doing an annual report.

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

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I appreciate the Minister's commitment. Mr. Speaker, I would also like to know, when someone disappears, there is rarely evidence that a crime has been committed. However, this is a prerequisite for police to seek the court's permission for a search warrant or for personal records to help their investigation. In the earliest hours after someone is reported missing, access to this crucial information can yield clues to the person's whereabouts held within their cellphone, computer, home, and more. A number of provincial jurisdictions have missing persons

legislation which can serve as a model for the NWT. Will the Minister commit to bringing forward missing persons legislation in the Northwest Territories during the life of this Assembly? Thank you.

HON. DIANE THOM: We have not explored this kind of legislation in the Northwest Territories. It will require further research and consideration as it will have far-reaching implications. However, we are open to having further discussions on this. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 293-19(2):
TORNADO IN FORT SMITH

MS. MARTSELOS: Mr. Speaker, today is the one-year anniversary of the tornado that hit the community of Fort Smith. It was a devastating event for a family in Fort Smith, and I just want to ask the Minister responsible for the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation when the file is going to be concluded for this family in the community of Fort Smith. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. Minister responsible for the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation.

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for your comments. This is an ongoing file that we have been dealing with. It's very unique. I want to provide information to the Member. I would like to meet with the Member. We do not have disaster funding within our department, but I am willing to look at flexibilities for the service for the client. I would look at this as ongoing, but I would like to resolve this, hopefully, by September. I would like to put that date out there.

MS. MARTSELOS: I have been going back and forth with the department, and I think that it has happened since I got elected in October, and I think that bureaucracy is slow. We have a member that had a very awful disaster in Fort Smith with the tornado. It is a big concern for myself and for the family involved in that community. A conclusion to this file is really important.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. I didn't really hear a question, but I'll let the Minister respond. Minister responsible for Northwest Territories Housing Corporation.

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just wanted to express that the Housing Corporation did come out, and we did provide assistance to the individual. I'm looking at what further that we can offer for the disaster and for the unit that was damaged. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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 of Infrastructure.

Tabling of Documents

TABLED DOCUMENT 124-19(2):
FOLLOW-UP LETTER FOR ORAL QUESTION 45-19(2): TLICHO ALL-SEASON ACCESS ROAD CONTRACT

TABLED DOCUMENT 125-19(2):
FOLLOW-UP LETTER FOR ORAL QUESTION 85-19(2): TLICHO ALL-SEASON ROAD

TABLED DOCUMENT 126-19(2):
FOLLOW-UP LETTER FOR ORAL QUESTION 187-19(2) NATIONAL TRADE CORRIDOR FOR FRANK CHANNEL BRIDGE

HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table the following three documents: "Follow-up Letter for Oral Question 45-19(2): Tlicho All-Season Access Road Contract"; "Follow-up Letter for Oral Question 85-19(2): Tlicho All-Season Road"; "Follow-up Letter for Oral Question 187-19(2): National Trade Corridor for Frank Channel Bridge." Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Tabling of documents. Member for Monfwi.

TABLED DOCUMENT 127-19(2):
LETTER FROM COMMUNITY GOVERNMENT OF BEHCHOKO, DATED JUNE 1, 2020, TO MINISTERS OF INDUSTRY, TOURISM AND INVESTMENT AND EDUCATION, CULTURAL AND EMPLOYMENT REGARDING CELL PHONE CONNECTIVITY BETWEEN YELLOWKNIFE AND BEHCHOKO.

TABLED DOCUMENT 128-19(2):
LETTER FROM COMMUNITY GOVERNMENT OF WHATI, DATED JUNE 2, 2020, TO MINISTERS OF INDUSTRY, TOURISM AND INVESTMENT AND EDUCATION, CULTURAL AND EMPLOYMENT REGARDING CELL PHONE SERVICES BETWEEN YELLOWKNIFE AND BEHCHOKO.

