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The Honourable Frederick Blake Jr, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

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YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**Thursday, June 11, 2020****Members Present**

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

The House met at 1:34 p.m.

Prayer

---Prayer

SPEAKER (Hon. Frederick Blake Jr): Item 2, Ministers' statements. Minister of Justice.

Ministers' Statements

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 55-19(2):
JUSTICE DURING AND BEYOND COVID-19

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Mr. Speaker, like other departments across the GNWT, the Department of Justice saw its operations, administration programs, and service delivery impacted by COVID-19. Some functions or activities were delayed as more urgent tasks took over and staff were redeployed. Yet, as we begin to take stock of the last few months, there are challenges and opportunities that have appeared. I want to speak today on the response and emerging opportunities within Court Services and Corrections.

Our correctional facilities have implemented numerous measures, including modifying intake assessment procedures and practicing physical distancing. The department worked closely with the Chief Public Health Officer on developing these new protocols. One of the first and more critical responses to COVID-19 was to reduce the number of inmates at the correctional facilities. With support and cooperation from all those who work within the justice system, including the judiciary, the Federal Public Prosecution Service, and the Defense Bar, there has been a strong focus on some of the core principles of both judicial interim release, or bail, and sentencing to ensure that only those who must, by law, be separated from society are directed to the correctional facilities.

Within the Department of Justice, we are ensuring that inmates who are eligible for temporary absence release are aware of their opportunity to apply, have support from case officers to make those applications, and will have those applications

examined promptly. The application process for temporary absences includes a thorough risk assessment, because one of the goals of the correctional service is to preserve public safety; but it has been an opportunity for many individuals nearing the end of their formal custodial sentence to complete their period of rehabilitation outside the walls of the correctional facility. All of this work monitoring access to bail and supporting applications for temporary release can continue past the current COVID-19 measures.

Another challenge that we are still facing is the lack of Internet services available to inmates. For safety reasons, inmates do not have unrestricted access to the Internet. With visits cancelled in order to reduce the risk of an outbreak in our correctional facilities, this created a very real challenge to ensuring that inmates can keep in contact with their loved ones. The Department of Justice has responded by bringing in dedicated lines that can be set up to facilitate virtual contact sessions. Looking forward, this improved connectivity could also help facilitate access to new and innovative education and programming opportunities.

Court Services have also implemented measures to allow court operations to continue in accordance with the protocols set by the Chief Public Health Officer and as directed by the judiciary. To reduce the number of people present in a courtroom, hearings are only being held for urgent matters, and video appearances and videoconferencing are being utilized where feasible. Court circuits have been postponed to protect our communities. Additionally, we have reduced the hours of our court registries and installed depositories for the safe drop-off of court documents to protect both staff and the public.

Like other jurisdictions across the country, we are now examining how technology worked for us during the pandemic and considering how we may be able to continue to provide the court with flexible tools so there are options available in the future. The pandemic forced an increased reliance on technology for the delivery of court services, but, going forward, we have an opportunity to decide how technology can mean better service for the people of the Northwest Territories. That can include not only the efforts made to date, but also

looking at where we can continue to grow, including improvements to video and other telecommunication processes and electronic filing opportunities.

Mr. Speaker, Court Services and Corrections were not the only divisions within the Department of Justice impacted by COVID-19 and that worked to deliver a swift response. Lawyers in the Legal Division have been called on to provide opinions and draft documents in a situation without precedent; Community Corrections has worked to deliver their programs, even when our method of community engagement has been upended; Legal Registries and the Public Trustee developed new work processes and found new ways to interact with clients. In every case, we are seeing some of our challenges more acutely, but also seeing opportunities for improved service delivery and innovative responses. The Department of Justice will continue to ensure health and safety first for all residents and will also continue to grow the creativity and innovation that has been a part of our response to COVID-19. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Ministers' statements. Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment.

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 56-19(2):
MINING WEEK 2020

HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Every June, the Government of the Northwest Territories, together with the Northwest Territories and Nunavut Chamber of Mines and the Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission of the Northwest Territories and Nunavut, mark Mining Week in our territory. This year will be no exception. From June 21st to the 27th, we will once again recognize this industry that is a foundation of our economy.

What will be different this year is that, with COVID-19 restrictions in place, Mining Week will take place entirely online. A robust calendar of social media content is being planned. A dedicated Mining Week page on the Mining North website will provide access to geologist-led virtual rock walks, an opportunity to engage with representatives of the Northwest Territories Geological Survey, short videos, a kids' activity booklet, and links to feature stories, infographics, and a list of resources and information.

For its part, Mr. Speaker, the Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment's Mineral and Petroleum Resources Division will be introducing an app with two guided walking tours that we hope will encourage the public to explore our local geology. One walking tour will feature the Ranney Hill Trail, while the second will walk participants

through downtown Yellowknife. Both will highlight and offer information on this region's varied geology and the rich mining industry that it has sustained.

Mr. Speaker, as we prepare to mark Mining Week this year, I would also like to recognize the importance of not just our diamond mines, but the exploration companies and prospectors that also make up our resource sector. Just as it underpinned our economy before the pandemic struck, we will need mining, exploration, and development to anchor our economic recovery from COVID-19.

Mining and exploration have always been the biggest source of private-sector jobs and income for our residents. When they return to full operations, or when new projects advance, they will once again be major buyers of products and services from Northwest Territories companies and employers to our residents.

We recognize that these are trying times and, beyond addressing health and safety concerns as a first priority, we have worked to protect the livelihood of Northwest Territories residents and the many associated businesses working in our resource industry. Like we have with all sectors of the NWT economy, we continue to consider how we can best support our mineral sector through this period of reduced or limited activity.

We initially suspended payment and work requirements to protect mineral tenure holders until the end of June. I am happy today to announce that this relief is being extended for another three months until September 24th. This is an ongoing interim measure while we continue to work on more fulsome relief measures that require legislative change and consultation with our Indigenous partners, including those who share in the NWT's resource revenues. We have also made changes to our Mining Incentive Program to strengthen our support this year for proposed mineral exploration projects.

Overall, priority will be given to projects that offer the greatest potential to advance both mineral exploration and economic recovery in the Northwest Territories. Applicants are being advised to improve the attractiveness of their applications by committing to use services provided by Northwest Territories businesses and contractors to conduct most or all components of their work.

Mr. Speaker, through this COVID pandemic, our resource companies and their contractor partners have, once again, proven themselves to be strong corporate citizens. In particular, our diamond mines have worked with the Office of the Chief Public Health Officer and the Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission to identify and put into

practice very stringent guidelines and conditions governing the movement and interactions of their workforces. I want to thank them for their continued commitment to our territory.

Mr. Speaker, I have committed to being a strong advocate for our mining sector, and I stand by that today. I encourage all Members of the Legislative Assembly to seek out the online presentations and resources events that will mark Mining Week beginning on June 21st, and to take some time to acknowledge the opportunities and benefits which have been afforded to our territory by our historic relationships with mining. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Ministers' statements. Minister of Education, Culture and Employment.

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 57-19(2):
IMMIGRATION AND THE NORTHWEST
TERRITORIES NOMINEE PROGRAM

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We will defeat the scourge of COVID-19, and when we do, we will be better prepared to attract and welcome new residents.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to provide an update on the new immigration-related initiatives that the Department of Education, Culture and Employment has implemented or undertaken in the past six months, including an immigration settlement and integration pilot project, development of a new immigration stream, the creation of new resources for newcomers, and a refreshed website. I am also happy to officially announce the launch of the all new online application portal that will replace the current paper-based application process.

ECE delivers the employer stream of the Northwest Territories Nominee Program, which assists employers in filling workforce gaps with skilled and semi-skilled foreign nationals when local workers are not available. While the vast majority of nominees supported under the Nominee Program are already working in the territory, we continue to receive requests for information from people around the world who are interested in coming here. The entry of foreign nationals into Canada is a federal responsibility, so, like other provinces and territories, we work with Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada to ensure that processes and supports are in place when we welcome new residents to our territory.

In order to assist employers to build a skilled workforce while also supporting the immigration of foreign nationals who contribute to the economic development and success of the NWT, the Government of the Northwest Territories developed

an immigration strategy, titled "Building a Skilled Workforce and Vibrant Economy 2017-2022."

Recent progress on the actions from the strategy include the development and implementation of a comprehensive marketing strategy to promote the NWT and the Nominee Program to both employers and foreign nationals at the local, national, and international levels. We are also working to introduce a new program stream specific to francophone foreign nationals, which we hope will encourage new residents to become a part of our vibrant francophone community in the North.

With the input of local community organizations, we have developed a "Welcome to the NWT" resource booklet to provide key information to foreign nationals and newcomers on the services that they need to settle, integrate, and succeed in their new communities. This booklet shows newcomers what it is like to live here and describes everything from initial checklists to information on schools, community and government services, employment, healthcare, and weather. It is a very comprehensive, plainly written resource in both English and French and available on the ECE and immigratenwt.ca websites.

Mr. Speaker, the immigratenwt.ca website has been refreshed to a more vibrant story-centric site with testimonials, narratives, and multimedia. It is one stop for all of the information we have on the Nominee Program, and now includes an online application portal.

The new online application system will be more user-friendly for the applicant, allow the departments to better track and manage the lifecycle of an application, and enhance accountability. It will eliminate the need for paper applications, while maintaining efficiency and improving the collection of information under the program.

Mr. Speaker, I am also pleased to note that Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, the Conseil de développement économique des Territoires du Nord-Ouest, and the Federation Franco-Tenoise are piloting the delivery of immigration settlement and integration services through an integrated service centre for newcomers in Yellowknife. The goal of the pilot is to enhance the coordination and delivery of settlement and integration services, provide a one-stop shop for these services, and support the success and retention of newcomer immigrants in the NWT. The centre officially opened in December 2019 and will continue in pilot for the remainder of the 2020-2021 fiscal year.

To improve partnerships with immigration stakeholders, we are holding semi-annual meetings

with federally funded settlement service providers and offering information sessions and resources to newcomers and employers.

Mr. Speaker, from 2009-2019, the employer stream of the Nominee Program has welcomed 427 nominees to the territory. With their families, the total number is 819 people attending school, shopping at our stores, and contributing to their communities.

Since 2016, the business stream of the Nominee Program, delivered by the Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment, welcomed 17 business nominees. Five are currently operating their businesses in Hay River and 12 are operating in Yellowknife. Together with their family members, these nominees bring new business services and a number of new residents to the territory.

Mr. Speaker, we continue to have requests for information from potential new residents to come to the NWT to live, work, and contribute to a growing economy. Now more than ever, addressing workforce gaps and supporting the development of a strong labour market is critical to the territory's economic future. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Ministers' statements. Minister responsible for Seniors.

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 58-19(2):
SENIOR CITIZENS MONTH - JUNE

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The month of June is designated as Senior Citizens Month in the NWT. It is a time to recognize and show appreciation for the contributions made by seniors and elders to our communities, our families, and society in general.

In the Northwest Territories, seniors continue to be the fastest growing demographic in our population. In fact, it is projected that seniors and elders will comprise approximately 20 percent of our territorial population by 2035. This presents opportunities as well as challenges, Mr. Speaker.

We must ensure our seniors have a good quality of life that enables them to thrive and continue to be respected and contributing members of society.

One of the priorities of this 19th Legislative Assembly is to enable seniors to age in place with dignity. We must ensure that seniors have the necessary supports that allow them to live at home for as long as possible.

The GNWT is working across all levels of government and with community partners to ensure a wide range of social programs are available to meet the needs of our seniors, including housing, financial and income supports, healthcare supports,

and accessible community infrastructure and transportation.

Mr. Speaker, one serious challenge that negatively affects many of our seniors' quality of life is elder abuse. June 15th is designated as World Elder Abuse Awareness Day to bring awareness and encourage dialogue around this important issue.

This is a topic that is uncomfortable to acknowledge or discuss, as elder abuse, financial, emotional, or physical, can happen in a senior's own home. We must continue to address this to ensure vulnerable seniors are protected.

The NWT Seniors' Society has worked closely with the GNWT and has been instrumental in taking the lead on elder abuse prevention initiatives by way of awareness workshops and by providing a toll-free Seniors' Information Line. To complement this support, the NWT Help Line service offers confidential counselling support for residents of all ages in need of support.

Mr. Speaker, one of our first responses to the COVID-19 pandemic was to ensure the safety and well-being of our seniors, particularly those residing in long-term care facilities. We implemented a range of protective protocols and worked with families to ensure that residents could stay connected to those who love and care for them.

As the COVID pandemic response carries on, we will continue to deliver the services that seniors rely on. We are collaborating with community agencies and non-government organizations to ensure they are aware of the federal funding available to provide local support to seniors during this challenging time. We are also working with the NWT Seniors' Society to ensure communication material related to COVID-19 gets out to seniors in their Indigenous languages. This material will hopefully increase their awareness of the situation and how they can protect themselves, as well as reduce their anxiety about contracting the coronavirus.

The Department of Health and Social Services is also currently revising and updating the Seniors' Information Handbook, Mr. Speaker. This is a valuable resource for seniors and those who support them that provides listings of available services and numerous helpful resources. This handbook was developed in partnership with the GNWT departments and the NWT Seniors' Society and is updated periodically. It is available as both a hard copy handbook and online now, and the updated version is in process.

In closing, I would like to assure our NWT seniors that the GNWT remains committed to protecting their health and safety during the uncertain times as

well as moving forward. We will continue to work cooperatively with Indigenous governments, government agencies, and non-governmental organizations to achieve our goal of applying quality services for our seniors to ensure they are able to enjoy long and healthy lives here in the NWT. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Members' Statements

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON WORLD ELDER ABUSE AWARENESS DAY

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The United Nations General Assembly designated June 15th as World Elder Abuse Awareness Day. It is to bring attention to the world that abuse of elders is a public health and human rights issue that must be addressed.

The issue of COVID-19 has brought the treatment of elders to the forefront as we hear of the appalling treatment that some are being subjected to in both public and private care homes. It is not only care homes. We know of elders being abused by government through outdated policies and lack of support by family and friends. I am not saying this is an epidemic, but it is a reality.

Mr. Speaker, we hear of incidents of bullying, insults, abandonment, belittling, humiliation, harassment, isolation, privacy breaches, financial exploitation, and withholding of basic necessities of life all being revealed across the country. Most elders, out of love for their family or for a number of other reasons, almost never complain about this treatment. Because of health issues, they may not be in a position to vocalize how they are being treated, no matter what their living arrangement.

Elders, like the rest of the population, are looking for social interaction, a sense of belonging, and a sense of worth. It is important that we, as a society, as family, and as friends, provide that social aspect while safeguarding the protection these elders require. COVID-19 has forced the lockdown of many elders in government and other care facilities. This limits their opportunity for social interaction and visits from family and friends. We are fortunate in the NWT that our facilities are staffed with competent and caring staff, but loneliness continues to exist and needs to be addressed.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask all persons throughout the NWT to visit with elders, talk with them, sit with them, and above all else, listen to them, because one day, it may well be you in that exact position and wondering why you have been forgotten. It all

comes down to showing respect and standing up for elders and not just on June 15th of every year, but every day of every year. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON ELDER ABUSE

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Most of us love and respect the elders in our lives, yet abuse of this growing population is a problem all across the country. The detail of the problem is documented by Statistics Canada. NWT has the second highest rate of elder abuse in the country, and that rate is rising.

What is "abuse" in this context? The World Health Organization says it's a single or repeated act, or the opposite, a lack of appropriate action, which causes harm and distress to an older person, occurring within any relationship where there is an expectation of trust. It's a sad fact that all across Canada, elders are most likely to be victimized by those who are closest to them, namely, their own adult children.

Elder abuse can take many forms, but financial abuse and neglect are the most common in the NWT. It is important to note that overcrowded houses, poverty, and the legacy of residential school experience can make matters worse. The end result of any and all abuse is the same. It compromises the dignity, independence, health, and security of elders. It diminishes and frightens them. It's not what any of us want for our parents or for ourselves.

In 2015, the NWT Network to Prevent the Abuse of Older Adults released a five-year strategy with the title "Creating Safe Communities for Older Adults." The purpose of the strategy is to acknowledge and educate us about how widespread abuse is. The strategy starts from zero tolerance and offers 20 recommendations in four areas. Those four areas are public engagement, education and training, community responses, and policy and legislation. We all have a role to play in preventing elder abuse and creating safe, secure, and caring communities.

In the last four years, there have been some successes. The network itself is dormant, but the NWT Seniors' Society has been providing workshops called Creating Safer Communities for older adults. The workshops reflect NWT cultural practices and preferences. The goal is to empower communities to take on the issue of elder abuse themselves. Naming and speaking out about the

abuse of older adults is one of the first steps to prevent it, and that's what today is about.

As Members of the Legislative Assembly, we have a special role to play. We can advocate in all four areas, but particularly those recommendations directed to government. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON ON-GOING COVID-19 PANDEMIC PRECAUTIONS

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It has been three months since COVID-19 lockdown. Getting used to the new normal of wearing masks and not able to hug or handshake anymore is a new normal. We have been really fortunate that the fast acting of our communities widespread are extremely lucky that no lives have been lost in the Northwest Territories. All the hard work that our staff have been going through.

