



NORTHWEST TERRITORIES  
**LEGISLATIVE  
ASSEMBLY**

**2<sup>nd</sup> Session**

**Day 35**

**19<sup>th</sup> Assembly**

**HANSARD**

**Wednesday, August 26, 2020**

Pages 1229 - 1248

**The Honourable Frederick Blake Jr, Speaker**

# Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

## Members of the Legislative Assembly

### Speaker

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

---

**Mr. Ronald Bonnetrouge**  
(Deh Cho)

**Ms. Caitlin Cleveland**  
(Kam Lake)

**Hon. Paulie Chinna**  
(Sahtu)  
*Minister responsible for NWT Housing Corporation*  
*Minister responsible for Homelessness*

**Hon. Caroline Cochrane**  
(Range Lake)  
*Premier*  
*Minister of Executive and Indigenous Affairs*  
*Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs*

**Ms. Julie Green**  
(Yellowknife Centre)

**Mr. Jackie Jacobson**  
(Nunakput)

**Mr. Rylund Johnson**  
(Yellowknife North)

**Mr. Jackson Lafferty**  
(Monfwi)

**Ms. Frieda Martselos**  
(Thebacha)

**Hon. Katrina Nokleby**  
(Great Slave)

**Mr. Steve Norn**  
(Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh)

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

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

**Hon. R.J. Simpson**  
(Hay River North)  
*Government House Leader*  
*Minister of Education, Culture & Employment*  
*Minister responsible for the Public Utilities Board*  
*Minister of Infrastructure*

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

**Hon. Diane Thom**  
(Inuvik Boot Lake)  
*Deputy Premier*  
*Minister of Health and Social Services*  
*Minister responsible for the Status of Women*  
*Minister responsible for Persons with Disabilities*

**Hon. Shane Thompson**  
(Nahendeh)  
*Minister of Environment and Natural Resources*  
*Minister of Lands*  
*Minister responsible for NWT Power Corporation*  
*Minister responsible for Seniors*  
*Minister responsible for Youth*  
*Minister responsible for the Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission*  
*Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment*

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

---

### Officers

**Clerk of the Legislative Assembly**  
Mr. Tim Mercer

**Deputy Clerks**  
Mr. Glen Rutland  
Ms. Kim Wickens

**Committee Clerks**  
Mr. Michael Ball  
Ms. Cynthia James  
Ms. Jennifer Franki-Smith

**Law Clerks**  
Ms. Sheila MacPherson  
Ms. Alyssa Holland

---

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

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>PRAYER.....</b>	<b>1229</b>
<b>TABLING OF DOCUMENTS .....</b>	<b>1229</b>
<b>MOTIONS.....</b>	<b>1229</b>
12-19(2) – Revocation of Appointment to the Executive Council (Cochrane).....	1229
<b>ORDERS OF THE DAY .....</b>	<b>1248</b>



**YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES****Wednesday, August 26, 2020****Members Present**

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

The House met at 1:32 p.m.

**Prayer**

---Prayer

**SPEAKER (Hon. Frederick Blake Jr):** Item 2, Ministers' statements. Item 3, Members' statements. Item 4, returns to oral questions. Item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery. I would just like to welcome everyone in the gallery. It is mainly media that is allowed in our Chamber at this time. I would just like to welcome you. It is always good to have people in the Chamber. Thank you. Item 6, oral questions. Item 7, written questions. Item 8, returns to written questions. Item 9, replies to Commissioner's address. Item 10, petitions. Item 11, reports of committees on the review of bills. Item 12, reports of standing and special committees. Item 13, tabling of documents. Minister responsible for the Status of Women.

**Tabling of Documents**

TABLED DOCUMENT 164-19(2):  
2019-2020 ANNUAL REPORT - THE STATUS OF  
WOMEN COUNCIL OF THE NORTHWEST  
TERRITORIES

**HON. DIANE THOM:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table the following document: "2019-2020 Annual Report from the Status of Women Council of the Northwest Territories." Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister. Tabling of documents. Item 14, notices of motion. Item 15, motions. Honourable Premier.

**Motions**

MOTION 12-19(2):  
REVOCATION OF APPOINTMENT TO THE  
EXECUTIVE COUNCIL,  
CARRIED

**HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

WHEREAS pursuant to Section 61(1) of the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act, the Legislative Assembly recommends to the Commissioner the appointment of Members of the Executive Council;

AND WHEREAS, pursuant to Section 61(2) of the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act, the persons appointed hold office during the pleasure of the Legislative Assembly;

AND WHEREAS the Assembly, pursuant to these powers, has chosen the Honourable Katrina Nokleby to sit as a Member of the Executive Council;

NOW THEREFORE, I MOVE, seconded by the honourable Member for Thebacha, that this Assembly formally revoke the pleasure of the Assembly from the appointment of the honourable Katrina Nokleby as a Member of the Executive Council;

AND FURTHER, that this Assembly recommend that a new Member be chosen to be a Member of the Executive Council. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Range Lake. I will now open it up for discussion, starting with the mover, seconder, and then we will open it up.

**HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE:** Mr. Speaker, the events that have caused us to be here today are unfortunate. My revoking of the Minister's portfolios, and this motion, were decisions not made lightly, but they are necessary ones. The inability to work with and have confidence in the professionalism and integrity of Minister Nokleby ultimately made the decision clear. As set out in the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act, and in our Members' handbook, the Premier has the authority for the overall management and direction of the Executive branch and the responsibility to take disciplinary action with respect to the conduct of Ministers. The removal of portfolios does not circumvent the authority of the Legislative Assembly to remove membership on the Executive Council. It is about taking the steps necessary to protect the reputation, proper functioning, and management of government.

I know that the public wants to hear the rationale for my decision. While it would not be appropriate to provide information to the same extent that I have shared confidentially in Caucus, I will share some of that information at a higher level. I am trying to balance the need to provide Members of the Legislative Assembly and the public with sufficient information to provide context for my actions while also trying to respect the Minister.

When Regular Members brought the previous motion of non-confidence in the Minister, it was agreed not to proceed with the motion in exchange for commitments from the Minister to improve in specific areas and the expectation for myself, as Premier, to ensure that the commitments were fulfilled. Although Minister Nokleby has stated many times that she learned from the first non-confidence motion, she has also continually stated since then that these are not her issues, that they are either untrue, the department's fault, or mine, directly or indirectly. I have not seen the kind of self-reflection required to find improvement, and I still don't believe that Minister Nokleby is ready to accept any responsibility.

The areas of concern that determined my final decision include interactions with civil servants; interactions with myself, Cabinet colleagues, and MLAs; and the failure to manage her office. After many unsuccessful attempts to address concerns directly with Minister Nokleby repeatedly turned into an exchange where I and/or staff were subjected to a rude and disrespectful Minister, who was yelling, angry, and using vulgar language, I provided Minister Nokleby with a detailed letter that outlined my concerns and expectations. I also expressed my willingness to discuss matters further in order to find ways to improve and restore my confidence if she agreed to accept and work on the expectations. The initial reaction of the Minister to the letter and subsequent meeting was extremely inappropriate. Recognizing that the Minister lacked the necessary respect for me to provide any feedback, advice, or guidance, I also attempted to engage a former Premier to offer advice and mentorship to Minister Nokleby. That effort was also unsuccessful.

Some of the areas I raised with Minister Nokleby included concerns that she targeted staff for discipline based on unsubstantiated rumours. I emphasized the importance of following processes to ensure that people are treated fairly and avoiding acting on rumours. The Minister also openly expressed negative, degrading, and potentially harmful personal opinions about various public servants, both to the individuals and to others. This put the government at legal risk and is also unfair to the staff, who are unable to defend themselves against someone with an unequal amount of power, and also undermines the morale among the public service.

I also attempted to address the inappropriate communications experienced by myself, Ministers, and MLAs. I reinforced the clear expectations that Ministers hold themselves to high standards of professionalism and a meaningful commitment to working together. I accept that we can all get frustrated and even angry. However, the Minister's continual tantrums in meetings, walking out of meetings, lashing out at others, and a refusal to hear from colleagues are not productive or reflective of the kind of relationships that we need to effectively look after the concerns and priorities of residents.

Another key area of concern was the failure of the Minister to manage her office. This may seem like a small factor. However, failure to be responsive and be transparent can have serious consequences. Failure to respond meaningfully and promptly to concerns from the public and MLAs will occasionally happen, and I appreciate that we faced extraordinary demands with the pandemic, but replies should not be waiting months without an interim response. The Minister's failure to respond in a timely manner can and did cause significant intergovernmental harm.

I also made clear the expectation that the Minister and her office disclose all meetings with outside parties and that she include departmental officials in all meetings to ensure transparency. Unrecorded meetings held without officials or any staff present is a significant danger to the essential trust and public confidence in the integrity of government decision-making.

During our final face-to-face meeting, Minister Nokleby again did not take any responsibility for any of her actions, blamed me for all of the problems, would not listen to any of my comments, and made an extremely inappropriate statement about a public servant, which confirmed my lack of confidence and the decision to immediately pull her portfolios. Although I have not disclosed everything leading to my decision, at the end of the day, it is clear to me that allowing Minister Nokleby to continue to hold portfolios would significantly disrupt and frustrate our ability to do business together and make progress on the Assembly's priorities. She has not given any indication that she is sincerely willing to improve. On the contrary, she has continued to suggest that none of her failings are her fault and that responsibility for them all lies with others, including myself. I believe that keeping her as a Minister will damage not only Cabinet but will harm the Assembly, the GNWT, and ultimately, the residents we serve. I gave Minister Nokleby ample opportunity to improve. Minister Nokleby has made it clear to me that she disagrees with my judgment and does not accept the standards I set and my efforts to help her meet them. I was left with no choice except to remove her portfolios.

Mr. Speaker, there is not one single incident that resulted in this need for this action. This is a result of a pattern of behaviours that have continued despite efforts of MLAs, Ministers, and myself. This motion, while necessary, is both regrettable and distracting. We all recognize unprecedented challenges we have faced and the challenges yet to come. We owe it to the residents to have a strong, united Cabinet, and I believe all of us need to show more of a willingness to work together and stand together as a whole Assembly. I look forward to putting this issue behind us, Mr. Speaker, and instead of focusing on questions of non-confidence, putting our collective energies towards meeting the needs of the people we serve.