MR. LAFFERTY: Masi, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table two documents, both addressed to the Ministers of Industry, Tourism and Investment and Education, Culture and Employment. The first letter dated June 1, 2020, is from the community government of

Behchoko regarding cell phone connectivity between Yellowknife and the Behchoko injunction. The second letter dated June 2, 2020, is from the community government of Whati regarding expansion of cell phone services along Highway No. 3 corridor. Masi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Monfwi. Tabling of documents. Item 15, notices of motion. Member for Kam Lake.

Notices of Motion

MOTION 9-19(2): REAPPOINTMENT OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION MEMBERS

MS. CLEVELAND: Mr. Speaker, I give notice that on Friday, June 5, 2020, I will move the following motion: Now therefore, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Inuvik Boot Lake, that the Legislative Assembly recommend the reappointment of the following individuals to the Northwest Territories Human Rights Commission:

- Ms. Marion Berls of the Town of Fort Smith, for a term of four year; and
- Mr. Charles Dent of the City of Yellowknife, for a term of four years;

And further, that the Speaker be authorized to communicate the effective date of these appointments to the Commissioner.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. Just a slight correction, I believe that is Tuesday? Tomorrow's the last day, so we'll deal with it on Tuesday. Thank you. Notices of motion. Item 16, motions. Item 17, notices of motion for the first reading of bills. Item 18, first reading of bills. Item 19, second reading of bills. Item 20, consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters: Tabled Document 30-19(2), Main Estimates 2020-2021, with the Department of Justice and deferred departments in the pages with 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 2020-2021 and specifically the departments of Justice; Environment and Natural Resources; Industry, Tourism and Investment;

Infrastructure; Lands; Municipal and Community Affairs; and the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation. Marsi cho, Madam Chair.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, committee. We will take a short recess and resume with the first item.

---SHORT RECESS

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): I will call committee back to order. Committee, we have agreed to consider Tabled Document 30-19(2), Main Estimates 2020-2021, and will be resuming with the Department of Justice. The Minister of Justice has previously given opening remarks. Does the Minister wish to bring witnesses into the House?

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

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Madam Chair, on my right is Charlene Doolittle, deputy minister of Justice, and on my left is Mandi Bolstad, director of Finance.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): All right, committee. We have deferred the departmental summary, and we will resume review of the estimates by activity summary. We will begin where we left off, starting on page 281 with information items up to 284, Justice, services to government, operations expenditure summary. I think we went through all the questions the last time, so we just need to call the page for this one, and then we can move on to the services to the public. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Justice, services to government, operations expenditure summary, 2020-2021 Main Estimates, \$12,961,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, committee. We will now turn to page 285, services to the public, with information items up to 287. Questions? Member for Yellowknife North.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. Right now, if I want to look up corporate registries document, it would cost me \$4. Can the Minister tell me how much in revenue the corporate registries' online system makes us each year?

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Sorry, if I could just clarify, it's the total revenue per year. Is that correct?

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Yes.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. I don't have the breakdown here, but I suspect Ms. Bolstad likely does.