Mr. Speaker, I am worried about the people who will become complacent. Today, as a reminder to my constituents of Nunakput and across our territory, not to let your guard down. When it comes to this deadly pandemic, you have to keep social distancing, hand-washing, self-isolating, and if you have to travel, you should be avoiding large crowds, any situation, socially distance yourself, and wearing a mask.

To date, 97,000 Canadians have caught COVID-19. Approximately 8,000 Canadians have lost their lives to this pandemic. Worldwide, over seven million people contracted the virus and 400,000 have died. Now is not the time to be careless. We still are in this pandemic. Experts say there is a chance that there will be a second wave of COVID-19 this fall. There's a risk that the virus could spread to our governments who start to relax restrictions. I encourage the people of Nunakput and across the territory to continue to be careful. Remember, if you've travelled, to isolate yourself, especially if you visit vulnerable children or elders. Keep sanitizing your hands and hand-washing. Keep a good supply of dry goods just in case. Remember, call your local health centre if you feel sick or have a fever. Out there on the land, our summer weather is the best kind of social distancing there is.

I know that there has been some confusion this week around our travel, whether our borders are closed or not. I understand that, if someone wants to come to the NWT, they can, but they have to have an isolation plan. Friends and relatives who want to visit, they need a plan to self-isolate for two weeks when they get here. If not, they shouldn't

come at this time. This goes for travelling south. The disease is still out there. Some places have widespread community transmission. Please don't travel if you don't have to. Use caution. Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

---Unanimous consent given

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Premier and Cabinet, please remember to stay visible to the public and also to keep the promise that we made to our communities: no evictions and no power limiters or cut-offs. Help our people at this time. Don't forget how much our people are hurting. Help our communities when asked upon. I want to wish the constituents and all residents in the Northwest Territories: have a happy, safe summer. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON NATIONAL ACCESSABILITY WEEK AND ACCESSIBILITY FOR SENIORS

MS. MARTSELOS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week was National AccessAbility Week in Canada, which is an annual occasion for Canadians that brings attention to the issue of accessibility and recognizes the efforts of individuals, communities, and workplaces that actively work to remove barriers to accessibility and inclusion.

Mr. Speaker, the issue of accessibility across the NWT has become an increasingly pressing issue for those with less-able bodies, and the longer our government does nothing to change things, the longer we will continue to marginalize those with disabilities. This has been said by numerous territorial organizations, such as the NWT Disabilities Council, the NWT Human Rights Commission, and the Yellowknife Chapter of the MS Society of Canada, to name a few. To put it into perspective, according to the 2017 Canadian Survey on Disability, the NWT has a total of 6,350 people with a disability over the age of 15. Furthermore, according to the NWT Human Rights Commission 2018-2019 Annual Report, in total, 66 percent of all new complaints were allegations of discrimination based on disability.

I would like to also add that, even those without disabilities can have troubles accessing certain spaces across the territory. I say that from experience, Mr. Speaker, because even for myself, I am at a point in my life where I must consider my own accessibility needs before I travel to most places. I do not have a disability, but if someone like me, an elder with minor mobility issues, cannot access certain spaces adequately, consider what it

is like for someone in a wheelchair or a walker entering those same spaces.

Mr. Speaker, part of the problem with the NWT and accessibility is that our jurisdiction is one of 10 other provinces and territories who do not have any legislation on accessibility. Absent of any legislation, our territorial building codes have no frame of reference, no standards to follow in constructing buildings as barrier-free. By comparison, Ontario is one of the three provinces with accessibility legislation, and they have set the goal to be barrier-free by 2025, setting a standard for designing public spaces, transportation, and other customer services. Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

---Unanimous consent granted

MS. MARTSELOS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Accessibility is an issue that must be addressed and advanced with greater substance during the life of this Assembly. The Government of the Northwest Territories has already released a Disability Strategic Framework in 2017, along with a Disability Action Plan the following year. Let's build on that and put in the work to pass legislation on this very important issue of accessibility. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON ELDER ABUSE

MR. BONNETROUGE: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. The abuse seniors go through is lost on the public, as most people don't see or hear of it. It is not just the physical abuse that should be concerning, but the mental abuse, as well. Most seniors put their trust in immediate family, whether they be a son, daughter, brothers, or sisters, and even the caregivers who are trusted to provide services for them. Many seniors will lose faith in their loved ones at some point, should that trust be broken. They may lose faith, but still have the love they so dearly want in return.

Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Yellowknife Centre will be tabling a motion on behalf of the seniors of the Northwest Territories, requesting supports that will enable them to live in dignity. I will support that motion. Mahsi.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON AGING IN PLACE AND ACCESSIBILITY FOR SENIORS

MR. NORN: Marsi cho, Mr. Speaker. In my Member's statement today, I am going to join with my colleagues and discuss the importance of caring for our elders and people with mobility issues in the NWT.

Mr. Speaker, most of our elders have worked hard all their lives. They have paid their dues and helped lay the foundation of the road before us, so we as a government owe it to them to let them thoroughly enjoy their golden years with peace of mind. When I say they have worked hard all their lives, it's not just in the traditional 9:00 to 5:00 jobs. A lot of our elders worked hard out on the land. My great-grandfather hunting, checking fish nets, providing for the family; my great-grandmother used to tell me stories about going out in 50 below at Little Buffalo River with a shawl and checking rabbit snares for food, and still set in her ways. Even late in life, when I was in school, we bought her a washer and dryer. She refused to use it, and she still stuck with her old ways and had a washboard, because she wanted to get my socks just the right way. I still think about that, and it makes me smile. Hard-working, and I wish we could teach our youth some of that hard work ethic. I'm still trying, and hopefully, we can get there.

Going on with what I was saying, in our list of 22 priorities of the 19th Assembly, one of them is to enable seniors to age in place with dignity; the key word there being "dignity." This priority item is also expanded upon in this Assembly's mandate.

Mr. Speaker, our mandate says that this government commits to increasing supports for seniors to remain in their own homes in their communities; to protect our elders from abuse and neglect; and to fund actions that enhance inclusion, safety, and removal of community-level barriers to aging in place.

As we recover from this pandemic, I will work as best I can to ensure that this government will stay true to these commitments. As well, Mr. Speaker, for the reasons I have just mentioned, I will be supporting today's motion, or any motion about supporting our seniors here in the NWT. Marsi cho, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON AGING IN PLACE

MS. CLEVELAND: Mr. Speaker, my mother is my favourite senior. I might get in trouble for referring to her as that, but she is a feisty and fabulous 74-year-old. She loves to travel, kayak, create, and she is affectionately referred to by my girlfriends as

the original diva. Those of us with seniors in our lives are truly blessed. Our elders and seniors are powerful, but it is not a power that is physically exerted over us. Their power comes from the knowledge and wisdom gained over decades of life experience. It is a power that teaches us to sit, breathe, and listen.

Mr. Speaker, aging isn't just a biological process; it is a cultural one. Different cultures have varying attitudes and practices around aging, and these cultural perspectives shape our individual experiences of getting older. Many cultures celebrate the aging process. In Zimbabwe, they train grandmothers to help treat depression. In Greek culture, old age is honoured and celebrated, and respect for elders is central to the family. In places like China, South Korea, Taiwan, and Vietnam, in the practice of Confucianism, filial piety or caring for one's parent is considered a prime virtue. As a result, we see cultural practices, like in China, where employers provide time off for workers to visit elderly parents.

Here, Indigenous people also hold an attitude of respect and reverence for their elders. When starting a new beginning, elders are often asked to open the celebration with prayer, by feeding a fire. Indigenous elders are viewed as knowledge keepers and stewards of centuries-old language and traditional practices. In the North, as in Japan, we see multiple generations living under one roof, but Japan does not suffer the same housing and equitable access to healthcare crisis as the NWT.

Conversely, in Western cultures, we celebrate youth, strength, and virility, and do not emphasize the care and comfort of our elders and seniors at the same time. We need to ensure that we do all that we can to honour, respect, and support our elders. This includes ensuring that they have the opportunity to age in place close to family, with support, resources, and connections in their own language, safe from violence and neglect. We need to ensure that our programs and services do not have unintended barriers preventing seniors from accessing them.

Mr. Speaker, I am happy that our Premier continues the tradition of naming a Minister responsible for Seniors, because seniors and elders matter. However, I am generally concerned about the practice of assigning portfolios lacking fiscal resources and departments of capable staff to do the necessary work. What does it mean to be a Minister responsible for an issue without adequate resources to do the work or plans in place for affecting change?

As Northerners, we need to reflect on our own views on aging and how we are supporting our elders. As a government, we need the resources to

ensure we are providing seniors with the supports they need to live meaningful lives. Collectively, we must embrace our seniors and elders and recognize all they do to enrich our lives. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON IMPACTS OF COVID-19 ON SENIORS

MS. SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will repeat it again: June is Senior Citizens' Month, and June 15th is World Elder Abuse Awareness Day. Today, I would like to talk a bit about how this pandemic has affected some of our seniors in my community that I have observed.

Since March, programs have been cancelled, like the Elder Day Program, and orders to social distance have been put in place. No visitors for our elders in our long-term care or the elders that are in our homes. This pandemic is also keeping seniors out of the loop of what's happening in our territory during this pandemic, so it increases what's going on. What they're seeing on TV and what's actually happening in their territory, they haven't been able to observe, because GNWT has had a web page, Facebook posts, and most of the information shared by this government on the radio may have only been in English or in French. Those who speak other Indigenous languages may not have received the message. Our newspapers went digital, so they didn't even have the newspapers to read about what was going on in our territory.

Mr. Speaker, the only information that a senior who lived at home alone, with them alone or with a spouse, would get is word of mouth over the phone for the six weeks of this pandemic, if they had family to call, that is. They can watch the news, like I said, but only see what's going on in the rest of Canada. I know what it's like to have elderly grandparents that are living alone at home. Some are lucky and get visits every day, and phone calls all day, but there are those who have family that have their own issues they're dealing with, or they have work, kids, and other things that they're trying to manage. I'll be honest, when my grandparents lived alone at home, as a young mother, I could hardly get to see them.

Our elders don't like to ask for help as well, so they could be more at risk for loneliness, and that can lead to depression. Mr. Speaker, I just want to make sure our elders and seniors know they are important, and we must remember that they need to socialize. I'll ask for unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

---Unanimous consent granted

MS. SEMMLER: Thank you. We must remember that they need to socialize. They need to be informed in ways that they can understand. They did not grow up in a world of technology. Heck, some of them never had power or running water, let alone a computer or a smartphone. Moving forward, we need to make sure that, when we do make decisions, we are making decisions for all Northwest Territories residents, and we are providing material in more than one piece of information in our mailboxes so that they can be part of this Northwest Territories as well. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON AGING IN PLACE

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With each day as our population ages, this Assembly's priority of enabling our seniors to age in place with dignity gains more importance.

Mr. Speaker, when dealing with our seniors, we must make our most compassionate selves take the lead. We must celebrate our elders for enriching our lives and building our futures. In our communities, unfortunately, we have created a system of healthcare that often asks many of our seniors make the impossible choice between aging in their community or being placed in a long-term care facility away from their homes. This tragedy is compounded by cases where elders are then surrounded by people who don't speak their language, and a family visit can often require a very expensive plane ticket just to say "hello."

During COVID-19, Mr. Speaker, we saw many of us across the North take great steps to protect our elders and most vulnerable, but we also saw our seniors make great sacrifices living, and now continuing to live, isolated. We owe it to them to ensure that such isolation is only caused by a pandemic and not by them being forgotten. Coming out of COVID-19, we all must ensure that our seniors don't live in loneliness. Mr. Speaker, we must do everything we can to ensure that people who want to live in their community can do so.

Mr. Speaker, many of our constituents may not choose to retire in the North, perhaps a fair choice, but there is no doubt that every time they make this choice, it is a loss. A community is held together by its elders. Children raised with access to grandparents have deeper roots in their community, Mr. Speaker. Our elders ground us. They provide cultural continuity and calm guidance, and during

such uncertain times we are in now, we are in need of both.

Mr. Speaker, I hope we in this House can look back on our term and feel that we have made all of our seniors feel at home, that we have made sure their lives were a little easier, that we made meaningful progress on the tragedy that is elder abuse, so let us all lead with compassion and give hope for our elders and live a long, happy, retired life surrounded by their grandchildren in their homes. This is our responsibility, and I am honoured that it is a priority for all Members in this House. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON NORTHERN BENEFITS FROM SLAVE GEOLOGICAL PROVINCE ROAD

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. On March 16th, I presented written questions to the Minister of Infrastructure on GNWT contracts for the Slave Geological Province road. The Minister tabled the response on May 26th. The results were shocking in terms of the failure to deliver northern benefits. The information tabled by the Minister shows that, for the contracts issued from September 1, 2015, to date: only four of the 14 contracts went to northern contractors; only three of the successful contractors were Business Incentive Policy registered; only nine percent of the contracted amounts went to northern companies, \$88,660 out of \$987,282; and the pattern continues under the current Minister as all three contracts issued in 2020 went to southern companies.

These results are even worse than predicted in a March 2019 Economic Study of the Slave Geological Province Road by a consultant hired by the Department of Infrastructure. That consultant predicted "based on historical evidence" that "engineering and professional services related to the road pre-construction work will import 66 percent of its labour." According to that study, at no point in this project, from planning right through to potential mine operations, will northern labour ever exceed 50 percent.

The Minister of Finance said the following in this House on March 26th while defending the Slave Geological Province road: "We all arrived here on a mission of change, and we all arrived here on a mission of doing things differently and better. That means keeping resource dollars in the North. That means keeping the spending on projects in the North. That means engaging local industries. That will be up to all of us, and it will be up to this Cabinet to do that and to deliver on that promise."

Earlier this week, we approved the largest supplementary appropriation in the history of the Northwest Territories. Over 40 percent of the \$162 million amount in that spending is for infrastructure projects carried over from the previous year. This is proof that large infrastructure projects are not going to be the foundation for economic recovery. We can't get the money out the door, Mr. Speaker, and when we do, the benefits to Northerners rarely live up to the promises. We need to start small, spend money on people and our needs, such as housing, food security, and renewable energy. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON ELDERS' MONTH

MR. LAFFERTY: Masi, Mr. Speaker. [Translation] Mr. Speaker, this month is Elders' Month, and we hold them in great respect. They lead us. They guide us into everything that we do. We also have respect for our elders. They give us guidance. As we stand here, we have elders in our community who guide us, so we need to have respect and take care of them. We also know the kind of life they led. They have a lot of traditional knowledge.

Mr. Speaker, not only that but in the Northwest Territories, we know that our elders go through some hardship. Sometimes they are harsh with their words to their families, their children or grandchildren, but we also need to take a good look at how we treat each other. Sometimes there are bad words out there that belittle each other. We need to remember this.

The concern we have is that elders sometimes go through hard times in their own home. Sometimes the elders have their children or grandchildren taking care of them, so the elders do have their family members in their unit. Sometimes, when the family members live with them, they go through hardship because the children may have an addiction problem which causes the elders some stress. We need to remember that the elders have gone through a lot of problems in the past and we want the best for them to lead a good life. We need to talk about this so we can do something for them. This is the Elders' Month, so we need to do something for them. That is my statement. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. [Translation ends]

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON COVID-19 PANDEMIC RESPONSE IN NAHENDEH

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, today I'd like to rise and talk about some of the COVID-19 responses in the Nahendeh region.

Northerners throughout the area support local events and groups however they can. Things like the Lights On Program and the elementary school lunch program received donations monthly pre-COVID-19. That includes monthly donations. The North West Company Healthy Horizons Foundation donated \$20,000 to the Lights On Program so that they could begin to build a snowboard park in Fort Simpson, and I'm happy to say it's been built. Since the pandemic started, they donated \$1,000 to the local foodbank and soup kitchen. This was greatly appreciated by the staff and residents. As one person said recently, every little bit helps in our time of need.

There have been also private donations from the North West Company by the Sprout Foundation and Second Harvest. The North West Company contributed an additional \$600,000, bringing their total donation of \$3.6 million. This donation will be spread throughout the stores within the North West Company to divide among communities in the form of vouchers. These vouchers can be used in store to buy food items. The company is working with the community to decide which families would benefit most from this. They are also looking for new ways to support the community. We are especially grateful for the support that they have shown us throughout the difficult times.

There are a couple of other stores that I'd like to recognize here, as well: the Unity Store and the Fort Liard General Store. They are big supporters of community events, corporate citizens, and employers in both the communities. They also reach out to people in time of need.

I would like to also recognize Dene First Nation, who contributed a whole pot of their money, including dividends as they move forward. This has allowed people, not just in the community, but also outside membership, to get food in this time of need. The local band has also developed small gardens for kids under six. This is allowing them to get the material and seeds, and I would like to thank them for that.

In closing, I would like to thank all of the businesses and stores which I didn't mention today for all their help and commitment to the residents of the Northwest Territories and for their wellness. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Oral Questions

QUESTION 324-19(2):

HOMELESSNESS AND HOUSING IN HAY RIVER

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have questions for the Minister of housing in her role as the housing Minister and also the Minister responsible for Homelessness.