Mr. Speaker, I will be requesting a recorded vote on this motion. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Premier. To the motion. Member for Thebacha.

**MS. MARTSELOS:** Mr. Speaker, as the MLA for Thebacha, I firmly believe that seconding this motion is the correct thing to do in order to move forward. The Government of the Northwest Territories represents all the people of the North, and public outbursts that have happened have got to stop. Professionalism must take over. Serving all the people of the NWT, including the business community and Indigenous governments, must be a priority.

Mr. Speaker, I support the Premier and Cabinet with this decision. These kinds of actions are not taken lightly. I am sure they are well thought out. I know the reasons for removal, and, as a government, we have to move on, and so does the Member for Great Slave. For all the people of the NWT, including my constituents of Thebacha, I want you to know that my decision to second this motion was the correct thing to do.

Mr. Speaker, the Government of the Northwest Territories must be inclusive, and we must respect each and every person who lives in this territory. We must treat them with respect, fairness, accountability, and transparency, no matter who they are. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Thebacha. To the motion. Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

**MR. NORN:** Marsi cho, Mr. Speaker. Colleagues, I am sure you appreciate how difficult today's motion is for many Members of this House. We are only nine months into the life of this government, and I can almost guarantee that none of our colleagues could imagine we would be considering a motion like this at this time.

When we were first elected, it was a hopeful time, enthusiasm for change and fresh ideas, and I still

think we can go in that direction. I know that many people may think that we have let them down, but I am forever an optimist, and I remain committed to the strong ideals that I championed during my election last year, and I am sure my fellow MLAs feel the same way. This moment will pass, and the future, what really matters and what we as Members choose to do, is to ensure the NWT is on the right track to recover and go stronger than ever was before.

Mr. Speaker, it would be disingenuous for me to pretend that the Member for Great Slave and I have not been involved in a personal matter that had reached the public's attention. Despite the highly personal nature of this incident, I want to ensure this House and all members of the public that my consideration of this motion is based solely on the Minister's performance in the execution of her responsibilities to this House.

I will say, however, this is 2020, Mr. Speaker, and all Northerners understand the need for a respectful workplace, where people feel safe and feel free from harassment and intimidation. In whatever workplace you work in, one should always feel safe and free from being verbally abused and insulted. Industries from across the country and throughout the world have taken steps in light of serious scandals to improve on harassment-free workplaces and better support employees who are subject to poor treatment by their colleagues and, more importantly, to those positions with power over them.

Democratic institutions like our Legislative Assembly are no stranger to these issues, and, in many cases, the pressures to politics and the very nature of our particular profession means we're often seeing worse behaviour behind closed doors in parliaments and in legislatures. We must all strive to do better, to ensure we treat each other with utmost respect and civility, and act as role models to the people who are placing their trust in us to represent them.

As I have said, Mr. Speaker, this is still a new government, but it is also a government that inherits some bad habits from previous Assemblies. One only needs to look at to how the public is reacting to this week's sitting to see what we have done. We have done a bad job in explaining our processes to our residents. That has hurt the trust people place in all of us to represent them openly and honestly, and not with the familiar in-fighting that has so defined our predecessors. I have nothing but respect for those who have served here in the past. Times have changed, and we must change with the times.

We cannot continue to govern from the shadows of confidential meetings and expect the public can

understand how we come to our decisions and what factors led to those decisions. We have to let some sunlight in and be willing to trust that the public will view our work fairly. I believe it is the best way forward, and it is clearly what we are being told by the majority of our constituents. I know I have heard it all, and I know you have heard it all, as well. To make this change, it will require us to change how we do our business in this Assembly, and I don't think that's necessarily a bad thing. When we were first elected here, people expected the most of us, to make bold decisions -- there are fresh faces here -- and to move forward. Change is good. There are quite a few, all elected here to do. I have a couple of examples here. Like, for one, we need to open up our standing committees opened to the public a little bit more, make sure there is a record of all decisions made and all documents relating to our proceedings are accessible, readable, easy to find online.

Mr. Speaker, it is so true that consensus government is very unique and a valuable institution that we are right to be proud of, but, if we don't make the kind of changes people are asking us by asking for, we risk losing it, and that's not something I want to be remembered for. I hope we can all learn and grow from this experience, and to work collaboratively to ensure our constituents are never left again waiting for answers that we can readily provide, and get to the real work that we're here elected to do. We've still got housing; we've still got jobs; we've still got an economy to worry about. I'd rather be talking to that than to dealing with these types of matters.

Mr. Speaker, I feel this context is important to our debate of this motion. This motion to revoke the Minister's appointment has become much more than a procedural matter or an accountability exercise. It is going to embody our track record as an Assembly, and we are being judged on how we handle things today. I am very proud to serve this House as a Regular Member, and we all have an important job to do. We work to both collaborate with our Cabinet colleagues and policy initiatives, legislation, and other important decisions, while also scrutinizing Ministers for their performance as leaders of this government. Does it mean we all agree? No, of course not. That would be unhealthy for our democracy. It does mean we should always try to do our best to work together for the good of the people of the Northwest Territories. It also means that there are clear issues with the government that we are not doing the best job we can. It is our job as Regular Members to call out Ministers and get them to fix the problems. We all understand it's not an easy job. Now, in the vast majority of cases during our brief life of this government, most of the Ministers have acted promptly to address these concerns, but there are

exceptions. Unfortunately, the performance of the Member for Great Slave as Minister for Infrastructure and for ITI has been lacking.