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

MS. BOLSTAD: Thank you, Madam Chair. The revenue under the land title and legal registries fees is just about \$5.6 million total, so that's land titles and our corporate registries fees. I don't have the exact breakdown between the two, though. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I have no issues, obviously, with land titles fees. Obviously, that is a fee, and I hope that office continues to charge them. My issue is specifically corporate registries, and very specifically the corporate registries' online system. I'll get to the point. It costs \$4 to look up any corporate entity in the Northwest Territories. Most jurisdictions have waived this fee as an effort to transparency to see corporate records. These are public documents. It's a principle of good open data and open government to not put things behind a pay wall. Would a number of under \$100,000 make sense for the amount of money we are actually charging to keep our corporate records behind a pay wall? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: While again, Madam Chair, we don't have the specific breakdown, I will certainly get it. I think really what I am being asked is whether or not we are going to look at whether we need to charge the \$4 fee. That is not something that I have had a chance to speak to the department about, but I can certainly commit to having a proper conversation with the department and getting back to the Member or to this House about that. Thanks.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. That is exactly what I was looking at. I just think it would be one of these helpful transparency things if corporations' records were not behind a pay wall and I could go in and I could search any corporate entity and track their legal history, as I can do with most jurisdictions. Similarly with the land titles office, at one point, we were going to close down the land titles office during this COVID-19, essentially not allowing anyone to transfer real property. Can the Minister commit to bringing land titles online so that they can conduct their business even during a pandemic? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. I was just looking. My recollection is actually that those efforts have been made recently. Now, I am not sure what the status of it is. This is the challenge of COVID-19, not being able to have my little whispers in my ear, but certainly in my past life I know there was access to a lot of that information online. I am not sure if there is something specific that the Member wants to ask about what is not online.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes. I believe there was a system worked out where people could email and then some of the records were available online and some weren't. A lot of land titles, if you want, are still done in paper, so I am looking for a commitment from the Minister that we can bring our land titles office digitally online. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Sorry. I think a lot of the services that are provided can be performed online, but there certainly still are requirements about the document passing back and forth, that are still requiring the papers to be filed. We have worked out a system where you can drop something off in a drop box, but that certainly is far from being an online system. Again, that is sort of outside the scope of what I can speak to in terms of our budget right now. It's not in the budget, for what that is worth, but as far as having a conversation, again, that might be one of the post-COVID-19 conversations that we are now going to have to have. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes. I guess I will look forward to that conversation. I think if you can give the office marching orders to bring their systems online, they will tell you how long that will take. If it takes a few years, I can live with that, but clearly it's something we should get started. Similarly, this is one of those weird sections of Justice where we have our personal property registration, a very underutilized system. We have regulations of securities trading, as expertise, we struggle to keep/have in the Northwest Territories. Can the Minister update me if there is any thought to combining these, specifically the personal property registration, with Alberta or any efforts to kind of work with larger jurisdictions who hold the expertise? This is kind of a structural problem in that I think the GNWT has some responsibilities that we are perhaps not really capable of or it's not a priority. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. That certainly is a larger question around the structure and the function of the department. We are small fry in some of these respects and in some of the tasks that are being performed, in securities, for instance. That is not to say that we do not have some obligations, and some of those obligations are going to be legal obligations we have to maintain these registries and legal obligations that we have to perform the function of registering securities. I think there is always a desire for efficiencies in conversations being had. How far they are going, I am not sure. Perhaps what I might suggest, Madam Chair, let me start with the conversation with the Member for Yellowknife North. However, if there is a bigger interest in this area on the part of a committee, we can certainly have a conversation. I am certainly happy to go to committee and sort of brief them on what is maybe not as well-known an aspect of the work that the Department of Justice does. I will start one Member at a time, though. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I suspect I am probably the only Member interested in the regulation of securities trading, and I don't know -- oh, sorry. I am getting some looks. I would like to speak briefly to the rental office. I understand the rental office is a bit of an arm's-length organization, but I have raised previously with the Minister some of these concerns and their ability to kind of make orders and address things more

systemically. We had a briefing from the human rights office, and they have kind of switched to this model, looking at more systemic issues, issuing kind of larger orders. A lot of the work came out of their act. Are there any plans to review the legislation that the rental officer operates under? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Right now, that legislation, I was just going back to double check where it might be landing in terms of on our legislative worksheets. Certainly, there were recent amendments to the Residential Tenancies Act just last year, so it likely isn't going to be high in terms of a further review. That said, certainly in terms of the commercial tenancies and the residential tenancies, both of those pieces of legislation have been called to task, if you will, for their lack of modernity during COVID-19. I am certainly now aware of that. I was aware of it before, but I am more aware of it now. I am not going to necessarily commit to ratcheting it up the legislation timeline other than to look at whether there are small tasks that we can maybe do. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I am getting down to the weeds in these sections because I have some very specific issues with them. One of my issues, as I have raised with the Minister, is that the land titles office does not let you search by the name of a property owner. You have to find the lot address and the legal address and then find who owns it. I get that there are some personal privacy issues, but what other jurisdictions have done is they have allowed all corporate-owned land to be searchable by name because those same privacy concerns do not apply to corporate entities. I, for example, would love to know how many properties Northview actually owns in the Northwest Territories. That is not public information. I would love to know how many Kingsett owns in the Northwest Territories, how many of these large REITs just keep gaining more and more property. There is no public data. That is not publicly available information. I can't go to land titles and search it. Would the Minister be willing to make the land titles office have the ability to search corporate entities by name? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. That, on its face, seems like an