Last weekend, when I was home, I was driving home after work and I noticed someone lying in the ditch. It was one of my constituents. He was not under the influence; he was just tired, had a medical issue and no home to go to. He was lucky that a couple of young ladies were kind-hearted enough stop and call an ambulance for him.

When I arrived, he was alone. I stayed with him until the ambulance showed up, and at that time, he informed me that the night before he was in the same position, and he went to hospital there, or the health centre, they wouldn't let him stay overnight. I told him, I said, "Well, go and take the ambulance, and they're pretty well going to have to keep you there." I said, "If they don't, just tell them to call me. As an MLA or as a lawyer, I will look after you, one or the other." I never heard from him so hopefully he's okay.

Anyway, the first question I have is: I would ask the Minister if her departments have taken any action to establish a permanent shelter for men in Hay River. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Hay River South. Minister responsible for the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation.

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the Member for his question. Right now, the Housing Corporation is involved in a vulnerable persons working group in the community of Hay River. Right now, we are in agreement with an established business in Hay River as well, too, that we have opened up 18 additional rooms for Hay River. I know this is a temporary solution for the community, but we are hoping to work in conjunction with the community membership and the non-profit organizations in the community of Hay River to find a solution to address the homelessness need in the Member's riding.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: I think that the people appreciate the beds that are made available to the homeless right now. Problem is that some of them are removed every once in a while, and they have nowhere to go. They had a shelter in the old part of Hay River, and it was closed. This morning there was somebody peeking out the window, so they moved back in. I told the guy, "Just keep the door

open. Let them use it until something else comes up."

The next question I have for the Minister: it's not only the homeless that we need shelter for in Hay River. We need living accommodation for singles, couples, and families. There is a big shortage. What is the department doing to address this immediate issue that is in Hay River?

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you to the Member for his questions. Last week, the Housing Corporation had rolled out \$43 million in infrastructure projects through the Northwest Territories. With that is an initiative, as well, to try to work and address the housing needs and the homelessness issue throughout the territory. We also have carry-over projects as well, too, that that weren't complete in 2019-2020, so those projects are soon to be coming to completion.

I also made an announcement that approximately 130 units would be available to the people of the Northwest Territories due to the COVID response from the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation and that emergency measure is no longer required those units. Right now, I can let the Member know that the Housing Corporation, we do have 60 units throughout the Northwest Territories that we are looking for immediate occupancy. The additional 70 are needing minor to major repairs. I could follow up with the Member to address how many units identified are going to be allocated in his riding.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: The Hay River high-rise has been a sore point for many, but it has 122 apartments sitting empty right now. It is time to put our differences aside and seriously look at it as a viable place to reduce housing requirements in Hay River. This government did it with the Arnica Inn project here in Yellowknife. Why not the Hay River high-rise?

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: I do see the need for utilizing the high-rise in Hay River for the additional 122 units. The Housing Corporation hasn't been approached, to my knowledge. It does lie in the Office of the Fire Marshal. We haven't had any approach from the business owner or the owner of the high-rise that would have expressed interest in looking at renovations or a possibility of accessing our co-investment fund for the Northwest Territories. I am open to furthering this conversation with the Member, should the Member and his riding be interested in looking at additional solutions for the high-rise. The business owner would have to contact the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation individually.

MR. SPEAKER: Oral questions. Final supplementary, Member for Hay River South.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I guess I'd be hoping that the Housing Corporation, knowing that there is a shortage in Hay River, would be kind of proactive, so I'm just wondering: when was the last time that anybody from the department has actually talked to the owner of the high-rise? I talk to him probably weekly, so I'm just wondering if your department has talked to him, or when was the last time anybody talked to him. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Like I said, this is a private business, a private owner and, to my knowledge, as of today, we haven't been contacted by the Hay River high-rise. I do have open dialogue to be working with the owner for the high-rise in Hay River, but I do know that there were some concerns with the Fire Marshal, so I'm not too sure; I couldn't comment on what status that building may be in and what the requirements would be to have the high-rise up and running again. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 325-19(2):
COVID-19 PANDEMIC DATA

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Throughout the course of COVID-19, I have made multiple requests to see some data regarding COVID-19. I have made requests to see modelling, and I have still have not seen those. The type of data I am looking for is really not the kind of thing that I think should be asked on the floor of the House, but I will ask.

We have consistently heard that one of the risks of the Northwest Territories is we have a lot of immunocompromised people and respiratory illness, so my question to the Minister of health is: how many people in the NWT are projected to be at high risk or immunocompromised? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. DIANE THOM: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Right now, we are looking at about a third of the residents of the Northwest Territories. Thank you.

MR. JOHNSON: I find that a truly terrifying statistic, and I am a little concerned that it took this long for me to hear that one third of our residents are in that category, because I really do think it shows the significant risk we are at. One of my other concerns is that there is a lot of different data out there showing how deadly COVID-19 is and what actually its effect on a population are. I'm not looking for

specific modelling. I'm looking to get a sense of, given there is one third of our population at risk, and based on the number of people in the Northwest Territories, if COVID-19 is spreading across the Northwest Territories, how many people would we expect to be hospitalized and/or die?

HON. DIANE THOM: I don't have that level of detail right now, but I will get back to the Member.

MR. JOHNSON: Yes, I would appreciate if that level of information could be made public. During one of our briefings, I asked the Chief Public Health Officer, and she started to lay out a formula of how you could take a set of the population, and what we know about COVID-19, and then project hospitalizations. It's that kind of information I'm looking for. It's certainly not information I am capable of understanding or providing, so I would really appreciate if the Minister could follow through with that commitment.

Another one of the main concerns I have had is that I still don't have a full understanding of the risk. If we have community spread of COVID-19, there is going to be a set number of hospitalizations and deaths due to COVID-19, but there is also the risk of a surge on our healthcare system. Can the Minister try to give me a sense of what the risk of deaths due to unrelated-to-COVID illnesses that would not be treated due to a surge?

HON. DIANE THOM: Yes, we will look into that and provide that detail to the Member.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate that the questions I'm asking are highly technical, and I have resorted to asking them on the floor of the House because, after numerous requests, I have not got that data, so I'm really looking for some concrete numbers.

I don't believe it is a fair comparison to compare COVID-19 to the flu, based on everything I know. I also know that flus have flu shots, which significantly reduce the number of people who get the flu, but I have made this request previously, and I am looking to get a sense from the Minister of how many people require hospitalization in the average flu season in the NWT or how many die from it. I think that would be a fair comparison to COVID-19, and ultimately, I would like data that shows that, but if I could get a sense of what a flu season looks like in the Northwest Territories, as compared to the worst cases of COVID. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. DIANE THOM: We do have those numbers prepared, and I can get back to the Member with those. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 326-19(2):
ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE
MINISTER RESPONSIBLE FOR SENIORS

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would like to ask some questions today of the Minister responsible for Seniors. My first question is: what tasks or responsibilities has the Minister responsible for Seniors been charged with to achieve during the life of this Assembly? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One of the roles is being an advocate for the seniors within the Cabinet, working with the various departments, but also the second part of it is to work with the seniors' societies. Groups in the Northwest Territories that have seniors' issues that need to come forward and talk to me, as well. I attend federal meetings, as well, on behalf of the government in regard to seniors. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. CLEVELAND: I understand that the Minister is very dedicated to his job, but he is one person, so I'm wondering: what kind of fiscal and human resources have been allocated to the Minister to achieve the tasks and responsibilities that he would like to achieve as Minister responsible for Seniors through the life of this Assembly?

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Presently, the Minister responsible for Seniors doesn't have any fiscal or staff time allocated to me specifically; however, I do have a working relationship with various Ministers, in particular the Minister of health, and we are able to work together on various tasks and we are able to get work done that way. Also, in regard to resources, one of the things is that we are looking at our mandate letters and some of the challenges that we see facing us. We have reached out to AOC, and to my understanding, it has gone to the committees, and they are coming back and commenting on our ability with the mandates and what they would like to see, as well.

MS. CLEVELAND: I'm wondering if the Minister has considered developing a plan for aging in the Northwest Territories that identifies things like policies, programs, and services that are currently in place to support seniors; that identifies gaps in those supports; and that sets out a course of action or a plan for how to improve territorial supports of seniors going forward.

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: I recognize the importance of supporting seniors to ensure that they are safe, supported, and are able to age with dignity within their communities and their own homes. There are a number of initiatives across departments that provide support for seniors. These programs are listed in the Seniors' Handbook, which is a valuable resource for seniors looking to access government and community supports in the NWT.

Departments are constantly looking at gaps in programs to be responsive in a timely manner to issues affecting seniors; however, developing an NWT seniors' strategy may not be achievable at this time. However, we are committed to supporting seniors by advancing the mandate priority of the Government of the Northwest Territories. The most important other part of it is that we are willing to work with committee and what they can help bring forward.

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

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I had a teacher in high school who still lives in town, and he used to always say to us, "If you fail to plan, you plan to fail." I am wondering if the Minister responsible for Seniors would be willing to commit to creating a plan, somewhat of a strategy, one would say, around seniors. Thank you.

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Unfortunately, I can't make that commitment. I am becoming the Minister of "No." However, we do have a number of activities, things that various departments are doing. We are also working with NGOs to identify concerns and issues that we can help work with them. At the end of the day, as the Member says, you plan to fail or whatever the statement was. I get that one mixed up. If you fail to plan, you fail, but at the end of the day, we are working with the government departments to make sure that the issues are brought forth, that we can work to be able to achieve that. We have a variety of activities that are happening within various departments that help seniors move forward. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 327-19(2):
SUPPORT FOR CHILD CARE AND EARLY
CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. My questions are for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. I would like to follow up on a letter that I tabled in the House a couple of days

ago regarding support for childcare. Has the Minister had an opportunity to review the letter from the Children First Society in Inuvik and the Yellowknife Daycare Association? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes.

MR. O'REILLY: That is the kind of answer I am looking for. Thank you to the Minister. There has been almost \$5 million designated to support early childhood care and education during the COVID-19 pandemic by GNWT. Supports include a subsidy to lower childcare costs for essential service workers, wage top-ups, funding for cleaning supplies, and money available to assist with reopening. Of course, we don't want to take steps backwards. The child carers would like to maintain this positive momentum. Will the Minister commit to continuing these additional supports for childcare beyond the COVID-19 pandemic?

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: ECE gives out a lot of money. The Members are always asking me to give out more money. I have to let them know there is a process. There is a process in the government whereby I have to go to the Financial Management Board and present this. That being said, these funds were put out there for a reason. It's because COVID-19, we were afraid it was coming to the territory, and we needed to be prepared. As such, we put a lot of time into it in a short period of time. We put a lot of hours each day into this.

We are in a different place now. What we have to do is go back, look at what we have in place, look at these supports. Maybe they are not the right supports. Maybe we need different supports. There are some things in there, for example, helping ensure that childcare centres that have closed can keep paying their bills so they don't disappear. Why would we do that if we are just going to now let them disappear? It would make sense that we have to look at what ongoing supports we can provide. Once we figure that out, then I will come back to the Financial Management Board with a plan if that is what is needed, and we will go from there.

MR. O'REILLY: I was hoping for a "yes." Look, I take the Minister's points, but what I would like to hear him say is that he is actually prepared to take that proposal to FMB. During COVID-19, there has been a global recognition of how childcare workers provide an essential service. Early in this sitting, the Premier reiterated her support for universal childcare. I agree with it, too. We also have an early childhood development framework and an action

plan in place that will start to help us get there. Can the Minister commit that he'll get his senior staff to discuss with early childcare providers, and they are ready and eager to enter discussions about looking at making some of these changes during COVID-19 more permanent, to increase the availability and affordability of childcare?

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: I know that every time we talk about universal childcare for the next four years, it's going to come back to the quote from the Premier saying, "I am all about universal childcare." I thank her for that. In the government's mandate, there is a commitment to develop a 2030 early learning and childcare strategy in consultation with stakeholders that considers the availability of childcare spaces and reduction of childcare costs. This is under the commitment to advance universal childcare. What the Member's asking is what is in the mandate.

This is what we plan to do, how can we move towards a universal childcare and early learning education system, essentially, across the Northwest Territories. I can't commit to the date when those talks will happen. The department is in constant contact with early learning and childcare providers. There are ongoing conversations, and there are a lot of good ideas that we already know about. Given the situation right now where a lot of employees are working from home, some have gone to other departments to help with the COVID-19 efforts, I can't commit to making this happen today. That is exactly the type of work that ECE is planning on doing.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. I want to thank the Minister for that fabulous display of Cabinet solidarity. More seriously, I do appreciate his commitment on this file. He has done a lot of work in the department, as well. I commend him for his commitment to work with childcare providers moving forward. Of course, we are still in a pandemic. I have raised the issue of lessons learned several times in this House, Mr. Speaker. One of those lessons learned is that we need to continue to improve access to affordable childcare. Can the Minister tell us how he and his department intend to approach lessons learned about childcare during this pandemic and make permanent changes that bring us closer to universal childcare? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Unfortunately, I wouldn't say there are necessarily a lot of lessons learned. It's highlighted a lot of the things that we already knew: that there are a limited number of qualified early childhood educators; the pay scale is not quite comparable to other fields. In the letter the Member

referenced, it talks about the pay scale for early childhood educators and people who work at childcare centres. It's much lower than, say, teachers, for example. A lot of times, people who have those qualifications move on to the JK to 12 system. It's tough to hold onto them.

The department has been trying to respond to these types of things over the past number of years. We have grants for people who want to further their education in this field. There are dual credit courses that students can take in high school so that they can get an early start into this. There are a couple programs at Aurora College. We are doing a lot of the work that needs to get done here. We already know about that work. If this helps us get there faster, then I will take advantage of that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 328-19(2):
PROGRAMS AND SUPPORTS FOR ELDERS
AND SENIORS

MR. LAFFERTY: Masi, Mr. Speaker. [Translation] I spoke earlier in my Member's statement about the seniors and what kind of a program is there. We have been thinking about it. That is why I want to ask the Minister for seniors about what kind of a program is there for seniors. [Translation ends]

[Microphone turned off] ...month. I have some questions for the Minister responsible for Seniors. The first question I have is: what kind of programs exist for our elders' or seniors' care, more specifically in the area of verbal and physical abuse here in the Northwest Territories? Masi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Monfwi. Minister responsible for Seniors.

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Part of the mandate and one of the priorities is we are working on that. Right now, we do have a hotline available for people to bring forth their concerns. We also have the work with NWT Seniors' Society who provide that information to us, and then we try to work with seniors moving forward. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. LAFFERTY: Moving onto the question I have: we talk about integrated approach and interdepartmental collaboration, as well. I would assume that all are departments that work together, Justice, ECE, housing, and also, the Minister responsible for Seniors, pertaining to these issues that we are faced with. I would like to know, Mr. Speaker, are there inter-agencies in the communities that deal with these issues, such as

senior abuse in the communities, and do all communities have these inter-agencies?

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: It's my understanding that there are inter-agency committees in some of the communities. Health is part of it, ECE, Municipal and Community Affairs, and Housing. They are there; they do have inter-agency meetings. I'm not sure about every community, but I know that there are a number of communities that have that group that works together.

MR. LAFFERTY: The next line of questions is pertaining to enforcement. As you know, a lot of our communities, 10-plus communities, do not have RCMP detachments, so what is the process where an elder or a senior is being verbally or physically abused, especially in communities that do not have an RCMP detachment? What is the process?

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: There are a number of opportunities for elders to reach out. There are emergency protection orders that they can reach out to Justice with the Alison McAtteer House, so they are able to go forward with that. They are also able to reach out to the NWT Seniors' Society to help them, and they would give them direction on where they go, as well as working with Health and Social Services staff; they are able to work with them, as well. There are a variety of opportunities. As well, I would also encourage them to reach out to leadership and get them to help them, too, because then they can direct them or help them get the support they need.

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

MR. LAFFERTY: Masi, Mr. Speaker. As you know, a lot of our community members, especially the elders and seniors, do not speak English, in my communities especially. Obviously, I would like to know if this Minister is committed to providing more of an enhanced educational awareness on programs that are available to our elders, to our seniors, in our language, whether it be broadcasted on CKLB or other programming, because a lot of elders don't know that these programs exist and, if we reach out to them, I think a lot of these issues can be prevented, Mr. Speaker. Masi.

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: I would like to thank the Member for that great idea. We will, and I have been working with my colleagues across here, been working to get that information. We do have the Seniors' Handbook, but we can work together to get it into the languages, and as well to try to get it out there in the news, and that, and working there. We are more than willing to work with my colleagues on that issue. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 329-19(2):
COVID-19 AND INFLUENZA DATA

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If I have learned one thing in this job, it's that persistence often gets you results. Considering that one third of NWT residents are at high risk of COVID-19, does the Minister have any projections of, if COVID-19 were to spread across our population, how many people would be hospitalized and/or die? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Yellowknife North. I'm guessing the Minister of Health and Social Services.

HON. DIANE THOM: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Using the data from the four most recent influenza seasons, there were two years with no influenza deaths and two years with a single influenza death each year in a row. The past four years, we have also had between 14 and 24 influenza-related hospitalizations and between two and seven ICU admissions. It is important to note that approximately 21 percent of the population receives the influenza vaccine, with greater than 50 percent coverage among those 65 years of age and older, who are typically at greater risk for severe disease.