Mr. Speaker, out of respect for the Minister and the seriousness of this motion, I want to provide some specific examples where I find her lacking in her abilities. Relying on broad statements of "performance" and "professionalism" I don't feel are adequate to address the public's concerns.

Mr. Speaker, I have great concerns regarding the Minister's attention to the interests of our Indigenous partners. Indigenous governments, our Indigenous partners, are woven into the fabric of modern NWT, and it is impossible to govern without understanding and respecting the unique role they play as partners to the GNWT. We have seen both the Tlicho and the Akaitcho governments condemn the inaction of the GNWT on addressing serious economic concerns related to the Minister's portfolios.

The Rae Access Road, Mr. Speaker, and the Slave Geological Province Road are both key infrastructure projects vital to our economic recovery. It goes without saying that these projects need the full participation of the Indigenous governments in question. That the Minister could not see that and defended the decision not to involve them has forced the government to backtrack significantly in these procurement deals. There is, no doubt, lasting damage to our relationship with the Tlicho and Akaitcho governments and more likely to other Indigenous governments, as well, who now look to the GNWT with skepticism, and I am hoping that we can still move in the right direction.

Mr. Speaker, another important point to make is that we must always honour our treaties and do whatever we can to ensure that Indigenous peoples are full participants in our economy. If it were not for the Premier stepping in to address the concerns of Indigenous leaders that were left unresolved by the Member for Great Slave, this situation might have grown far worse.

Mr. Speaker, the economies of small communities work differently than in regional centres and here in Yellowknife. That should be obvious, but I have seen the Minister blatantly ignore the economic realities of small communities despite Members flagging these concerns and asking for actions to resolve them. For example, in April of this year, the Minister signed off on a directive for vehicles and equipment belonging to the Department of Infrastructure to discontinue using Deninu Kue fuel products. This decision was made without consultation and had devastating consequences for the local economy of Fort Resolution.

Mr. Speaker, my constituents don't have the luxury of a robust economy like Yellowknife. Every dollar that is spent by the GNWT is a direct investment in the well-being of the community. I still firmly believe that this is a discriminatory business practice, and yet there is little to no action for a Member to address my concerns and restore prosperity to a community.

Something I have also noticed is, when other Members speak, I try to stay off our devices and listen intently. To make matters worse, it took five months to the Minister to get back to me with a response to these very serious concerns. That kind of response time is completely unacceptable and contrary to our communications convention of Cabinet and Regular Members, that state Regular Members should receive response time within five days. For a constituent worried about the future during a terrible pandemic in a rural and remote community, five months might seem like a lifetime. This was not the first time there was an unreasonable delay in the Minister's responses to my inquiries. Sadly, Mr. Speaker, it has become a regular occurrence for me and many of my colleagues.

Mr. Speaker, I could go on with further examples, but I believe I clearly provided grounds for serious concerns of the Minister's performance. Months ago, I hoped we would see improvement from the Minister, that together we could move forward and together support stronger government. It is very regrettable that this is not the case, and I have an obligation to my constituents to take action to ensure that their needs are addressed by this government in both a timely and effective manner. I do not believe that the Minister is capable of delivering on results that we so desperately need in the state of national and international emergency.

Mr. Speaker, I said earlier that I wish we were not in this place, but, nevertheless, we are. We must act according to what is best for the people that we serve. Therefore, I will be supporting this motion, and I hope we could all move forward towards a stronger government in the time that remains ahead of us.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I don't think that Minister Nokleby has anything to be ashamed of. She has a lot of accomplishments. She has a lot of supporters. I think she should hold her head high through this after it's all said and done. With that, I have nothing further to say, and I would say thank you, Mr. Speaker. Marsi cho.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh. To the motion. Member for Hay River South.

**MR. ROCKY SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is unfortunate that we are here today. However, it should not come as a surprise to any of the Regular Members or Cabinet that we have this motion before us. Our constituents elect each one of us, and in turn, it is our responsibility to elect the Premier and Cabinet. It is also our responsibility to keep each Minister accountable and remove any one of them when necessary. We also expect Cabinet to be respectful and work as a team if government is to be effective.

Mr. Speaker, a decision like this is not one that comes out of nowhere. It is not one that is taken lightly, nor is it an easy one to make. It is a decision based on a prolonged breakdown of confidence between Regular Members, Cabinet, and the Minister, and that confidence has been broken. It is now our responsibility to vote on a motion of revocation. We all had a part to play in this matter, and we must all take ownership.

This is not a new issue. This is an ongoing issue of standing at the highest level of this government. Minister Nokleby was previously offered the opportunity to address ongoing issues and limitations with respect to her role as Minister and her interaction with Regular Members. I truly believe everyone deserves that chance, and that chance was provided. The Premier was presented and agreed with the task of working through those issues with Minister Nokleby. Unfortunately, those limitations and issues could not be resolved.