easily solved problem, so part of me wants to simply give the easy "yes," but at this point, again, I am not sure if there are other pieces of legislation, either domestic to the Northwest Territories, that we would have to comply with. I do not know the degree to which there would have to be associated amendments and associated regulation changes, et cetera. I just do not know the extent to which this is a problem or why it's the problem that it is. What I can certainly commit to doing is finding out why, why it is that we have this system that is different. I do not know the answer to that off hand, but I can at least start there. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Minister. Are there any other questions from any Members for services to the public? Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. I know it has been raised in this House by members of the public that sometimes the turnaround in the rental office doesn't always meet people's expectations. Has there been any assessment of the workload of that office and the resources that they have available? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. I do know that those numbers, the lag time between the filing of an application and the hearing date has been continuously dropping, and indeed, I believe as of February 2020, it was roughly at five to seven weeks, which is an improvement over the last few years, certainly. Some of the initiatives that were undertaken in order to get there were around the fact that they do not need to conduct in-person hearings, and that certainly made it a lot faster. There has also been an attempt to increase the staffing, although I don't know that we are quite yet at two rental officers, fully staffed, at this point. Though, I can certainly confirm whether or not we have achieved that goal. Again, there is always going to be a need to improve those wait times. Five to seven weeks is still a fairly significant time, whether you are a landlord or a tenant. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. Yes. I am looking at page 286, and I see that, 2018-2019, there was actually \$292,000 spent in the office, and the budget for 2020-2021 is only \$238,000, so there might have been some extra money spent in the one year. Can I get an explanation of what might, on the surface, look like a downward trend in resourcing? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. I know there is some variance as a result of the UNW collective bargaining, but if I might, I'm going to ask the director of Finance if there is any further information that we can provide to the Member, please.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. I'm not sure I'm the director of Finance.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Sorry. Ms. Bolstad.

MS. BOLSTAD: Thank you, Madam Chair. There has been no reduction in resources to the rental office. The variance there really is just some higher contract spending that occurred in the 2018-2019 fiscal years, and we had a similar trend in 2019-2020, as well. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. I guess some of this goes back to in previous business plans when we were doing them in that way. We actually had some performance indicators, some way of judging how resourcing levels affected the level of service. We don't have that for this particular service and entity. At some point, we're going to have to look at how the engaging, monitoring, and access to services and turnaround service standards, times, whatever, is measured in resourcing is appropriately allocated. I will take the Minister's word at it for now. The wait times have come down. They probably still need to come down further. That's all I've got. Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. We certainly can provide the metrics in terms of the reduction in wait times. There have been reductions. I'm looking back to 2017-2018, and it's been by 22 percent the one year and then to 29 percent after that. The wait times there are only one metric. That is influenced by the fact that there are now two part-time rental officers hearing that. That changes the wait times, but it doesn't necessarily change some of the other metrics of the service, wait times to a decision. There are other ways of measuring the effectiveness of this public service, and I want to be cognizant that it is also a judicial service, and sometimes measuring a metric can be a bit challenging on a judicial service. I do take the point that, when representing this here and

relying on public resources, we want to make sure we are showing as many metrics as we can about the service people are receiving. Thank you.

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

MR. NORN: Marsi cho, Madam Chair. Just looking at a line item on page 286. I looked throughout the book. A lot of the other departments have computer and hardware and software, and then they seem to have budgets throughout. There is always some money there to maintain equipment and whatnot for computers. On this one here, from actuals a couple of years back, there was \$94,000 allocated, and all of a sudden, it stopped. Is there a reason for that, Madam Chair?