In addition, antivirals for flu treatment are often effective. We do not have a similar treatment for COVID-19 at this time. General estimates are that both 10 percent of unvaccinated adults and 20 percent of unvaccinated children acquire influenza each season. The case fatality rate of influenza in adults is about one in 1,000, resulting in about 3,500 deaths in Canada each year. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. JOHNSON: That was some very helpful influenza data, and I will re-read the Hansard to try to understand it after. Perhaps it could be posted publicly. However, specifically, I'm not just looking for data on influenza; I'm looking for a projection of COVID-19 community spread across our population and the number of hospitalizations or deaths that could result from that.

HON. DIANE THOM: COVID-19 is a new virus to everybody around the globe. Everyone is susceptible because none of us has had a chance to build our immune system up to it. Without a vaccine and without public health measures to reduce exposure, there is a high probability that the vast majority of NWT residents could acquire COVID-19 in the coming months and years. However, with public health measures that we have in place, it's unlikely that all of the NWT's population will get COVID at the same time or in the same

season. That is why it's so important that we stay the course and follow the public health advice and orders that are in place so that we can continue to contain the spread of COVID-19 and keep the curve flat.

The NWT has not experienced any community transmission, so we don't have the data to be able to model how COVID-19 might behave in the Northwest Territories if we did have community transmission, so our modelling efforts are being informed by the experience of places where community transmission has occurred, including those that are similar to the Northwest Territories, like northern regions in other provinces. This will help us get a more realistic idea of how the outbreak might spread.

What we know from other regions that are affected is approximately 80 percent of infections are mild enough to be managed at home; it's about 15 percent who are hospitalized; 5 percent require ICU; and approximately 1 percent die. In the Northwest Territories, this could translate to 450 deaths from COVID-19, so, in order to delay the spread of COVID-19 as much as possible, we put public health measures in place early, before there was any evidence of community transmission, and this has helped us contain the spread of the virus.

MR. JOHNSON: The idea of 450 residents across our very small population dying, I think, is truly a tragic figure that we want to avoid at all costs, and I'm happy to hear that we do not expect, given our public health measures, for everyone to obtain COVID at the same time.

My other question is: one of the main things we have been trying to do is to break the wave, to prevent a surge in our healthcare system. Do we have any current projections or idea of, if we get to that community spread where there are potentially hundreds of people dying, whether other deaths will be caused due to the surge on the healthcare system?

HON. DIANE THOM: From the beginning of the pandemic, we have encouraged people to continue to seek care for their healthcare needs. It's important that we continue to support the healthcare and wellness of our population, including primary preventative care. We have made significant advances in virtual care to enable people to receive care closer to home. I will get back to the Member with the rest of this question.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I guess my request to the Minister is: I think if people hear that there are potentially 450 deaths, that statistic

has numerous qualifiers and a bunch of underlying assumptions built into it. When we hear that 5 percent of people get COVID and end up in the intensive care unit, once again, there are a number of qualifiers, and that's a worst-case scenario based on all of the qualifiers you said. My request to the Minister: could we publish some sort of report or data or put this out with all of the information out? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. DIANE THOM: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. All the information we provided is good information, and it allows the people in the Northwest Territories to see how serious this pandemic is in comparison to the flu. Our department has good data and has the figures, and we would be able to provide that data publicly. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 330-19(2):
CREATING SAFE COMMUNITIES FOR OLDER
ADULTS

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In my statement, I mentioned that there is a strategic plan to create safer communities for older adults. This wasn't a government strategy, but government was at the table along with various stakeholders for the seniors community. Are the strategy's recommendations still on the government's radar? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. DIANE THOM: Can the Member repeat the question? Thank you.

MS. GREEN: My questions are for the Minister of Health and Social Services. In my statement today, I mentioned there is a strategic plan to create safer communities for older adults. This wasn't a government strategy, but government was at the table along with other stakeholders from the seniors community. My question for the Minister is: are the strategy's recommendations still on the government's radar?

HON. DIANE THOM: The NWT Network to Prevent Abuse in Older Adults that the Member is referring to is comprised of representatives from non-profit organizations, service providers, Indigenous groups, and GNWT departments. The Department of Health and Social Services provides funding to the NWT Seniors' Society to support the Network to

Prevent Abuse in Older Adults, and also to promote public awareness around recognizing the abuse, preventing, support and programming.

With the funding we provided to them, the NWT Seniors' Society is making progress, so yes, we are doing the work on three strategic priorities. The public education, like the Member mentioned in her statement, public education, education and training, community responses that are all recognized in the strategy, and yes, we are continuing to do the work together.

MS. GREEN: Thank you to the Minister for that response. The strategy included three recommendations directed to government. The first is to implement a centralized data reporting system for all cases of abuse of older adults in the NWT. Is there such a data reporting system in place at this time?

HON. DIANE THOM: I am not aware. The Member did mention that this is their report and this is their progress, so I'm not sure if there is data that is related to that.

MS. GREEN: Thank you to the Minister for that. This recommendation was aimed at government to set up a centralized data reporting system. Another of the recommendations was to research the need for legislation which would protect older adults from abuse. Is this something that is anywhere on the government's radar?

HON. DIANE THOM: The GNWT is committed to supporting the ongoing work to protect seniors from abuse and providing, again, ongoing funding to support this network. We are committed to working actively as members of this NWT network so that we can continue to prevent the abuse of elders, and also looking to explore the renewal of this network strategy.

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

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the Minister for that. The Minister said that there was a possibility that this strategy would be renewed. Now is certainly the time. It was a 2015 to 2020 strategy. Can the Minister tell us what steps she is planning to take with stakeholders to renew this focus on elder abuse? Thank you.

HON. DIANE THOM: In addition to the work that is specific to seniors, the department is also taking steps to address and reduce the family violence in general. The department has looked at the strategy. It is coming up for expiry, and I did mention that we are looking to work together, and that is something we will look at. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 331-19(2):
FAMILY REUNIFICATION DURING COVID-19
PANDEMIC

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. One of the most common questions that I get from constituents right now is in regards to family unification and being able to visit with family in the Northwest Territories. I am wondering if the Minister of Health and Social Services can speak to instances where family is allowed to come to the Northwest Territories. Thank you.

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

HON. DIANE THOM: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When the COVID virus came, when it started happening all over the world, the GNWT took extreme measures to ensure that we restricted a lot of things, and that meant closing down some of our long-term care centres, and that meant putting restrictions in place. I look back, and a lot of family were not able to visit, and that was hard for a lot of families because we weren't allowing them into the long-term care centres. You look at some of the places now, and there are innovative ways where we can allow visits that are safe to our elders and seniors. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. CLEVELAND: One of the most common reasons that people reach out for wanting family members to come north is because of compassionate exemptions for childcare. A lot of people are still working, schools are closed, and childcare is very expensive in the Northwest Territories, and so they are looking to have family members come north to provide childcare assistance. I'm just wondering, what is the proper way for people to request these exemptions through the Department of Health and Social Services?

HON. DIANE THOM: There are two public health officers to put orders in place, however, within the orders, there are exemptions. One of the exemptions is to make an application to Protect NWT or call 8-1-1 and request the exemption for families to be able to reunite, especially in the situation of childcare.

MS. CLEVELAND: What is the anticipated wait time that somebody should expect to hear back from Protect NWT?

HON. DIANE THOM: It varies. I talked in the House this week about how busy our Protect NWT is, and how busy our 8-1-1 is. We are getting to the tune of 1,600. I can't remember, but we are getting a lot of

requests for exemptions, for complaints, for enforcement, border control. Our Chief Public Health Officer mentioned that it would take anywhere between five to 10 days for a response. With that, I ask residents and people who are coming to the Northwest Territories to plan ahead. You can't expect to just file your self-isolation plan and expect to know in a day or two. It does take time. If people are travelling around, you should file your plan as soon as you know. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much Mr. Speaker. Though I appreciate that, I know that a lot of GNWT employees were redeployed to help out Protect NWT, and I definitely appreciate that they volunteered for that. I'm wondering, given that there is such a desire for people to find out more information about this, if the Department of Health and Social Services is willing to put this information online so that residents can have easier access to how to go about this process. Thank you.

HON. DIANE THOM: Absolutely. As things change and as things develop within this COVID-19, our department is frequently updating our website. We are providing information through media, through a variety of radio, the list continues. Our department continuously provides communication as things come up, and that is important. People in the Northwest Territories would like to know when things are happening, when changes are being made to different orders, how we're moving into different phases. It's very important that communication continues. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 332-19(2):
IMPACTS OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON
SENIORS

MS. SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Minister of health. I know that we have some great homecare and home support staff, and I'm sure they're providing as much information to the seniors and elders in my community that are on their homecare list, but not all seniors in my community are on that list. I want to know if the department can make sure that, if, or when, we have this second wave, some information packages can be put together so that we can have them in the public, even for constituency office, so we can deliver this information out to seniors to help them what they need to do to be safe during the pandemic. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. DIANE THOM: Absolutely. Right now, we are going through this first wave of COVID. We are learning from some of the things that we are doing, therefore, allows us to better inform residents of the Northwest Territories. It is important and communication is key. Especially if we are moving into the summer months, the fall, and the flu pandemic is coming. Information will be provided on vaccines and that is important. We are currently having discussions with the federal Ministers on perhaps having a flu vaccine available earlier so that we can have protection for our seniors.

MS. SEMMLER: Can the Minister maybe have her homecare staff or some other staff within the community that really work with a lot of the elders and boots-to-the-ground frontline staff to gather more lists of names, especially if we do go into the second wave of this pandemic? This is just to make sure there is someone checking on them, even though now they may not have that need, but during that, they may need that.

HON. DIANE THOM: Another absolutely. It is important that our home and community care workers work hard in the communities. We are looking at extending hours. We will be talking about the home and community care review after rise of the House today. There are some recommendations in the review that Members will be happy, and they'll be supporting because some of the work that is in the review, in the recommendations, we're already doing. I think our home community care in the communities work hard. Right now, we need to look at some of their hours, because I have been hearing that elders don't go to sleep after 5:00, or they don't wake up at 9:00. We recognize that, and I think that is important.

MS. SEMMLER: Thank you to the Minister for that. I always want to protect the elders because we know that they're vulnerable, and they're immunocompromised, and they're our elders. We were raised to protect them once we got older. That was what we do. I understand the reason behind closing the visiting to long-term care area like when there is an outbreak of flu, and now with the pandemic, but a lot of our elders don't have long to live in some of our long-term care facilities. Can the Minister explain if there is a process for immediate family that can visit their loved ones now during this pandemic? If there is, can you explain that?

HON. DIANE THOM: We watched what was happening across Canada and where seniors were passing on as a result of not tightening up rules. That really sent a message to us here in the Northwest Territories, so we acted really quick to

make sure that we restricted some of the access to our long-term care centres. We put measure in place where basically the visiting hours were really quite restricted. That was done for the safety of the elders, that was done for the safety of our workers.

I look around now within social media and you see innovative ways of how people are visiting their elders. They're taking pictures through the windows of the long-term care centres. They're visiting that way. Even some of the elders are wanting Facebook and just to find ways to communicate, FaceTime. There are so many different ways that we can communicate with our elders that are in care with the family. There are ways that are safe for both. That's our primary concern right now.

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

MS. SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, I appreciate that the department is taking that serious and I know that the workers in the long-term care really care for the elders. We don't want them getting sick, but it is hard to see that when they can't connect. We have to do what's right and that's the thing, the highest population in Canada that we're losing to COVID is seniors. I thank the health department for that.

What I would like to know is: what needs to happen during this pandemic or after the pandemic? Have you thought that far ahead yet on what needs to take place to start lifting these measures? Again, I'm not saying we're going to put them at risk right now but so families can start to kind of get a sense of, "This is what needs to happen before I actually can sit and hold my mom and my dad or my grandparents."

HON. DIANE THOM: Like I mentioned, we are still in the first wave. We are looking forward to a second wave. We're easing up wisely. We're loosening some of the things. We'll do a big announcement tomorrow that some folks might be happy with, some folks might not be happy with. Can't please everyone, but we're going to do the announcement anyways.

The Member is asking: when will we start to lift restrictions for our elders and for our seniors? My quick answer would be: let's find a vaccine, then we can start to look at lifting some restrictions. Right now, it's not safe. There are some exceptions that our department is doing in order to ensure that we have family somehow visit or somehow interact with the elders that are in care. One of the things we have asked people to do is to be outside. Start utilizing the outside. Hopefully, that's in our phase 2, tomorrow, we'll see. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Oral questions. Item 8, written questions. Member for Frame Lake.

Written Questions

WRITTEN QUESTION 15-19(2): FINANCIAL OBLIGATIONS OF AND SUBSIDIES TO THE DOMINION DIAMOND GROUP OF COMPANIES

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. My questions are for the Minister of Finance. Please provide a list and amounts of all current financial obligations to the Government of the Northwest Territories and subsidies provided to the Dominion Diamond group of companies that includes the following:

- an itemized listing of and outstanding amounts due to the Government of the Northwest Territories for payroll taxes, property taxes, corporate taxes, mining royalties, carbon and fuel taxes, land lease rents, water use fees, Worker's Safety and Compensation Commission assessments, and any other financial obligations;
- an itemized listing of amounts and type of any subsidies provided to the Dominion Diamond group of companies, including land lease fee holidays, wage top-ups, loan deferrals, mining fee reductions, or any similar reductions, deferrals, or forgiveness; and
- an itemized listing of amounts spent by GNWT in connection with the Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act proceeding in relation to the Dominion Diamond group of companies including outside legal counsel, consultants, staff time and related costs.

Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. Written questions. Member for Nunakput.

WRITTEN QUESTION 16-19(2): INCOME ASSISTANCE REGULATIONS [R-010- 2007,S.2.]

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On June 10, 2020, I asked the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment if he could confirm whether payments of claims beneficiaries, per Section 20(4) to the Income Assistance Regulations, has been considered "unearned income" when determining "net monthly income" to the purpose of calculating Income Assistance payable to the applicant, whether the payments and claims in the beneficiaries were exempt from being considered unearned income under the regulations

prior to 2007. Quoting from unedited Hansard, the Minister replied, "I'm not up to date with what happened in 2007, so I can't confirm what the status of the program was in 2007." I also asked the Minister how much the inclusion of this provision saves the Government of the Northwest Territories on Income Assistance payments, to which he did not receive a direct answer. Consequently, I have the following written questions:

1. Since the 1990, inception of the Income Assistance Regulations pursuant to the Social Assistance Act, is "money, or the value of goods, in excess of \$500 per year, received by a person under a self-government agreement, a land claims agreement or an impact benefits agreement" always considered as unearned income for the purpose of determining an applicant's net monthly income, or the provision included in the regulations at that point subsequent to their coming into force?
2. What is the rationale for including claims beneficiary income, the calculation is "unearned income" when Residential School Settlement payments were not included in that calculation?
3. If the Government of the Northwest Territories were to exempt claims of beneficiaries in land claim groups income from being considered "unearned income" when determining the applicant's net monthly income for the purposes of calculating Income Assistance payable to the applicant, how much extra would it cost our Government of the Northwest Territories in social assistance payments, applicants for the current fiscal year? Put another way, how much money will the GNWT save on Income Assistance payments in this current fiscal year by including claims beneficiaries income as "unearned income" when determining the applicant's net monthly income for the purposes of calculating Income Assistance payable to an applicant?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Nunakput. Written questions. Item 9, returns to written questions. Item 10, replies to the 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 Industry, Tourism and Investment.

Tabling of Documents

TABLED DOCUMENT 142-19(2):
GRANTS AND CONTRIBUTIONS RESULTS
REPORT 2018-2019

TABLED DOCUMENT 143-19(2):
ANNUAL REPORT 2019-2020 NWT OFFICE OF
THE REGULATOR OF OIL AND GAS
OPERATIONS

TABLED DOCUMENT 144-19(2):
FOLLOW-UP LETTER FOR ORAL QUESTION 52-
19(2): GRANTS AND CONTRIBUTIONS TO
COMMERCIAL FISHERS

TABLED DOCUMENT 145-19(2):
FOLLOW-UP LETTER FOR ORAL QUESTION 75-
19(2): IMPACT OF CORONAVIRUS ON
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES TOURISM

TABLED DOCUMENT 146-19(2):
FOLLOW-UP LETTER FOR ORAL QUESTION
112-19(2): NWT COMMERCIAL FISHING
INDUSTRY

TABLED DOCUMENT 147-19(2):
FOLLOW-UP LETTER FOR ORAL QUESTION
249-19(2): SMALL BUSINESS GRANTS

HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table the following six documents: "Grants and Contributions Results Reports 2018-2019"; "Annual Report 2019-2020 of the Northwest Territories Office of the Regulator of Oil and Gas"; "Follow-Up Letter for Oral Question 52-19(2), Grants and Contributions to Commercial Fishers"; "Follow-Up Letter for Oral Question 75-19(2), Impact of Coronavirus on Northwest Territories Tourism"; "Follow-Up Letter for Oral Question 112-19(2), Northwest Territories Commercial Fishing Industry"; and "Follow-Up Letter for Oral Question 249-19(2), Small Business Grants." Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Tabling of documents. Item 15, notices of motion. Item 16, motions. Member for Yellowknife Centre.