Mr. Speaker, the constituents of Hay River and throughout the Northwest Territories require timely answers to their concerns and issues. This has not been happening with the Department of Infrastructure and ITI. To this end, approximate two weeks ago, I had a discussion with the Premier to confirm that, going forward, I would be directing all my questions and issues with respect to ITI and Infrastructure through her office. For me to do my job, that was the action I was required to take.

A Minister must be willing to accept some advice along with constructive criticism. It is one thing to debate that advice and criticism; it is another to be disrespectful and uncooperative to not only Members but constituents, as well. Personally, I am not about to be put in the position of having to walk on eggshells around any Minister. I was elected to represent constituents of Hay River South, and that is exactly what I intend to do. The working relationship between Cabinet Ministers must be one that is based on trust, respect, teamwork, and confidence. I believe that we, as Regular Members, put our trust in Cabinet to do what is right for all the people of the Northwest Territories. In return, our expectation is that we, including our constituents, be treated with the same level of respect and trust we instill in Cabinet Ministers.

Mr. Speaker, we saw the media grab hold of this issue. We hear past politicians weigh in with their opinion. I suppose it does sell advertising and provides previous politicians with a bit more shelf life. However, as an Indigenous person born and raised in the Northwest Territories, I am insulted that they can focus on this issue with such interest and disdain when there are more earnest issues out there.

Mr. Speaker, to put the issue of revocation in perspective, when I find Indigenous people being incarcerated at disturbing rates, Indigenous children being placed in foster care at alarming rates, Indigenous people with high rates of addictions with limited support, Indigenous people without housing, Indigenous people passed up for employment opportunities, Indigenous-owned businesses being treated differently, and Indigenous graduation rates wanting, it is these issues that are central to me. This is where my energy has to be directed. Supporting the decision to remove a sitting Minister who was offered every opportunity to address shortcomings is not problematic for me. Mr. Speaker, just to be clear, based on my observations, based on my interaction with the Minister, and based on the reasoning provided by the Premier, my position is to unequivocally support the Premier in the decision she made and support the motion before us.

If Minister Nokleby finds herself on this side of the House, I will be the first to welcome her and encourage her not to consider this a failure but as an opportunity to learn and grow while working in the best interest of her constituents and the residents of the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Hay River South. To the motion. Member for Frame Lake.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Merci, Monsieur le President. [English translation not provided.] I have tried to choose my words very carefully. Firstly, I would like to thank the residents of Frame Lake and indeed all the Northwest Territories citizens who have shared their views with me. I have seriously reviewed and considered them. I take the issue of removal of a Cabinet Minister very seriously. This is not a process or decision that I have taken lightly or quickly.

There are a couple of points I would like to start with. Firstly, processes and rules at the Legislative Assembly have evolved over many years and have generally served us well. Confidentiality and trust go hand-in-hand and are a necessary part of any government, including consensus government and party politics. It is clear to me that we collectively have not done a very good job in explaining how this Legislative Assembly actually works. I will

continue to push for better communications, openness, and transparency.

Secondly, the matter of removal of portfolios and revocation of a Cabinet position are obviously very serious matters that often involve behaviour and performance. This is no different than a performance review or job evaluation which is typically conducted between an employer and an employee. The difference for the Legislative Assembly and indeed many other elected bodies is that removal or revocation is conducted publicly.

As I have said before, it is an awkward and uncomfortable process. It is difficult to avoid the appearance of personal clashes driving problems of performance. I want to assure members of the public that attempts were made to resolve these matters well before we arrived at this point. Many options and strategies were discussed before reaching a conclusion that a motion of revocation should be brought forward.

I was prepared to support a motion of revocation for Minister Nokleby in May of this year, but it never came to the floor of the House. I outlined my reasons in a social media posting on May 29, 2020 and left out some of the details in the interest of moving forward. All Regular MLAs met privately with the Premier and the Minister to express their views on areas that required improvement in both behaviour and performance on that morning. I believe it was appropriate and necessary that this was a confidential meeting, given the nature of the matters raised.

At that meeting, the Premier and the Minister both made clear commitments regarding improvements, which resulted in the motion of revocation not coming to the floor. We all hoped that problems would be resolved in a constructive fashion. Last week, the Premier removed the Minister's portfolios. That is a decision the Premier has the authority and the power to make, and she alone can do that. MLAs vote in the Cabinet Ministers and the Premier, but it is the Premier who makes the decision on portfolio assignments. From everything I have heard, portfolio assignments have been made in a collaborative and participatory manner by this Premier.

While the Premier made the decision to remove the portfolios from the Minister, this was conveyed in a timely manner to Regular MLAs, and there was a meeting to discuss this move with all Regular MLAs. The Premier explained that decision to us, and there was an opportunity to ask questions. I accept the explanation provided by the Premier and her decisive action, followed by a considerable series of efforts and measures to improve behaviour and performance of the Minister. As this

was a confidential meeting, I cannot share the details, and I respect that protocol.