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. I am going to send that one over to the director of Finance, too, please.

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

MS. BOLSTAD: Thank you, Madam Chair. The Department of Justice's computer and equipment is primarily purchased from TSC, but our systems were transferred to the ISSS. Although we have this one-time expenditure, it's just some equipment related expenses in 2018-2019. We don't have any ongoing requirement for computer and equipment funding. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. NORN: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you for that response. Just so I don't get ahead of myself, am I allowed to speak to the page ahead? Can I do this? No. I just want to make sure. Other than that, that's the only number that I saw that was out, so I have nothing further.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member. Are there any further questions to the services to the public up to page 287? Seeing none, turn to page 286. Justice, services to the public, operations expenditure summary, 2020-2021 Main Estimates, \$4,497,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, committee. We will now turn to the information items beginning on 288. We have Justice, Victims Assistance Fund; and on 289, Justice, proceeds of crime fund; 290 and 291, we have Justice, work performed on behalf of others, information items.

Do we have any comments or questions on these items? Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. On the Victims Assistance Fund, the accumulated surplus is growing. It's growing by \$100,000 since 2018-2019. I am just wondering if I can get a bit of an explanation there. I would have thought that we could find ways to better assist victims of crime by getting the money out. Can I get an explanation of the increase in surplus there? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I can reassure the Member I think in this case that, while I don't necessarily know all the reasons why the past iteration of the committee might have been hesitant or in terms of what they're funding, there are two things that are happening that I think are positive. The biggest one is that the committee members have now met in person. They met in person; November 25, 2019, was the first time they met in person in, I'm told, quite a long time. I had the opportunity to meet with them. They sat down. They were really brainstorming around where they want the committee to go. As I understand it, that was an opportunity that has not existed for some time and should, hopefully, therefore, support that committee to be working better and more proactively as a group. That's a big part of it.

Another part is simply ensuring that the organizations that would be applying to this, that they would know again, similarly, that they have the ability and the opportunity to apply. I am conscious that it tends to be the status of women, Native Women's Association, who are more than deserving, but there are likely other organizations out there. The fact of bringing some attention to the opportunity will also hopefully help with getting that money out the door. Thank you.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. Thanks for that explanation. Is there like a cap or set by policy, by regulation, by legislation, on how much can actually stay in the fund? Are there any guidelines on disbursement percentages or something? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. I believe there are. I don't know them offhand. If I may, Madam Chair, if you could check with the deputy minister and see if she has that

information available to her? If not, Madam Chair, then, we'll certainly commit to getting it to the Member.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Minister. Deputy minister.

MS. DOOLITTLE: Thank you, Madam Chair. The committee appointed by the Minister of Justice recommends disbursements from the fund to support community-based projects and activities that provide services and assistances to the victims of crime, and there's no cap.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. In no way am I'm going to suggest that these people are not doing their job. As the Minister says, I think they get together once a year or something to look at applications. Whether the issue is it's not well enough advertised, what is available there, whatever. I will probably ask these questions next year, so I hope to see more of it going out the door to help victims of crime. I think the Minister recognizes that there's an issue with a growing surplus, and she's going to find a way to make sure we get more of the money out the door. Thanks, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member. I didn't hear any question in there, so I will take that as a comment. Member for Thebacha.

MS. MARTSELOS: I just want to make a couple of comments. You're talking about the missing and murdered women. I had a previous role when I sat on the national capital commission. We have some surplus here, and I'm wondering if a monumental plaque or place would come under the Victims Assistance Fund, if the missing and murdered women in the Northwest Territories were placed on a plaque and designated to the missing and murdered women. Is that possible? Is it something that has ever been thought about?