Motions

MOTION 11-19(2):
CREATION OF A NORTHWEST TERRITORIES
SENIORS AND ELDERS' STRATEGY,
CARRIED

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. WHEREAS the population of elders in the Northwest Territories is the fastest growing sector of the population;

AND WHEREAS this population is expected to increase by 56 percent to 9,400 people in the next 15 years;

AND WHEREAS 40 percent of seniors and elders have income of less than \$25,000 per year and thus live in poverty;

AND WHEREAS this 19th Assembly agreed in its mandate to enable seniors and elders to age in place with dignity;

AND WHEREAS there is a need for a whole of government approach to provide and co-ordinate services and programs that respond to the complex needs of elders;

AND WHEREAS there are gaps in current programs and services such as accessing financial assistance for home maintenance and providing suitable, affordable housing;

AND WHEREAS there is a need to revamp homecare programming for elders across the territory by providing a broader range and more client-centered services;

AND WHEREAS most communities need programs and transportation for elders to combat their social isolation;

AND WHEREAS the National Elders Strategy is not designed to meet the needs of the Northwest Territories, and the Northwest Territories' "Our Elders, Our Communities" strategy needs updating;

NOW THEREFORE I MOVE, seconded by the Member for Thebacha, that the Government of the Northwest Territories develop a strategy by engaging Northwest Territories elders that provides a whole of government approach to enhance and coordinate programs and services to elders going forward;

AND FURTHER, that the Government respond to this motion within 120 days.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MS. GREEN: Mr. Speaker, I have an amendment to the motion. I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Thebacha, that Motion 11-19(2) be amended by changing each reference of the word "elders" to the words "seniors and elders," except where it is the title of a document. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Yellowknife Centre. The motion is in order as amended. All those in favour? All those opposed? Any abstentions? The motion is carried.

---Carried

Member for Yellowknife Centre.

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The NWT Seniors' Society has requested this government and the previous government create an NWT

seniors' strategy for a number of reasons. I am going to recap some of them today. The first is that the existing strategic framework, called "Our Elders, Our Communities," was published in 2014, and much has changed in that time. It also is a strategy that is specific to Health and Social Services. It doesn't address issues such as housing, transportation, social inclusion, and so on. While this is a good strategy in and of itself, it's not current to our needs at the moment.

There is, in fact, a national seniors' strategy, but it does not address NWT-specific issues. The result of that is that it's helpful, but not specific enough. What we have now in the NWT are 17 programs and services designed for or accessed by seniors and offered by departments and agencies, including Health and Social Services, the NWT Housing Corporation, Education, Culture and Employment, Justice, and Municipal and Community Affairs. What we need is to bring all of these programs together into one strategy and action plan for a whole-of-government approach. This is analogous to the integrated case management-type model, where there is a one-stop shop for all of these programs and services, and that roadmap is included in an NWT seniors' strategy.

Some of the areas that present gaps now that we know about are assistance with home maintenance, yard work, housekeeping, grocery shopping, and other essential activities of daily living. These are not covered by homecare. Homecare is a nursing function, and so this is a gap for seniors who are trying to age in place in their own homes. There will be much more said about homecare when the report is tabled, but we know that homecare is kind of a patchwork approach at this point and needs to be strengthened.

We also know that there is no transportation available to seniors outside of Yellowknife, and yet transportation is key to seniors who want to age in place in order for them to go grocery shopping and to meet their social needs, among other things.

Affordable housing is a huge issue for seniors. People have heard me talk before about how the waiting list at Avens here was six years long, last I heard. I know Avens is interested in expanding their offerings, but even when they do, there will still be a shortage of seniors' housing across the NWT and especially of affordable housing. We know that, for seniors, as for everyone else in the Northwest Territories, housing is their biggest expense, and they need assistance in the form of some kind of a subsidy.

What I am asking for here, then, is that the government create the resources necessary to engage a broad stakeholder group of people who interact with seniors, not only within government,

but also within the non-profit sector, so that there is a concerted effort to create a strategy that addresses this huge segment of our population, huge and growing, and that we live up to the commitments of allowing our elders to age in place by creating this coordinated approach to their needs.

Further, to the statement that I made today about elder abuse and the soon-to-be-lapsed strategy on combatting elder abuse, this also should be included in the seniors' strategy.

Mr. Speaker, I want to commend to my colleagues in this House how we can make seniors' lives more functional, richer, and meet more of their basic needs by making a roadmap for how to do that and implementing it. Those are my opening comments. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Yellowknife Centre. To the motion as amended. Member for Thebacha.

MS. MARTSELOS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour for me to second this motion with my colleagues on this side of the House. Our elders are our knowledge base in the communities and all over the Northwest Territories. Our seniors have given us a lot throughout life. The journey of leadership, they are all leaders in their own right and they should have the dignity to have a senior's strategy by the Government of the Northwest Territories, and there should be money set aside in the department to ensure that seniors are well looked-after so that they can live with dignity. I truly believe in this motion, and it would be really great if the whole House would have unanimously accepted this motion. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Thebacha. To the motion as amended. Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. I stand in support of the motion. There are a growing number of seniors across the Northwest Territories, and I am one of them, or will be soon enough. Part of the issue here, I think, Mr. Speaker, is that the issue of seniors cuts across several departments within this government; Health and Social Services, Housing, Municipal and Community Affairs. Most of our departments have some responsibility, some part of their programs and services that are dedicated and targeted toward seniors, but we don't really have a whole-of-government approach, and I think that's what is really required here, Mr. Speaker.

Often, the issues that seniors face are complex. You know, they relate often to areas around housing, transportation, accessibility, social

isolation, abuse, and, once again, these matters cut across a number of different departments. We have a very enthusiastic Minister responsible for Seniors, and I do want to give him credit. Unfortunately, he doesn't have any resources to work with within the government. I shouldn't say that; he is able to, I guess, draw on the resources that are there, but I think, when we have a Minister responsible for Seniors or a Minister responsible for Youth, we need to find ways to support that function, rather than just have them as figureheads. They often will need some sort of support, a secretariat, somebody who can help them lead the charge in terms of policy development when it cuts across various departments, and so on. Part of my objective in supporting this motion is to get the Minister responsible for Seniors the kind of support that is needed to help develop this kind of strategy, that cuts across many areas that our government provides services and programs in.

I am pleased to support this motion, and I look forward to all of the Regular MLAs on this side of the House voting in favour. You know, the way this works, to explain this to the public, is that Cabinet often abstains from these kinds of motions because it provides direction to them and maybe creates a bit of a perception of some kind of conflict of interest, or something, but I expect that most of our colleagues on the other side of the House actually support this, as well, but, just out of convention, they can't stand in support of it. However, I know that their hearts are in the right place and they support this initiative, as well. Also, I do want to acknowledge and thank the mover and the seconder in bringing forward this important matter of public interest, and commend them for their actions. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. To the motion as amended. Minister responsible for Seniors.

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government recognizes the importance of supporting our seniors and elders to ensure that they remain living safely in their own communities. The current mandate has several priorities which address key areas that impact the ability of seniors and elders to age in place, including housing, income, and finances; health support; community infrastructure and supports; and safety. Several departments are leading the work on this, including Education, Culture and Employment, Municipal and Community Affairs, Health and Social Services, Justice, and the NWT Housing Corporation.

Developing an NWT seniors' strategy may not be achievable at this time, particularly in light of the current and developing COVID pandemic response; however, we are committed to supporting our

seniors by advancing the mandate priorities. We will continue to work across government and community sectors to address the core issues that impact the ability of seniors and elders to remain living in supportive communities, free from abuse, regardless of whether a specific senior's strategy is developed.

Mr. Speaker, motions in Legislative Assemblies are typically taken as advice to the government, and Cabinet usually abstains from voting on them. Cabinet is committed to supporting NWT seniors and we will continue to advance our mandate priorities related to that, but we will be abstaining from this vote. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. To the motion as amended. Member for Yellowknife Centre.

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm not sure what COVID has to do with this. The Minister responsible for Seniors had already told the NWT Seniors' Society at the end of last year that he would not support the development of a seniors' strategy. I feel this is a really important strategy to support. That's the reason that I have brought this motion forward. I recognize that the government is not going to support this, but I look forward to the support of my Regular Member colleagues for our seniors to ensure that we've fulfilled our promise to them to make their lives easier in their old age. Mr. Speaker, I would request a recorded vote. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Yellowknife North. To the motion as amended. Question has been called. The Member is seeking a recorded vote. All those in favour, please rise.

RECORDED VOTE

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

MR. SPEAKER: All those opposed, please rise. All those abstaining, please rise.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer): The Member for Nahendeh, the Member for Sahtu, the Member for Inuvik Boot Lake, the Member for Hay River North, the Member for Great Slave, the Member for Range Lake, the Member for Yellowknife South.

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

---Carried

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

Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills

BILL 10:
TEMPORARY VARIATION OF STATUTORY TIME PERIODS (COVID-19 PANDEMIC MEASURES) ACT

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Mr. Speaker. I give notice that, on Monday, June 15, 2020, I will move that Bill 10, Temporary Variation of Statutory Time Periods (COVID-19 Pandemic Measures) Act, be read for the first time. Mr. Speaker, at the appropriate time I will be seeking unanimous consent to proceed with the first reading of this bill today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Item 18, first reading of bills. Minister of Finance.

First Reading of Bills

BILL 8:
SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATIONS ACT (INFRASTRUCTURE EXPENDITURES) NO. 2, 2020-2021

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Member for Nahendeh, that Bill 8, Supplementary Appropriations Act (Infrastructure Expenditures) No. 2, 2020-2021, be read for the first time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

---Carried

Bill 8 has had first reading. First reading of bills, Minister of Finance.

BILL 9:
SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATIONS ACT (OPERATIONS EXPENDITURES), NO. 1, 2020-2021

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Member for Nahendeh, that Bill 9, Supplementary Appropriations Act (Operations Expenditures), No.

1, 2020-2021, be read for the first time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

---Carried

Bill 9 has had first reading. First reading of bills. Minister of Justice.

BILL 10:
TEMPORARY VARIATION OF STATUTORY TIME PERIODS (COVID-19 PANDEMIC MEASURES) ACT

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to proceed with first reading of Bill 10, Temporary Variation of Statutory Time Periods (COVID-19 Pandemic Measures) Act. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. The Minister of Justice is seeking unanimous consent to proceed with first reading of Bill 10. Are there any nays? There are no nays.

---Unanimous consent granted

The Minister of Justice may proceed.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move, seconded by the Honourable Member for Sahtu, that Bill 10, Temporary Variation of Statutory Time Periods (COVID-19 Pandemic Measures) Act, be read for the first time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. To the motion. Question has been called. All those in favour. All those opposed. Any abstentions. Motion is carried.

---Carried

Bill 10 has had first reading. Item, 19, second reading of bills. Minister of Finance.

Second Reading of Bills

BILL 8:
SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATIONS ACT (INFRASTRUCTURE EXPENDITURES) NO. 2, 2020-2021

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Member for Nahendeh, that Bill 8, Supplementary Appropriations Act (Infrastructure Expenditures) No. 2, 2020-2021 be read for the second time. This bill makes supplementary appropriations for

infrastructure expenditures of the Government of the Northwest Territories for the 2020-2021 fiscal year. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Motion is in order. To the principle of the bill.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. All those in favour. All those opposed. Any abstentions. The motion is carried.

---Carried

Bill 8 has had second reading. Second reading of bills. Minister of Finance.

BILL 9:
SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATIONS ACT
(OPERATIONS EXPENDITURES), NO. 1, 2020-
2021

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Member for Nahendeh, that Bill 9, Supplementary Appropriations Act (Operations Expenditures), No. 1, 2020-2021 be read for the second time. This bill makes supplementary appropriations for operations expenditures of the Government of the Northwest Territories for the 2020-2021 fiscal year. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Motion is in order. To the principle of the bill.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. All those in favour. All those opposed. Any abstentions. The motion is carried.

---Carried

Bill 9 has had second reading. Second reading of bills. Minister of Justice.

BILL 10:
TEMPORARY VARIATION OF STATUTORY TIME
PERIODS (COVID-19 PANDEMIC MEASURES)
ACT.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Mr. Speaker, I seek consent to proceed with second reading of Bill 10, Temporary Variation of Statutory Time Periods (COVID-19 Pandemic Measures) Act. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. The Minister of Justice is seeking unanimous consent to proceed with second reading of Bill 10. Are there any nays? There are no nays.

---Unanimous consent granted

The Minister of Justice may proceed.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move, seconded by the Honourable Member for Sahtu, that Bill 10, Temporary Variation of Statutory Time Periods (COVID-19 Pandemic Measures) Act, be read for the second time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Motion is in order. To the principle of the bill.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. All those in favour. All those opposed. Any abstentions. The motion is carried.

---Carried

Bill 10 has had second reading. Minister of Justice.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to waive rule 73(2) and have Bill 10, Temporary Variation of Statutory Time Periods (COVID-19 Pandemic Measures) Act move directly into Committee of the Whole for further consideration today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. The Minister is seeking unanimous consent to waive rule 73(2) and have Bill 10 move directly into Committee of the Whole for further consideration later today. Are there any nays? There are no nays.

---Unanimous consent granted

Bill 10 has been moved directly into Committee of the Whole for consideration alter today. Thank you. Item 20, consideration of Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters: Committee Report 1-19(2), Standing Committee on Economic Development and Environment Report on Long-Term Post-Pandemic Recovery: Recommendations to the GNWT; Committee Report 2-19(2), Standing Committee on Government Operations Report on Long-term Post-Pandemic Recovery: Recommendations to the GNWT; Committee Report 3-19(2), Standing Committee on Social Development Report on Long-term Post-Pandemic Recovery: Recommendations to the GNWT; and Bill 10, Temporary Variation of Statutory Time Periods (COVID-19 Pandemic Measures) Act.

By the authority given to me as Speaker by Motion 1-19(2), I hereby authorize the House to sit beyond the daily hour of adjournment to consider the business before the House with Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes in the chair.

Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters

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

MR. NORN: Marsi cho, Madam Chair. The committee wishes to consider the following documents: Bill 10, Committee Report 1-19(2); and Committee Report 3-19(2). Marsi cho.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): 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 Bill 10, Temporary Variation of Statutory Time Periods (COVID-19 Pandemic Measures) Act. I will ask the Minister responsible for the bill to introduce it. Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. I do have some opening remarks. I am here to present Bill 10, Temporary Variation of Statutory Time Periods (COVID-19 Pandemic Measures) Act. This bill authorizes the Commissioner and Executive Council to make orders to be registered as regulations that would result in the temporary variation of a date, deadline, or time period set out in the act.

We have heard, during the course of this sitting, that, in March, the Government of the Northwest Territories had to mobilize quickly to take measures required to respond to the immediate requirements of the COVID-19 pandemic, including transitioning the vast majority of employees to working from home; redeploying employees to areas of high need; and focusing government efforts on the essential areas of service.

In April, it became obvious that public bodies, councils, and other organizations in the Northwest Territories were having difficulty, or would soon be having difficulty, meeting statutory deadlines due to necessary changes in their operations as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Emergency Management Act, or EMA, allows for the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs to make orders relating to a list of items to address various immediate aspects of an emergency situation, but, as set out presently, there was a concern that the authority in that act would not

support orders that would address impacts to usual business operations.

The Department of Justice examined several possibilities for addressing the issues identified and had discussions with other departments to consider the best approach to addressing the concerns that were raised to them about compliance with statutory timelines. It was decided that a streamlined bill, focusing exclusively on temporarily varying dates, time periods, and deadlines, would be a prudent approach to addressing this issue.

The proposed bill does not amend any statutes. It enables orders to be made that would have the effect of temporarily amending timelines set out in other statutes. It allows orders to have a retroactive effect as far as March 24, 2020, which was the date that the state of emergency was declared under the EMA. Any temporary variation of a statute will remain in effect for a maximum of six months from now.

I would like to thank Members for expediting the review of this bill. Their cooperation was needed to have this bill considered here at this sitting. The input of Members has resulted in adjustments to the bill before introduction, to clarify its purpose and to limit its application. This bill is a novel approach to a novel problem, and I commend Members for working together to see it through.

That concludes my opening remarks, Madam Chair. I would be happy to answer any questions the Members might have.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Minister of Justice. Would you like to bring witnesses into the Chamber?