Furthermore, I do not believe that the public interest or the privacy of the Minister is served in exposing all of the details to public scrutiny. This is not the practice with other personnel matters in a normal performance appraisal. I believe the examples made public today are sufficient substantiation of the need for removal of the Minister. I support the Premier's decision to remove the Minister's portfolios. Commitments were made to Regular MLAs by the Minister and followed up on by the Premier. When the Premier felt there was insufficient progress and little prospect for change, the Premier took her responsibility seriously and made the decision to remove the Minister's portfolios. I thank the Premier for taking my concerns seriously and taking decisive action.

We must assess the performance of Ministers as objectively as we possibly can. This is about getting results for the Northwest Territories residents and whether we have the right team in place to do this for the remaining part of our term. There is no doubt that the Minister works very hard and is knowledgeable in her fields of study and practice, and I commend her for that. However, government and politics in this Legislative Assembly is not an engineering project. It is about people and relationships, things that I need to constantly be reminded of myself, and I have a long way to go. There are no questions or issues about the Minister's ethical conduct, honesty, or integrity in my mind. I will not be commenting on the Minister's behaviour but support what the Premier has said publicly on this matter.

I do take issue with a number of problems or failures with the Minister's performance that have come to a head during the current pandemic. I certainly understand and have sympathy with the large load created with the responsibility for two important departments in our government. However, I set a very high standard for myself and others in this Assembly.

I will highlight some of the key issues with the Minister's performance. I am a member of the Standing Committee on Economic Development and Environment. We have held 24 meetings in the 19<sup>th</sup> Assembly over nine months. We have only had the Minister before Committee two times trying to get briefings and information. In 70 meetings held by the Standing Committee on accountability and oversight to all the Regular MLAs, the Minister has only appeared three times. Granted, COVID-19 has played a huge role in how we conduct our business, but Ministers need to get in front of committees and work with them. Our Standing Committee on Economic Development and Environment has rarely been invited to provide feedback or input on

policy or program changes in the two departments managed by this Minister.

From my last term and what I have seen in this Assembly at other Standing Committees, strong Ministers work collaboratively with committees to get ideas, feedback, and improved decisions and outcomes. This is supposed to be the way that consensus government works. This has clearly not been the case with the Minister in question today.

I have taken issue with the direction and outcomes of the Minister's management of economic supports and recovery during the pandemic. For example, the Assembly passed an interim budget that included the first quarter of operational funds for each department on March the 16<sup>th</sup>. Some departments also received all of their grants and contributions funding, including Industry, Tourism and Investment. This was done in anticipation of the economic downturn and to ensure GNWT could quickly respond with financial assistance.

The Support for Entrepreneurs and Economic Development, or SEED program, is promoted as "one part of the GNWT ongoing investment in a diverse sustainable economy." This is obviously increasingly important as we struggle to assist small business during this pandemic.

The much-anticipated SEED guidelines for 2021 were finally released on May 11, eight weeks after MLAs passed the ITI budget. It took far too long to open up the application process and develop a one-page seven-principle guideline for funding approval. The lack of transparency around allocation of funds within the eight streams of the SEED program is not helpful when small businesses are in dire straits. I first raised concerns with the delays in SEED funding on April 22. The Minister finally responded in an e-mail dated August the 18<sup>th</sup> with information on the allocation of these funds and how decisions will be made. That is a 16-week wait, Mr. Speaker. This was quite disturbing after many e-mails from me attempting to get this information, which is still not clearly explained on the departmental website. Small business, the public, and MLAs need to have confidence that ITI is going to get SEED money out quickly and in a transparent and accountable fashion.

The Minister has not established an inclusive mechanism with experienced individuals to help small businesses survive the pandemic through effective programs and services and supports. More loans will not cut it unless there are remission or grant provisions. Such a group also needs to be engaged to help plan for economic recovery. Yukon had its Business Advisory Council up and running on March 26, yet ours did not hold its first meeting until June the 5<sup>th</sup>. The advice offered on the composition and mandate of the Council from

Regular MLAs appears to have been largely ignored.

The Minister did not work with Regular MLAs or Standing Committees in setting priorities for economic assistance or for designing programs or services. In my view, the Minister appears to have invested an inordinate amount of her time early in the pandemic on sectors of our economy over which we have little to no control. That focus came at the expense of small business, which is a large part of our economy, over which we can and must have considerable impact.

The Minister continues to promote large infrastructure projects as a way to generate benefits for Northerners. Following written questions from me in March, shocking results from the Slave Geological Province Road contracts over the last five years were tabled in the House in May. Only four of 14 contracts went to northern contractors. Only three of the successful contractors were Business Incentive Policy-registered, and only 9 percent of the contracted amounts went to northern companies: \$88,000 out of \$987,000, Mr. Speaker. The pattern continues under her tenure, as all four contracts issued in 2020 went to southern companies.

The Yellowknives Dene First Nation publicly withdrew their support for the SGP Road on August 1, 2020, given that the GNWT contracted another southern company for up to \$20 million worth of work. I know, too, that the Tlicho government has raised serious concerns about the failure to deliver northern benefits with the Tlicho All-Season Road, where southern workers continue to be the majority. The Minister was not able to begin the policy and public engagement work to make meaningful changes to our spending and procurement services to ensure that Northerners benefit. That responsibility was transferred to the Minister in the Department of Finance on July 23<sup>rd</sup>, and I look forward to speedy progress.