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. I guess the answer really is whether or not there is an organization in the territories that might bring that idea forward, because the fund isn't one to which the Department of Justice can direct. The Department of Justice, myself, we don't get to say to the committee what they should spend this money on. They are responsible for making those decisions. We have a lot of department support that we use to support the committee so that they can engage with communities, so that they can help the communities to develop programs. Indeed, Community Justice helps directly with some of the

community agencies. If there is a community group or organization out there that wants to put an idea forward, then I would say, "Please go ahead and do that," and it will certainly be evaluated. As far as I know, there is no reason why that couldn't come up as being eligible, but again, it wouldn't be up to me to make the final decision.

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

MS. MARTSELOS: Acknowledgement by the Government of the Northwest Territories is extremely important in this file. It's a way of acknowledging the missing and murdered women, and it's a designation that would be unique. It shows us that we care. I'm not asking for it to go to a committee because I just saw the whole thing with the Victims Assistance Fund. A lot of families are still hurting from a lot of the whole events that took place, and justice hasn't been served. I want you to think about that as the Minister of Justice. I think it's extremely important that we acknowledge this. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Madam Chair, I don't disagree with anything that the Member has said. It's just that I can't spend this money. I don't have the ability to spend this money, but obviously the more we say it out in this House about these ideas, the more possibility that one of the community organizations could work with the Department of Justice and put forward a plan to do exactly as the Member has suggested. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MS. MARTSELOS: Maybe it would be a good idea if the Minister did a bit of research on the way the National Capital Commission handles monuments and designations. There are certain specifications that are required, and I think it's something that you could put toward your committee. I think it should be based here in the capital because this is where the government sits, and I think that acknowledgement of the missing and murdered women on this anniversary is extremely important. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Madam Chair, maybe that's a conversation that can also be had at Cabinet table, too, so the point is well taken. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MS. MARTSELOS: I have no further comments.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Are there any further comments or questions to the information items? Thank you, Members. Please turn now to the department summary on page 259. Justice, operations expenditures, total department, 2020-2021 Main Estimates, \$133,617,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Minister, and thank you to the witnesses for appearing before us. Sergeant-at-Arms, you may escort the witnesses from the Chamber. Members, committee has indicated they would like to continue with the summary pages for the other departments. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Members, we can begin with Environment and Natural Resources on page 65. Environment and Natural Resources, operations expenditures, total department, 2020-2021 Main Estimates, \$97,085,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): We will now turn to Infrastructure on page 223. Infrastructure, operations expenditures, total department, 2020-2021 Main Estimates, \$275,029,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, committee. We will now turn to Lands on page 297. Lands, operations expenditures, total department, 2020-2021 Main Estimates, \$23,364,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, committee. We will now turn to Municipal and Community Affairs on page 317. Municipal and Community Affairs, operations expenditures, total department, 2020-2021 Main Estimates, \$116,193,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, committee. We will now turn to the information item on the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation on page 359. Northwest Territories Housing Corporation, operations expenditures, total

department, 2020-2021 Main Estimates, \$109,216,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Committee, those are the matters that we agreed upon to review today. What is the wish of committee, Mr. Norn?

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

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Mr. Norn. The motion is in order. The motion is non-debatable. All those in favour? All those opposed? Abstentions? The motion is carried.

---Carried

I will now rise and report progress.

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

Report of the Committee of the Whole

MS. SEMMLER: Mr. Speaker, your committee has been considering Tabled Document 30-19(2), Main Estimates 2020-2021, and would like to report progress, and, Mr. Speaker, I move that the report of the Committee of the Whole be concurred with. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. Do we have a seconder? Member for Sahtu. All those in favour? All those opposed?

---Carried.

The motion is carried. Item 22, third reading of bills. Mr. Clerk, orders of the day.

Orders of the Day

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer): Orders of the day for Thursday, June 4, 2020, at 1:30 p.m.:

1. Prayer
2. Ministers' Statements
3. Members' Statements
4. Returns to Oral Questions
5. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery
6. Acknowledgements
7. Oral Questions
8. Written Questions

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

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. This House stands adjourned until Thursday, June 4, 2020, at 1:30 p.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 4:10 p.m.