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Yes, I would. I have one witness, please.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Sergeant-at-Arms, please escort the witness into the Chamber. Minister, please introduce your witness.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Seated with me is Mr. Michael Reddy. He is the director of the Legislation Division.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Welcome, Mr. Reddy. I will now open the floor to general comments on Bill 10. Member for Yellowknife North.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. Can I just get a little more explanation of what types of orders we are anticipating to see under this, and do we have any already drafted or ready to go? Just kind of a sense of it, a little more detail on what we

can expect to see this power used for. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. I know the department has already done some work to ensure that a draft is ready to go, but more to the point, I think, of the Member's question, the intent really is, if there is a deadline, for example, the Insurance Act provides a specific set deadline of June 30th and we are concerned that there will be occasions when that deadline can't be met, the orders will, in fact, then set a different or alternative deadline that is beyond that point. That is really the goal and the purpose of it. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I also note that the bill has the ability to be retroactive. We've seen licence deadlines extended. We've seen a number of kinds of deadlines that we've already missed, so can I just get a sense of what deadlines have already passed that we anticipate creating retroactive orders for? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. By way of some example, the Business Licence Act required business licences to be renewed by March 31st. So that deadline has, indeed, passed. Similarly, collection agency licences expired on March 31st, so that deadline has passed; and there are a number of government agencies that were required to file reports, often, also by March 31st, and some of those deadlines have passed. I'm not sure to what extent the Members may want me to run through a complete list, or if that gives a good sample. I'm happy to go through a few more examples, Madam Chair.

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

MR. JOHNSON: No, thank you, Madam Chair, that's fine. As the order requires, I look forward to seeing all of those deadlines in an order provided to Standing Committee. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Any further questions, Member for Yellowknife North? No. Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. I guess I have a similar question as my colleague from Yellowknife North. Can the Minister just get a little

bit more specific about what kind of time periods we're actually talking about here? Some more examples would be really helpful. Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. The person with more specifics would be the witness that I am lucky to have with me today, so if I could turn it over to Mr. Reddy, please.

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

MR. REDDY: Thank you, Madam Chair. Keeping in mind my first job as a legislative drafter, but by virtue of being in that position, I have learned a lot from departments in terms of some of the timelines that they're running up against over the last little while. I don't profess to be an expert, but I'll share the information that I have.

With respect to the business licence example that the Minister spoke of, as well as the insurance renewal example that the Minister spoke of, my understanding is that businesses, effectively, were looking for a couple of extra months to ensure that they get all their paperwork in order. In the example of business licences, I believe the new deadline would be somewhere around July 1st, the middle of July. Likewise, with the insurance deadline, that would be extended by about two months as well.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. I guess maybe I will paraphrase what I think I heard in some plainer language, but I want to thank our witness for saying that. As I understand it, this bill really is about ensuring business continuity so that businesses, small businesses in particular, can continue to operate if they have licences or permits or things that have expired. It could also be used to extend appointments for boards where they might lose quorum. Appointments, that kind of thing, and maybe places where individuals could be severely inconvenienced if a driver's licence expires. They need to travel in another jurisdiction. They don't have valid ID. Are those the kinds of examples of things that this government would expect to use this authority for? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Those are all perfect examples. That is exactly the nature of what is being contemplated here. If you sense any kind of reluctance to provide

a long laundry list, it's only because, frankly, we don't have the complete list necessarily. A lot of staff are really only getting back into their offices in a more regularized fashion. The examples that I think we've given here from the table, as well as what's been noted by the Member, are all very good examples and exactly the type of thing that's at issue here.

Really, as we begin to move from a more emergency stage and to, perhaps, a bit of a clean-up stage is when we would expect to be identifying precisely how far. Do we need 30 extra days? Do we need 60 extra days, et cetera? Some of that is just ensuring that all departments have that ability to come forward, request the order, and go through this process, but it is exactly in line with the kinds of procedural and timeline or appointment or et cetera related requests that we're making. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. I'm asking a few questions that I actually know the answers to, just so that the public might have a better understanding of where we're going, and why we are doing this. How long would the authority to make these temporary variations or extensions, how long would that stay in place? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. It is six months from the time of this Act, Madam Chair, and there is no intention to hopefully be in a position to have to renew it beyond that point. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. How would the public actually know about these extensions or variations? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Any orders here are to be published on a website that will be maintained by the Government of the Northwest Territories. They will also be part of the monthly publication in the Northwest Territories Gazette. Both of those are requirements of the Act itself. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. How does the bill set out that Cabinet is going to work with Regular MLAs in looking at what orders might come forward? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Again, that is actually also part of the Act itself where it does say that the order is not to be made until seven days after a copy is provided to the Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight, so the intention there being that any such orders are being put through a process of review and consideration by the whole of the Assembly. Thank you.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. I just want to get some assurance from the Minister that this is not just giving notice to the standing committee. If the committee has concerns or issues with a particular order, that Cabinet would seriously consider any representations that might be raised by the committee; Regular MLAs, essentially? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes. Any of these orders, they do have to go through all of Cabinet. They are not just exclusive to one Minister. That said, there is also going to be input from the department. I can't say for sure, but I would expect that if one particular department requires something, that the committee will hear from that department to understand the full context of what's happening and why. Really, again, Madam Chair, my hope would be that there won't, hopefully, be too many of these occasions or that we can do them, but that when we do have to do them, of course, if we are in front of committee which is meant to be an engaged process and not a one-way process. Thank you.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. I guess I have a few comments I want to make with my remaining three minutes. I want to commend the Minister and my colleagues in Cabinet for bringing this forward. I know, early on during the pandemic, I actually sent an email to the Minister saying, "Geez, we're going to be sitting soon. Is there any legislative changes that we should look at making in terms of COVID response and planning and recovery and so on?" This, eventually, ended up on our desks.

This is something that other jurisdictions have done, so this is not something terribly unusual. Other jurisdictions in southern Canada have, perhaps, done it in different ways and so on. I am prepared to support this. I want to commend the Minister and her staff for working with us as Regular MLAs to make some important improvements to this bill and changes. There's a purpose section in here now that sort of better explains and maybe restricts the ways in which the authority can be exercised.

Certainly, the Regular MLAs, we worked hard to make sure that some specific pieces of legislation were exempted or outside the scope of this including access to information, the Health Information Act, and the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act itself, and that the act itself cannot be used in a way that would allow Cabinet to unilaterally extend things.

I'm happy to have worked with Cabinet on this, and it is a collective effort. It is very unusual times, and we don't want to inconvenience our residents with deadlines running out. We want to provide for business continuity. I am prepared to support this with the important improvements that Regular MLAs made.

The process that we're going through with this bill is quite extraordinary as well. Normally, bills go off to standing committee where they can be studied. We take public input, and Regular MLAs can then propose changes, try to work with our Cabinet colleagues to improve bills based on public comment and our own advice, and so on. That is not the process that is being used for this bill, but I think it's a reflection of the extraordinary times that we are in and the compressed time frame of this sitting and so on. It is not the usual process that we are going through, but I want to assure Members of the public that it is time limited, that we have worked with Cabinet to put some reasonable limitations in here. Based on that, I am prepared to support the bill. Thanks, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. Are there any further questions or comments? All right. Does the committee agree that there are no further general comments?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): We will proceed to a clause-by-clause review of the bill. Can we proceed to a clause-by-clause review of the bill?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Committee, we will defer the bill number and title until after consideration of the clauses. Please turn to page 3

if you have the bill. Clause 1, does committee agree?

---Clauses 1 through 4 inclusive approved

Committee, to the bill as a whole, does committee agree that Bill 10, Temporary Variation of Statutory Time Periods (COVID-19 Pandemic Measures) Act, is now ready for third reading?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, committee. Bill 10, Temporary Variation of Statutory Time Periods (COVID-19 Pandemic Measures) Act, is now ready for third reading. Does committee agree that this concludes our consideration of Bill 10, Temporary Variation of Statutory Time Periods (COVID-19 Pandemic Measures) Act?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Thank you, Minister, and thank you to our witness. Sergeant-at-Arms, you may escort the witness from the Chamber.

Committee, we have agreed to consider Committee Report 1-19(2), Standing Committee on Economic Development and Environment Report on Long-term Post-pandemic Recovery: Recommendations to the GNWT, and Committee Report 3-19(2), Standing Committee on Social Development Report on Long-term Post-pandemic Recovery: Recommendations to the GNWT.

We will begin with Committee Report 1-19(2), Standing Committee on Economic Development and Environment Report on Long-term Post-pandemic Recovery: Recommendations to the GNWT. Does the chair of the Standing Committee on Economic Development and Environment have any opening remarks?

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, standing committees have continued to meet regularly. The GNWT's response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the long-term recovery of our economy and the territory have been focused on many of discussions that we have been having. The Standing Committee on Economic Development and Environment as well as other standing committees have worked in tandem to develop committee reports that we read into the House earlier this week. As chair of the Standing Committee on Economic Development and Environment, I am pleased to introduce the report. I would like to thank all of my committee members for all their contributions to this report. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member for Nunakput. Committee, we have agreed to forego general comments on the report and proceed directly to the recommendations. Member for Nunakput.

COMMITTEE MOTION 17-19(2):
COMMITTEE REPORT 1-19(2) – STANDING
COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
AND ENVIRONMENT REPORT ON LONG-TERM
RECOVERY: RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE
GNWT – BUSINESS RELIEF EFFORTS,
CARRIED

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I move that the committee recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories, through amendment of business development and investment corporation programs, increase business relief efforts through measures not limited to extending loan payment remission and providing loan forgiveness options; and further, that the business development and investment corporation expand investment programs to stimulate economic development; and furthermore, that amendments to the loan program, and a plan to expand the investment program, be completed and reported back to committee. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member for Nunakput. The motion is in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

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

---Carried

Member for Nunakput.

COMMITTEE MOTION 18-19(2):
COMMITTEE REPORT 1-19(2) – STANDING
COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
AND ENVIRONMENT REPORT ON LONG-TERM
RECOVERY: RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE
GNWT – BUSINESS INCENTIVE POLICY,
CARRIED

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I move that this committee recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories review and revise the Business Incentive Policy in collaboration with the business community as well as Members of the Legislative Assembly; and further, that this work commence immediately and the status of work be reported to committee by September 1, 2020, including a comprehensive work plan and a projected implementation date for the updated

Business Incentive Policy. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member for Nunakput. The motion is in order. To the motion. Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. I feel obligated to say something about where we went with some of this stuff as a committee. Committees started to meet during the pandemic electronically. Of course, we were quite preoccupied by what was happening during the pandemic. We were trying to find ways to provide advice, recommendations to our Cabinet colleagues. Each of the standing committees has come up with its own report.

With this particular recommendation, I was a Member of the last Assembly, and towards the end, the Standing Committee on Economic Development and Environment did bring forward a report on procurement that was based on a survey of small businesses. One of the main recommendations was that there should be a review of the Business Incentive Policy and, more generally, procurement practises. That hasn't happened. I know it came towards the end of the life of the last Assembly, and perhaps we have been overtaken by the pandemic. I think we have heard numerous complaints as individual MLAs about the Business Incentive Policy, and thus, again, we are making this recommendation to move forward with a review. I certainly support this recommendation and timely action from our colleagues on the opposite side. Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

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

---Carried

Member for Nunakput.

COMMITTEE MOTION 19-19(2):
COMMITTEE REPORT 1-19(2) – STANDING
COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
AND ENVIRONMENT REPORT ON LONG-TERM
RECOVERY: RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE
GNWT – TALTSON HYDRO EXPANSION,
CARRIED

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I move that this committee recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories work with Indigenous stakeholders and define the Indigenous ownership of the Taltson Hydro Expansion; and further, that the government of the Northwest

Territories lead interdepartmental efforts with project stakeholders to develop a plan that builds capacity among northern businesses to maximize the benefits from the construction project. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member for Nunakput. The motion is in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. I will not be supporting this recommendation for a variety of reasons. I tried to work within committee to broaden the scope of the recommendation beyond the Taltson Hydro Expansion to look at building Indigenous capacity and partnerships in general to maximize benefits, which I certainly support. The work proposed in this motion is already underway, so I don't really see the need to make this recommendation.

Natural Resources Canada and Crown Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada are providing \$619,950 to "support Indigenous engagement" in the Taltson Hydro Expansion as announced in January of 2019. Committee did not seek information on the status of this work. I raised this issue when we were reviewing the supplementary estimates yesterday, and I look forward to receiving that information. I am also of the view that, in terms of critical infrastructure for post-pandemic recovery, Taltson expansion is not a priority and should not be a priority. It is not anywhere near shovel-ready and it will take years of planning, environmental assessment, and permitting before it is ready, if ever. The top priority for critical infrastructure should be improving the broadband Internet connectivity in all NWT communities to Canadian standards, and that is something that I believe the federal government is ready to invest in.

To be clear, I have always supported the use of currently available power from Taltson to build the South Slave regional economy, including use for space heating, electric vehicles, small-scale transmission lines to adjacent communities, and possibly even a submarine line to Yellowknife, depending on the outcome of ongoing studies. However, the full extent of Taltson expansion, we have not yet seen a business case for it. We haven't seen a full project description. There are no confirmed buyers, and I have serious doubts about the financial viability of the full expansion. The most recent cost estimates are over \$2 billion, and a recent study showed that the Taltson hydro

expansion is also the most expensive option per unit of greenhouse gas emissions saved.

There was a previous attempt at Taltson hydro expansion by Deze Energy. That corporation was one-third owned by NWT Energy Corporation, or the GNWT, essentially, and two-thirds by Indigenous development corporations. There was an environmental assessment of that project that started in 2007, and it was withdrawn in 2013. It's my understanding that about \$17 million was spent on that project before it was withdrawn.

In any event, I believe that there are better ways to build energy self-sufficiency, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and create more jobs and benefits for Northerners than through the Taltson expansion project. So, Madam Chair, for all of those reasons, I will not be supporting this recommendation from the committee and this motion. Thank you.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I do agree with many of the sentiments expressed by my colleague from Frame Lake. One of the issues I struggle with is that expanding strategic infrastructure projects, including Taltson, was made a priority of this Assembly, it's in our mandate, and then therefore the government is working on it, and to me it is committee's direction to provide that direction on how to do that. I still think there are a lot of questions to be answered about Taltson, and whether we actually build it or find a buyer, I think, is the biggest one, but to me, what this recommendation really gets to is we've seen other large P3s built. We've even seen the Tlicho all-season road, an Indigenous P3, built, and we still don't get the northern labour numbers. We still don't get the Indigenous ownership that we should see from these P3s. To me, that is the specific wording that this recommendation really gets to; that, if we're going to be building these massive infrastructure projects, let's make sure we get them built by northern companies and employing Northerners. Ultimately, I will be supporting this recommendation coming out of committee, in support of it being a priority and a mandate item. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MS. MARTSELOS: I will be supporting this recommendation because I think it's the only way to go. Laying the groundwork for the future economy is extremely important to not only the South Slave but the entire Northwest Territories, and the larger piece of the whole puzzle is that Yellowknife will get power from the Taltson, and all along the way, that

they don't have now. Green energy is extremely important. Cutting the power bills so that there are going to be lower bills is extremely important. Setting the groundwork for future large proponents is extremely important. I'm very positive about the economy. I think this is a P3, and it is going to be owned by Indigenous people, and it doesn't necessarily have to be 25 percent. It might be 50 percent. Who knows the plan? I was part of the initial plans from the start, in the earlier years, and it's something that could be done, and I know will be done, and the people of the Northwest Territories support it. I think that it is extremely important that the expansion of the Taltson hydro move forward. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I support this recommendation. What we have to do is we've got to look to working with Indigenous groups. We need to look at Indigenous ownership on some of these major projects. The other thing is we do need access to green energy and, in the South Slave, or even in the North, if we're going to promote manufacturing, we need access to cheap power, and right now we don't have that. This would provide opportunities in training, capacity building, business opportunities, contracting, a number of areas, so I think that it is okay to dream big. It's moving ahead, slowly, but we have to keep pushing, just like anything else. If we want more houses in the Northwest Territories, we have Members who keep pushing for that. At the same time, we have to continue pushing for the economy and building the economy, as well, so for that, I do support it. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member for Hay River South. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

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

---Carried

Member for Nunakput.

COMMITTEE MOTION 20-19(2):
COMMITTEE REPORT 1-19(2) – STANDING
COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
AND ENVIRONMENT REPORT ON LONG-TERM
RECOVERY: RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE
GNWT – BROADBAND INTERNET
CONNECTIVITY, CARRIED

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I move that this committee recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories complete a costed plan to provide broadband Internet connectivity across the Northwest Territories comparable to the rest of Canada; and further, in addition to the financial costs of extending broadband distribution into all communities, the plan should identify ownership model options, such as public, private, or partnership, for the delivery of broadband services; and furthermore, that the costed plan be provided to committee by September 1, 2020. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member for Nunakput. The motion is in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

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

---Carried

Member for Nunakput.

COMMITTEE MOTION 21-19(2):
COMMITTEE REPORT 1-19(2) – STANDING
COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
AND ENVIRONMENT REPORT ON LONG-TERM
RECOVERY: RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE
GNWT – GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO
RECOMMENDATIONS, CARRIED

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I move that this committee recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories provide a response to the recommendations contained in this report within 120 days. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member for Nunakput. The motion is in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

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

---Carried

Does committee agree that this concludes consideration of Committee Report 1-19(2)?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, committee. That concludes consideration of Committee Report 1-19(2). I would like to thank the chair of the committee, the Member for Nunakput.

Members, committee has agreed to consider Committee Report 3-19(2), Standing Committee on Social Development Report on Long-term Post-pandemic Recovery: Recommendations to the GNWT. Does the chair of the Standing Committee on Social Development have any opening remarks? Ms. Cleveland.