A big part of being a successful Minister in consensus government is open, respectful, and considerate communications with fellow MLAs. This helps to ensure that Regular Members are informed of and given opportunity to provide meaningful input into important decisions in a timely and respectful manner. It means responding with respect to criticisms and suggestions. MLAs are approached by constituents for help, often as a last result. We contact Ministers for assistance and information and need timely responses. We also require information to hold Ministers accountable. In short, we need access to timely information to do our jobs as MLAs, and normally, that is understood and acted on by Ministers.

To further illustrate my concerns with performance, I will provide some details of my direct interactions with the Minister. I have not swamped the Minister's office with requests for information or requests for assistance with constituents. I have submitted 19 such requests since the beginning of this Assembly. Six, or nearly one third, have yet to receive a response, with the oldest now over seven months old. Only one of the responses met the five-day target set out in the communications between Executive Council, Ministers, standing committee, and Regular Members' process conventions. When I do get responses, it has taken between three and 64 days, and on average, about 17 days for the ones I do get a response on. I cannot do my job as an MLA with this Minister when there are no responses or much delayed responses to my information or assistance requests.

My interactions and what I have witnessed with other MLAs have led me to conclude that the Minister has not developed effective working relationships with Members on both sides of this House. For all of these reasons, I have lost confidence that the Minister can or will provide the leadership and performance that the NWT needs for economic recovery, especially in these critical times. I support this motion. This is about the performance of the Minister and ensuring that we have in place the right skills to work with Regular MLAs and provide leadership and focus at this critical time. Whatever the outcome, as stressful as it has been for us all, we must rise up and work together for the betterment of the Northwest Territories. I commit to do my part. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. To the motion. Member for Monfwi.

**MR. LAFFERTY:** Masi, Mr. Speaker. [Translation] We have a motion in front of us today. Sometimes it is very difficult to speak on a motion, and it is to remove one MLA. It is a very difficult decision to make, but we do represent the people of the Northwest Territories. We have to make decisions on what they think, as well. Today, I am going to speak on this motion. A lot of people don't know the background information. A lot has been asked as to what has been happening here. Regarding the government and Ministers, I am going to speak on some of these issues. Mr. Speaker, we are live, so I would like to say a few words in the English language. [Translation ends]

[Microphone turned off] ...to the motion before the House, I would just like to address that our session is the only opportunity for us to make statements on what truly occurs in this building, whether it be within the government or the Assembly, as Members and elected officials. I would like to speak both about what really occurred from the

government perspective and also the Minister in question. What has truly transpired? There are a lot of questions from the general public, so I would like to capture some of them.

Before speaking to the motion, I want to comment on the extraordinary circumstances that have brought us here today in our session. It is rare that this House meets outside of regular scheduled settings. Our unique form of consensus-style government prides itself on its consistency and stability, even during the most trying times, Mr. Speaker. It is hard to imagine a more trying time when our people are facing, every day, the COVID-19 pandemic. For us to break with our respected traditions, only the most serious matter could possibly require such actions and attention from the honourable Members of this House. It is a most serious matter that brings us together here today, namely the Premier's decision to remove the portfolios from the honourable Member for Great Slave. This is the most serious and unprecedented action. Unfortunately, once again, it is a decision made by this Premier without consultation or proper notice given to MLAs.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to elaborate a bit more on that. The process conventions of consensus-style government that govern our institutions are quite clear. The fifth guiding principle states, "Except under extraordinary circumstances, Members of the Legislative Assembly should be made aware of and have opportunity to discuss significant announcements, changes, consultations, or initiatives before they are released to the public or introduced in the Legislative Assembly. Use of the element of surprise is inconsistent with consensus government."

Mr. Speaker, the unilateral decision of the Premier to revoke the portfolios of one of our Ministers has not been explained to me thoroughly as anything that so urgently needed to happen that we could not be consulted. In actual fact, we were given only a brief meeting with the Premier as notice of this decision. This has significant consequences, as you know, Mr. Speaker, on our ability to communicate directly and effectively with our constituents across the Northwest Territories, and they are far from happy about the whole affair that we face here today. On the contrary, they are very confused and frustrated, throughout the Northwest Territories, with no clear sense of what is happening at the highest level of decision-making in the GNWT.

Mr. Speaker, I will refer again to our governing protocols: "The Premier and Cabinet are appointed by Members of the Legislative Assembly to provide overall leadership and direction in accordance with the broad strategic direction set by the Caucus. Cabinet must have the ability to implement this strategic direction effectively and efficiently, but in a

way that reflects the concerns of Regular Members and maintains their support." No part of this protocol suggests that the Premier has the right to remove Ministers without first seeking the support of Regular Members.

Mr. Speaker, I will again remind the Premier that the House appoints Cabinet, not the Premier. It is this House, and only this House, that can revoke a Minister from their position on the Executive Council. I trust that the Premier will hear my words and carefully consider her actions in the future.