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Madam Chair. As noted by the Member for Nunakput, the GNWT's response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the long-term recovery of our economy and territory have been the focus of all committees' discussions. The Standing Committee on Social Development focused its work on the response of the Departments of Education, Culture and Employment, Health and Social Services, Justice, and the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation. As chair of the Standing Committee on Social Development, I am pleased to introduce this report and would like to take this opportunity thank committee members for their hard work and contributions to both the development and finalization of this report. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Ms. Cleveland, Member for Kam Lake. Committee, we've agreed to forgo general comments on the report and proceed directly to the recommendations. Member for Kam Lake.

COMMITTEE MOTION 22-19(2):
COMMITTEE REPORT 3-19(2) – STANDING
COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
REPORT ON LONG-TERM RECOVERY:
RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE GNWT –
PERMANENT POLICY CHANGES TO SUPPORT
INCOME ASSISTANCE CLIENTS, CARRIED

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Madam Chair. I move that this committee recommends that the Department of Education, Culture and Employment make permanent the policy changes made to support clients in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, to continue to reduce the amount of verification information required to apply for Income Assistance to ensure clients are registered as quickly as possible and automatically assessed for both basic needs and enhanced benefits, to continue with the allowable income exemptions and to increase the annual income limit for unearned income per year on top of the money received from impact benefits agreements, treaty or land claim agreements, to continue to allow for clients to select self-care as a productive choice option, and reduce the requirement for face-to-face monthly reporting, and to continue to payroll long-term vulnerable Income Assistance clients to increase consistent payments to a three-month reporting. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member for Kam Lake. The motion is in order. To the motion. Member for Yellowknife Centre.

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Madam Chair. For more than 10 years in the time that I've been here and the time that I worked with the YWCA, there have been repeated calls to revamp the Income Assistance Program, which is well known to be onerous to comply with if you're a client and onerous to deliver if you're staff. One of the great things about COVID is that it jump-started the reform of the Income Assistance Program in ways that are very helpful to clients by giving them additional money and less paperwork to complete. This has been a change that's been very well received and is very important to me, personally, that these changes which have started us on the road to revamping Income Assistance continue in place and that we continue the conversation about how this program can be strengthened so that it not only keeps people in poverty, which it is well known to do, but it actually helps them get out of poverty. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member for Yellowknife Centre. To the motion. Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. I want to thank the social development committee for allowing me to sit in on some of their discussions. I support these changes that the Department of Education, Culture and Employment made, and I want to commend the Minister and his department for these creative changes made during the pandemic. We have to make sure that they actually stay in place. That's the purpose of this motion.

We had the release of the integrated case management program recently the Minister tabled a report in the House. It's a very good report that says a lot of good things about integrated case management. What I took away from that is that we need to find a way to transition our system from, as I think it's been characterized, the punitive nature of Income Assistance to much more of an enabling, empowering system. That's what integrated case management actually does. We need to expand that outside Yellowknife. We need to expand it across the NWT and the way to do that is to transition our Income Assistance program to providing a guaranteed basic income. Integrated case management makes the case for doing it in that way. If we're able to get Income Assistance workers and transition them into guaranteed basic income pathfinders and pathfinders through integrated case management, we're almost there.

With the federal government supports offered through CERB, we're almost there at a guaranteed basic income. I'm happy to support this, but what

we really need is a precise roadmap from where we are to where we need to be in terms of universal basic income. That's a challenge to my colleagues on the Cabinet side and perhaps the colleagues on this side with social development. We need that roadmap. Step by step, how are we going to a guaranteed basic income so that we enable all of our residents to become full citizens in our economy and exercise all their rights and meet their potential. That's what we really need is a guaranteed basic income. This is a step in the right direction, so I'm happy to support it. Thanks, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

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

---Carried

Member for Kam Lake.

COMMITTEE MOTION 23-19(2):
COMMITTEE REPORT 3-19(2) – STANDING
COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
REPORT ON LONG-TERM RECOVERY:
RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE GNWT – COVID-
19 TESTING SUPPLIES AND PERSONAL
PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT, CARRIED

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Madam Chair. I move that this committee recommends that the Department of Health and Social Services continue to work with national partners to increase testing supplies, materials, and personal protective equipment to maintain a robust inventory for the anticipated second wave of COVID-19. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member for Kam Lake. The motion is in order. To the motion. Member for Yellowknife Centre.

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Madam Chair. This recommendation has taken on particular importance today now that the Minister of Health and Social Services has shared modelling numbers of the number of potential hospitalizations, the number of potential cases, the number of potential deaths. We obviously need to be on top of our testing and contact tracing game. I know there has been a lot of testing to date, but that's based on five cases. If we end up with a hundred cases, a thousand cases, we need to be ready. The purpose of this recommendation is really to encourage the Minister to continue working with the national

partners to make sure that our stockpile is equal to the task of a second wave. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member for Yellowknife Centre. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

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

---Carried

Member for Kam Lake.

COMMITTEE MOTION 24-19(2):
COMMITTEE REPORT 3-19(2) – STANDING
COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
REPORT ON LONG-TERM RECOVERY:
RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE GNWT – POLICY
CHANGES TO TRANSITIONAL RENT
SUPPLEMENT PROGRAM, CARRIED

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Madam Chair. I move that this committee recommends that the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation retain the policy changes made to the Transitional Rent Supplement Program during the pandemic to continue to improve access and affordability within private market housing until such a time that the Canadian Housing Benefit is operational. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member for Kam Lake. The motion is in order. To the motion. Member for Yellowknife Centre.

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Madam Chair. I've heard very good things from my constituents about the revamp to the Transitional Rent Supplement Program. They've had positive interactions with Housing Corporation staff, and they're grateful for the support to make their housing more affordable. I think the biggest challenge here is finding some bridging that will go from the end of August, when the current program is expected to expire, until the end of March next year, when the Canadian Housing Benefit will be introduced. I want to commend the Housing Corporation for good work on this and ask them to look internally to find the resources necessary to continue this program until the Canada program kicks in at the beginning of the next fiscal year. Thank you very much.

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

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I just also wanted to support the words of my colleague from Yellowknife Centre. This program has been the most popular program that myself and

my constituency assistant have recommended to people during the COVID pandemic. It's open to any NWT resident who is spending over 30 percent of their household income on shelter and is funding of up to \$500 a month, and has kept a tremendous amount of Northerners out of homelessness, which is far more expensive to pay for at the end of the day. I commend the quick ability of the Housing Corporation to put money into people's accounts to keep them housed. I support this, and I believe it needs to continue until the Canadian Housing Benefit is operational. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member for Kam Lake. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

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

--- Carried

Member for Kam Lake.

COMMITTEE MOTION 25-19(2):
COMMITTEE REPORT 3-19(2) – STANDING
COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
REPORT ON LONG-TERM RECOVERY:
RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE GNWT –
ADVANCING UNIVERSAL CHILD CARE,
CARRIED

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I move that this committee recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories advance universal childcare by maintaining the additional funding provided during the pandemic to support operational, cleaning costs, employee wage subsidies and food security issues anticipated to be more severe post-COVID. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member for Kam Lake. The motion is in order. To the motion. Member for Yellowknife Centre.

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Madam Chair. I think that most of us are aware that the best thing that we can do for our children is have them in licensed childcare. It promotes their personal development and their school readiness. It also allows, usually mothers, but in some cases, fathers, to return to the workforce and continue to support their families and have the personal fulfillment of work. This is really a critical service that we offer the population of the Northwest Territories. Every dollar that is spent on children under five is a savings for expenses further down the road because it gives them the best possible start in life. I commend the Minister of Education, Culture & Employment for finding ways

to provide additional support for childcare in the Northwest Territories.

I would certainly like to see it continue through the foreseeable future. There isn't really a time that we're not going to need childcare. We have a growing population of children, a large birth rate by national standards. We have good programs in some places; no programs in other places. I feel that we've made a really good start here on trying to make childcare a priority, and I support this wholeheartedly for the future of our children. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member for Yellowknife Centre. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

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

--- Carried

Member for Kam Lake.

COMMITTEE MOTION 26-19(2):
COMMITTEE REPORT 3-19(2) – STANDING
COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
REPORT ON LONG-TERM RECOVERY:
RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE GNWT –
EDUCATION SUPPORTS, CARRIED

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Madam Chair. I move that this committee recommends that the Department of Education, Culture and Employment direct the district education councils to keep technology to support student home-based learning during the COVID-19 pandemic; and further, that the Department of Education, Culture and Employment focus on positive interventions and outreach to improve relationships between families of "high risk" or vulnerable students. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member for Kam Lake. The motion is in order. To the motion. Member for Yellowknife Centre.

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Madam Chair. When we reviewed this work, we found that there were two issues for many families. One was that they didn't have the tools to participate in the technology which are things like pads and laptops and so on. The other end of the problem was having the infrastructure where they could have the bandwidth to participate in long-distance learnings, and that's an issue that has been addressed by my colleagues from the Standing Committee on Economic Development and the Environment. They have talked about the need to complete the

infrastructure necessary to make broadband available everywhere.

The tools and the infrastructure are two very important ways to help students continue learning, not only during the COVID period, but through any period in which they are in small communities, and all the course offerings are not available, and they need to do more distance learning. This is, obviously, a key piece of this.

We also recognize that families, in some cases, are very keen and able to assist their children in taking advantage of technology and distance learning, while others really struggle with that. The second part of this motion acknowledges that disparity among families and asks ECE to think of ways, and I'm sure teachers have already been doing this, but to continue to focus on ways in which they can engage vulnerable families to keep their children engaged in school activity when classes are out. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member for Yellowknife Centre. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

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

--- Carried

Member for Kam Lake.

COMMITTEE MOTION 27-19(2):
COMMITTEE REPORT 3-19(2) – STANDING
COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
REPORT ON LONG-TERM RECOVERY:
RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE GNWT – WAGE
TOP-UP, CARRIED

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Madam Chair. I move that this committee recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories continue to offer the wage top-up as a permanent program to businesses, providing financial assistance to Northwest Territories workers aged 15 and over and earning less than \$18 per hour. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member for Kam Lake. The motion is in order. To the motion. Member for Yellowknife Centre.

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Madam Chair. I want to say how important this program is to low wage workers. Eighteen dollars an hour is not a living wage here in Yellowknife, so then, it's likely not to be a living wage anywhere else in the Northwest Territories. What this federal program enables the Government of the Northwest Territories to offer is

wages that are closer to the living wage threshold, and thus, families and workers have a chance to live above the poverty line. I know from the questions that my colleague asked yesterday that there has been some uptake in this program. More uptake could be accommodated and the amount of money that is available. I believe it's important to continue this program so that people who are working full-time get paid a living wage. Thank you very much.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. Yes, this is, I guess, another one that I am passionate about. I've raised this issue with my colleague, the Minister of Finance, several times about the wage top-up program and want to commend her again. I think Cabinet did the right thing in extending this wage top-up to all low wage income earners in the Northwest Territories. It's not focused just on essential service workers.

I can support this but the real answer here is to increase our minimum wage, and that's what needs to happen. It's not just maybe into \$18 an hour. It needs to be closer to a living wage that we can lift people out of poverty. We heard, I think yesterday from the Minister of Finance, that 293 workers are taking advantage of this program. They have to do it through their employers. I guess I'm going to quote from the Premier. I think it would be a sin to roll back these people's wages after the pandemic. It's just unconscionable that we would actually take money away from people.

Now, whether GNWT should be doing this through a wage top-up, that's a different issue, and I think, as I said, we need to just look at increasing the minimum wage. I've had some members of the public raise with me the issue that with a wage top-up, what we're actually doing for some employers is subsidizing, like maybe big box stores, franchises where some of those workers may not get much more than a minimum wage. As I said, I think the real solution here is to increase the minimum wage, and I look forward to that being done in our term. I am prepared to support this motion. It gets us part-way there, but the real answer is increasing the minimum wage. Thanks, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

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

---Carried

Member for Kam Lake.

COMMITTEE MOTION 28-19(2):
COMMITTEE REPORT 3-19(2) – STANDING
COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
REPORT ON LONG-TERM RECOVERY:
RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE GNWT –
GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO
RECOMMENDATIONS, CARRIED

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Madam Chair. I move that this committee recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories provide a response to the recommendations contained in this report within 120 days. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member for Kam Lake. The motion is in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

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

---Carried

Does committee agree that this concludes consideration of Committee Report 3-19(2)?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, committee. That concludes consideration of Committee Report 3-19(2), and I would like to thank the chair of the committee. Mr. Norn, what is the wish of committee?

MR. NORN: Marsi cho, Madam Chair. Committee wishes to consider Committee Report 2-19(2), Standing Committee on Government Operations Report on Long-Term Post-Pandemic Recovery: Recommendations to the GNWT. Marsi cho.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, committee. We have agreed to consider Committee Report 2-19(2), Standing Committee on Government Operations Report on Long-Term Post-Pandemic Recovery: Recommendations to the GNWT. Does the chair of the Standing Committee on Government Operations have any opening remarks? Member for Thebacha.

MS. MARTSELOS: Thank you, Madam Chair. As noted by the Members for Nunakput and Kam Lake, the Government of the Northwest Territories' response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the long-term recovery of our economy and territory have

been the focus of all committees' discussions. The Standing Committee on Government Operations focused its work on the response of the Departments of the Executive and Indigenous Affairs, Finance, Municipal and Community Affairs, and the Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission.

As chair of the Standing Committee on Government Operations, I am pleased to be introducing this report and thank the committee members for their contribution to this report. I would especially like to thank my deputy chair, the Member for Yellowknife Centre. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member for Thebacha. Committee, we have agreed to forego general comments on the report and proceed directly to the recommendations. Member for Thebacha.

COMMITTEE MOTION 29-19(2):
COMMITTEE REPORT 2-19(2) – STANDING
COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS
REPORT ON LONG-TERM RECOVERY:
RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE GNWT –
EMERGENCY RESPONSE LEGISLATIVE
FRAMEWORK, CARRIED

MS. MARTSELOS: Madam Chair, I move that this committee recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories undertake a review of the legislative framework supporting the Government of the Northwest Territories' emergency response, with a view to determining what amendments are necessary to ensure that the Premier has overall administrative control whenever a public health emergency and a territorial state of emergency are declared under their respective acts at the same time; and further, that the Government of the Northwest Territories bring forward a legislative proposal to make the necessary amendments to the Government of the Northwest Territories' emergency response legislative framework during the life of the 19th Assembly. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member for Thebacha. The motion is in order. To the motion. Member for Yellowknife Centre.

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just want to recap the rationale for this recommendation. From the report itself, it says: "The authority of the GNWT to declare a public health emergency pursuant to the Public Health Act and a territorial state of emergency under the Emergency Management Act underlined a potential legislative void in that it did not expressly provide the Premier with authority to coordinate and manage the overall response."

As the public is no doubt aware, the Public Health Act previously has been used for things like whooping cough and sexually transmitted disease, and the Emergency Management Act is more typically used for forest fires and floods. As we are all going through our very first pandemic, our legislative framework did not contemplate a territory-wide emergency of the kind that we are in at this time, and so what we would like to see, then, is a remedy to this legislative void by reviewing these two relevant acts and seeing whether a third is necessary, or there are changes to the other two, which support the Premier in having clear authority to manage the government's response to a public health emergency such as this COVID-19 emergency that we are now in.

The rationale here is to solidify the legal grounds for the response to the pandemic. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member for Yellowknife Centre. To the motion. Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. I sat in on some of the deliberations of this committee, as well. I support this. The first day of this sitting, I was raising issues around lessons learned. Even though we're still in the pandemic, we need to start to think about what we've learned and how we're going to get ready for a second wave, potentially, or future pandemics, and so on, so this is certainly consistent with that.

I wouldn't wait, though. If I was on the government operations committee, I wouldn't wait for Cabinet to bring forward a legislative proposal. We can always work collaboratively with our friends in Cabinet, but the committee itself has the authority to conduct its own review and come up with its own ideas working collaboratively with Cabinet, but I wouldn't just sit back and wait for a legislative proposal from Cabinet; but I am happy to support the spirit and intent of this moving forward. Thanks, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

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

---Carried

Member for Thebacha.

COMMITTEE MOTION 30-19(2):
COMMITTEE REPORT 2-19(2) – STANDING
COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS
REPORT ON LONG-TERM RECOVERY:
RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE GNWT –
EMERGENCY RESPONSE COMMUNICATIONS
PROTOCOL, CARRIED

MS. MARTSELOS: Thank you, Madam Chair. I move that this committee recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories develop an emergency response communications protocol that ensures regularly scheduled updates to the public by the Premier and the appropriate emergency authorities whenever an emergency is declared under either or both the Public Health Act and the Emergency Management Act; and further, this protocol should ensure that the Government of the Northwest Territories' public response via electronic means is supplemented by a non-electronic communications mechanism. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member for Thebacha. The motion is in order. To the motion. Member for Kam Lake.

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I 100 percent agree with this one. I believe that centralized clear, consistent communication throughout a state of emergency is one of our most important tools. If we expect people to know what we are asking of them and to be able to help us out to get to where we're trying to go, then they need to know what that is and where to find that information. So I think that having not only consistent information out there, but also the ability for the people of the Northwest Territories to know where to go to get that and to be able to anticipate where that's going to be so that they can be up to date and they can be safe and they could become our biggest advocates in a state of emergency. Thank you.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. I support this motion. On the very last day of our sitting in March, I was asking questions about getting regular updates to the then-COVID-19 Web page that the department of health had set up, and eventually we did evolve into a single website. I had recommended much before that that we have one single portal, and we're finally there, so I support this.

I also think that we need to improve and have an understanding of what the communications are going to be between Cabinet and Regular MLAs if there is another pandemic or a second wave. I think we've all learned from this experience and probably

have found ways to work together through the school of hard knocks, sometimes. I think we probably need some work a protocol in terms of how we work together. The last thing I want to say here is that I had advocated, and I had members of the public come to me about the use of the emergency alert system through cellphones. We did not use it at all during the pandemic, at least so far. I think there are several occasions where it could and should have been used. As an example, when the borders were about to be closed so that people wouldn't be stranded on the other side. I trust and hope that that is going to be part of the what is considered as part of this exercise, but I will support the motion. Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Madam Chair. There have been some real challenges in communication during this pandemic. Of course, it is our very first pandemic and I'd like to think that there have been some learning along the way to how to communicate more effectively with people, not only in the ways that my colleagues have mentioned, but also by considering that not everybody is using social media or electronic means of gaining information. They were, to some extent, really left in the dark. I'm speaking here really of two groups of people. One is seniors who are not computer users. The other are vulnerable people who don't have computers at home and didn't have access to computers during the pandemic because the library in Yellowknife, for example, which is where people could access computers, was closed because of the pandemic. It's really important to take this time where we are not as swamped with cases to figure out these communications protocols and strengthen them for the second wave that's coming. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member for Yellowknife Centre. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

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

---Carried

Member for Thebacha.

COMMITTEE MOTION 31-19(2):
COMMITTEE REPORT 2-19(2) – STANDING
COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS
REPORT ON LONG-TERM RECOVERY:
RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE GNWT –
ENFORCEMENT OF ORDERS ISSUED DURING
A PUBLIC HEALTH OR TERRITORIAL
EMERGENCY, CARRIED

MS. MARTSELOS: Madam Chair, I move that this committee recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories undertake steps now to address public concerns about gaps in enforcement so that remedies are put in place before the possibility of a second wave of COVID-19 this autumn, and further that necessary planning be undertaken to ensure that any enforcement task force can be mobilized within 48 hours of a future declaration of emergency; and furthermore, that the government of the Northwest Territories undertake a dialogue with the municipal and Indigenous governments to obtain their input on enforcement measures and use this information to guide the development of a policy framework for the future enforcement of orders issued during a public health or territorial emergency. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member for Thebacha. The motion is in order. To the motion. Member for Yellowknife Centre.

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Madam Chair. This is arguably the most important recommendation in all of these reports. It's certainly the area that I've heard the most about. Members here have talked about encountering people who are visitors to the NWT who didn't seem to be self-isolated. We've heard from people who filed self-isolation plans and there was no follow-up. We've heard about communities putting up check stops in order to strengthen their own response to who is coming into their communities. This has been such a huge area of confusion and, to some extent, frustration. If we had a second wave right at this moment it would be a very frightening thing from an enforcement point of view. I do not see that the enforcement is now in place that will effectively follow up on complaints and concerns and the people who file the self-isolation plans and so on. This is an area that needs a significant amount of strengthening. I'm happy to hear today that the first ticket has been issued. That's a confidence building move for sure. I think there is so much more that needs to be done in this area. Once again, with a pause in cases here we really have an opportunity to get on top of how enforcement is going to work so that in the event of a second wave that we all feel confident that we are being adequately protected with the measures that are not only in place but are also enforced. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member for Yellowknife Centre. To the motion. Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. I want a second to sum up the concerns raised by my colleague by Yellowknife Centre. On March 21st, the public health order was issued closing the border. I started asking questions three days later of my Cabinet colleagues to try to find out what was actually happening, whether information was being collected, what information was being given out. I guess for the first few days the people at the border stop didn't even have pamphlets, brochures, nothing to give out. Then they started to collect photos of drivers' IDs, they were collecting names of passengers, but it wasn't until March 27th that they had a standardized collection process. Forms were actually not standardized until April 9th to, I guess, presumably ensure that there was a better follow up of self-isolation plans.

It's still not clear to me what happens with the information that is collected, how it goes from the task force to the Chief Public Health Officer's office and who does the follow up? I've asked questions since March about that and just never really got the answers I was looking for. I still have questions about this. I was going to make a Member's statement about it and that's where I'm taking some of these dates out of here because couldn't get to the bottom of it. I support this. The task force itself was only set up on April 8th, 18 days after the border controls were put into place. There was gaps there, I know that we are all learning from this experience. We've got to put that learning into practice and that's what this recommendation is about. It's making sure that we're ready next time. I do support it. Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. What can I say? Being from Hay River I continually get emails. I know that the Minister had said that Protect NWT gets 10,000, or they had over 10,000. Well, I've had probably half of those as well. I think it is important that they take a look at communication all the way from the top right down like to the border and vice versa. There seems to be a real gap in communication. The other thing that I think the issue, like in community of Hay River anyways, was the monitoring. Who is in charge of monitoring? That was a big thing. Then we were told that it's up to residents to do their monitoring and if there is a problem just call Protect NWT and something might happen.

I think the whole thing has to be kind of reviewed, looked at, and streamlined so that there is a good

line of communication and that's what was missing. I realize, and I think the people understand, as well, this came up so fast. We did what we could. I think we did a fairly good job. As things kind of calmed down a bit and people were getting antsy and wanting to move around a bit more and I think that's where we ended up getting a lot more comments. The other thing I think that has to be looked at as well, the communication between the Chief Public Health Officer and some of the other departments, as well. I saw that as a big problem. I think that there has to be better communication there, especially if we're looking at trying to move economic development and business alongside opening up the borders and things like that. Yeah, I support it. There is lots of work to do in this area. That is all I have to say. Thank you.

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

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Yes. I just wanted to along the same lines as to where my colleague from Hay River South was heading. I believe that Protect NWT is a piece of our enforcement within the GNWT. If that is where we are driving people when stuff goes wrong or when they have a question or when they have a concern, then Protect NWT is definitely a part of enforcement. I think that right now, while we don't have any active cases of COVID, we don't have community spread, is the time to be streamlining that and the time to be figuring out how to triage Protect NWT better so that we can reduce the amount of calls that they are getting, whether that is putting more information on the website, making it more readily accessible, making sure that we are putting consistent messaging out there so people aren't calling just to get clarification. I think that we need to figure out how to triage that today. Sorry. You need to figure out how to triage that today. Then if part of that is increasing the capacity of Protect NWT, then now is the time to do that. I 100 percent support this recommendation, but I do believe that Protect NWT needs to be considered part of an enforcement. Thank you.

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

MR. NORN: Marsi, Madam Chair. Just looking at this one and some of the motions we passed already, any time you do something with speed, you are going to lose a little bit in translation. It's always hard, but I think this captures a lot of what we are trying to do here. The biggest thing I have heard complaints to about the enforcement is one of the big issues. I get calls from my constituents, "Why aren't we finding these people more often?" People are never going to learn their lesson if they

keep doing the way things we were doing. We need to start having more of those discussions and more. There has got to be some recourse if you stray from our rules because if we just say, "You are going to get a warning. You shouldn't be doing that," people are going to continually find those grey areas in the law and move around it. Because of it, somebody might get sick. I think if we start actually having some rules that have a little bit of teeth in them, then people will start paying attention. I think that is a big message we need to get across. Mahsi cho. I will be supporting this motion, as well.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member for Tu Nedhe-Willideh. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

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

---Carried

Member for Thebacha.

COMMITTEE MOTION 32-19(2):
COMMITTEE REPORT 2-19(2) – STANDING
COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS
REPORT ON LONG-TERM RECOVERY:
RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE GNWT – DIGITAL
COMMUNICATIONS PLAN AND INTERNET
ACCESS,
CARRIED

MS. MARTSELOS: Madam Chair, I move that this committee recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories develop a digital communications plan for the Northwest Territories that: assesses the state of the telecommunications infrastructure serving each Northwest Territories community; identifies the costs and timelines associated with ensuring that all NWT communities have access to high speed digital telecommunications; and identifies who will be responsible for the work and how it will be achieved; and further, that the Government of the Northwest Territories Long-term Pandemic Response must also include provisions ensuring the vulnerable populations have access to the Internet during a pandemic lockdown by developing plans on a community by community bases for ensuring Internet access for individuals when libraries and community centres are ordered closed during a lockdown. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member. The motion is in order. To the motion. Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. This recommendation dovetails very nicely with the

fourth recommendation in the Standing Committee on Economic Development and Environment report where we wanted a costed plan for upgrading Internet access across the NWT to Canadian standards by September 1st. I hope that when Cabinet responds positively to that recommendation, we can work together and deal with the two at the same time. Thanks, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. To the motion. Member for Kam Lake.

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Just to reiterate, this one has such huge social and economic ramifications throughout the Northwest Territories. Anybody who tuned into any single one of our committee meetings got to see what it was like for us to communicate throughout this time. Anybody who was working from home had the same type of challenges clear across the Northwest Territories. Especially at a time like this where information really became survival for a lot of people, having access to information is vitally important. I fully support this recommendation. Thank you.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I am fully supportive of this recommendation. I just wanted to speak to what I see are some very easy steps we could take. I don't understand why all of our housing units don't have free Wi-Fi in them. As far as I am concerned, we are providing people housing. Let's put Wi-Fi in them. That is something the NWT Housing Corporation, I think, can do tomorrow. Secondly, I know more and more jurisdictions are giving people cell phones. When you get income assistance, you get a cell phone through it. Victim Services has started to do some of that work, but it's the same kind of thing. It actually just ends up saving us money when we can get a hold of our clients because they own a phone and they have Internet.

Lastly, the Mackenzie Valley Fibre Link, there is this debate about whether local service providers are ever going to connect that last mile. The reality is, in some communities, you are never going to find someone to do that. It's just not profitable in some of those communities to connect that last link. Therefore, government has to do it. I don't care whether it's the municipal government and Indigenous government, us building a non-profit or a co-op or some sort of thing, but we need to take the steps to create the organizations that will provide that community service so that the fibre

optic line that we own is actually being used. Those are my comments. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

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

--Carried

Member for Thebacha.

COMMITTEE MOTION 33-19(2):
COMMITTEE REPORT 2-19(2) – STANDING
COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS
REPORT ON LONG-TERM RECOVERY:
RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE GNWT –
DEVELOPMENT OF A "WORKING FROM HOME"
POLICY,
CARRIED

MS. MARTSELOS: Madam Chair, I move that this committee recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories prepare a lessons learned report based on employee input which can be used to inform the development of a working from home policy designed to identify the circumstances under which employees will be authorized or directed to work from home, what supports are available to employees, and what expectations the Government of the Northwest Territories has with respect to the accountability of staff members who are working from home; and further that this work be completed by August 31, 2020, and shared with the standing committee for input consistent with the 19th Legislative Assembly's process convention on the standing committee review of proposed policy initiatives and implementation plans. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member for Thebacha. The motion is in order. To the motion. Member for Yellowknife Centre.

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Madam Chair. This was an issue that I certainly heard a lot about during the lockdown. As Members are aware, some GNWT staff have worked right through the pandemic. They have worked very hard to implement the different measures that keep us safe. Other people went home and there has been some uncertainty about how productive that time has been for them. In order to provide some accountability and consistency, this policy is a key piece of the puzzle. It will then tell not only the employees but also the public what is expected from someone who's working at home. I think there is a misunderstanding that people who are working at

home are only "working," in quotation marks. I know that there are people who are working at home who are working as hard as they would if they work sitting in an office downtown. They are doing the same kind of work. I think there needs to be some confidence building with the public that working at home means working. I think this policy would go a long way toward answering questions about under what circumstances people will work at home and what is expected of them and what supports are provided to them. I certainly will support this recommendation. I just want to note that the timeline here is expedited over the usual 120 days. It's more like two and a half months. The reason for that is so that this policy is in place in the event that there is a second wave, so that it's clear, as I say, what the expectations and supports are for this kind of a move. Thank you.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes, I have big expectations from what a work-from-home policy could accomplish. I think many people who work in government departments feel they don't need to be in the office the majority of the time, and I feel that a great way to get more childcare is allow people to be at home with their children, should they want. I know there are various ways across departments, and some departments have been highly productive working from home, and others have not.

I also think this is a big potential for the GNWT to be a leader. More and more corporations across the world are allowing people to remote work. If we want to be a leading employer and keep people, we need to be more flexible. That doesn't mean you have to work Monday to Friday, nine to five. It means you can work evenings and weekends, you can answer emails when you want, and I really think the GNWT needs to rethink work, because we have all sorts of different productivity coming out of different departments, and I think a lot of lessons can be learned from COVID-19 about creating flexible and individualized work systems for those people who prefer to work from home. So I look at what every other large company is doing in the modern age and how they are letting people do remote work and work from home, and that should be the kind of model we as the GNWT are aspiring to. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

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

---Carried

Member for Thebacha.

COMMITTEE MOTION 37-19(2);
COMMITTEE REPORT 2-19(2) – STANDING
COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS
REPORT ON LONG-TERM RECOVERY:
RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE GNWT –
GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO
RECOMMENDATIONS, CARRIED

MS. MARTSELOS: Madam Chair, I move that this committee recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories provide a response to the recommendations contained in this report within 120 days. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member for Thebacha. The motion is in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

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

---Carried

Does committee agree that this concludes consideration of Committee Report 2-19(2)?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, committee. That concludes consideration of Committee Report 2-19(2), and I would like to thank the chair of the committee. Mr. Norn, what is the wish of committee?

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

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Mr. Norn. There is a motion on the floor to report progress. The motion is in order and non-debatable. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried.

---Carried

I will 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: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Your committee has been considering Bill 10, Temporary Variation of Statutory Time Periods (COVID-19 Pandemic Measures) Act; Committee Report 1-19(2), Standing Committee on Economic Development and Environment Report on Long-Term Post-Pandemic Recovery: Recommendations to the GNWT; Committee Report 3-19(2), Standing Committee on Social Development Report on Long-Term Post-Pandemic Recovery: Recommendations to the GNWT; and Committee Report 2-19(2), Standing Committee on Government Operations Report on Long-Term Post-Pandemic Recovery: Recommendations to the GNWT. I would like to report progress with 18 motions carried and that Committee Reports 1-19(2), 2-19(2), and 3-19(2) be concluded, and that Bill 10 is ready for third reading. Mr. Speaker, I move that the report of the Committee of the Whole be concurred with. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes. Do we have a seconder? Member for Inuvik Boot Lake. All those in favour? All those opposed? Any abstentions? The motion is carried.

---Carried

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

Third Reading of Bills

BILL 9:
SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATIONS ACT
(OPERATIONS EXPENDITURES), NO. 1, 2020-
2021, CARRIED

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move, seconded by the honourable Member from Nahendeh, that Bill 9, Supplementary Appropriations Act (Operations Expenditures), No. 1, 2020-2021, be read for the third time. Mr. Speaker, I would request a recorded vote. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

RECORDED VOTE

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer): The Member for Yellowknife South, the Member for Range Lake, the Member for Great Slave, the Member for Hay River South, the Member for Thebacha, the Member for Nunakput, the Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh, the Member for Nahendeh, the Member for Sahtu, the Member for Inuvik Boot Lake, the Member for Hay River North, the Member

for Yellowknife Centre, the Member for Frame Lake, the Member for Kam Lake, the Member for Deh Cho, the Member for Yellowknife North, the Member for Monfwi, the Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes.

MR. SPEAKER: All those opposed, please rise. All those abstaining, please rise. The results of the recorded vote: 18 in favour, zero opposed, zero abstentions. The motion is carried.

---Carried

Third reading of bills. Minister of Finance.

**BILL 8:
SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATIONS ACT
(INFRASTRUCTURE EXPENDITURES), NO. 2,
2020-2021, CARRIED**

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member from Nahendeh, that Bill 8, Supplementary Appropriations Act (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 2, 2020-2021, be read for a third time. Mr. Speaker, I would request a recorded vote. Thank you.

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

RECORDED VOTE

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

MR. SPEAKER: All those opposed, please rise. All those abstaining, please rise. The results of the recorded vote: 18 in favour, zero opposed, zero abstentions. Motion is carried.

---Carried

Three for three there, Minister. Third reading of bills. Mr. Clerk, orders of the day.

Orders of the Day

COMMITTEE CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Ball):
Orders of the day for Friday, June 12, 2020, at 10:00 a.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
 - Motion 10, Extended Adjournment of the House to October 15, 2020
 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
 21. Report of Committee of the Whole
 22. Third Reading of Bills
 - Bill 10, Temporary Variation of Statutory Time Periods (COVID-19 Pandemic Measures) Act
 23. Orders of the Day
- MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Clerk. This House stands adjourned until Friday, June 12, 2020, at 10:00 a.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 6:05 p.m.