Mr. Speaker, while I have spoken at length about my dissatisfaction with the Premier's decision and how it was made or the process, I must now turn to the matter at hand: the motion. Mr. Speaker, my duty is first and foremost to represent the concerns of my constituents and those of the Tlicho people as it relates to the conduct of this government and, in particular, the conduct of the Member for Great Slave in her role as Minister.

Mr. Speaker, early in July of this year, the GNWT blatantly ignored the wishes of the Tlicho leadership and terms of the final Tlicho Agreement when they tendered a construction contract on Tlicho land without making any effort to provide economic benefits to the Tlicho people. When the final agreement was signed in 2003, Mr. Speaker, chapter 26 specifically provided for economic benefits to the Tlicho people arising from Government of the Northwest Territories contracts and employment. It's clearly highlighted. It also imposed requirements on the government to consult and engage when changes are made to procurement policies and when contracts on Tlicho land are not put out for tender. None of these conditions, Mr. Speaker, were considered, and my leaders, the Tlicho leadership, were forced to raise their concerns by openly condemning the actions of this government.

Mr. Speaker, my people, my Tlicho people, are humble and dignified. They place the highest value on the Dene principles of cooperation and mutual respect. It is not our way to air our grievances or publicly shame others. It is simply not our way; so you can imagine how deeply disrespected my leaders felt to take such a serious measure as publicly speaking out against the GNWT. This was only after three meetings with the Premier and the Minister failed to produce any changes that would provide the promised benefits to the Tlicho people. Thankfully, we found a way forward that meets the needs of my leaders and will help our people achieve the prosperity and opportunity that they well deserve, but it should not have taken such drastic action as a public scolding to achieve that result, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, in the context of this important decision, the Member for Great Slave took no action to share our words of protest and help reconcile the promises made within the Tlicho agreement with GNWT policy. Instead of working diligently to reach out to her federal counterparts and work on securing the funding changes needed to meet the agreement, she made excuses and prioritized the needs of the GNWT over the needs of my people, the Tlicho people. Not only were her actions contrary to the spirit and intent of the Tlicho Agreement, they could have resulted in a legal challenge from the Tlicho government that could have cost taxpayers a significant amount of dollars.

Mr. Speaker, it is episodes like this that test the character and ability of a Minister. Mr. Speaker, believe me; I know far too well the many challenges that a Member of the Executive Council faces every day. I, too, sat across the aisle, made decisions that have affected the lives of thousands of Northerners, and helped to guide the overall strategic focus of the GNWT. When I say that the Member for Great Slave failed this test of her abilities, I am not speaking without the perspective of experience and knowledge of her role in this Assembly and this government, as well. Though I am sure that the Minister is more than capable of achieving a better understanding of the treaties and how to uphold treaty commitments, we quite frankly do not have the time, nor can we gamble on inexperience when stakes are so high. The consequences of failure could be a generation of Indigenous people left behind. Our economy is too fragile. Our needs are too great to continue making excuses, Mr. Speaker, and pleading for patience. Indigenous peoples have waited generations for colonial governments to make good on their promises, and our patience runs short, Mr. Speaker.

While I continue my objection as to how this motion has come to be debated on the floor of our legislature, I will say that it is past time that this Cabinet has a shake-up. For too long, Mr. Speaker, far too long, we have seen the focus of the GNWT on the capital region and not on the small communities that truly need the attention and full efforts of this government. Departments have grown increasingly centralized, with headquarters making virtually all decisions, while regional centres are given token roles in the larger enterprise of government. The majority of our infrastructure dollars are spent to benefit the capital, with the scraps left over for the small communities. We have seen that over and over and over.

Mr. Speaker, the economic multipliers for every dollar of infrastructure invested in a small community are immense. What could be a handful of jobs in Yellowknife become dozens of well-paid prospects in Gameti, Whati, Sachs Harbour, or other small communities. This government has

more than enough resources -- over \$1 billion a year, in fact -- to ensure that investment is equivalent across our vast territory, the Northwest Territories. We need to change our perspectives of what the true needs of our communities are, and that can only happen if our top decision-makers better reflect the most serious needs of our people of the Northwest Territories.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that appointing a new Minister to Executive Council from the small communities will accomplish this change in focus and offer new and valuable perspectives to the GNWT as it manages an unprecedented pandemic. This is not a suggestion that I make lightly, as I have nothing but the utmost respect for the conventions of our unique form of consensus-style government, but extraordinary times call for extraordinary measures that will get the best results for our communities and make a real difference in the lives of the people that we serve.

Mr. Speaker, it is for this reason that I have lost confidence in this Minister and will vote in favour of the motion at the appropriate time. But hear my words, Mr. Speaker, when I say that my vote is not a vote against the Member for Great Slave; it is a vote for the Tlicho people and for the people of the small communities, who are so often overlooked by this government. Masi, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Monfwi. To the motion. Member for Deh Cho.

**MR. BONNETROUGE:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Colleagues, it is unfortunate that we are faced with unseating a young, educated, and talented woman from Cabinet. We are now 10 months into our term, and, of course, we gave the benefit of the doubt to all Members of the Cabinet team, as they had to come to understanding the machinations of their respective departments and, at the same time, charting a course in line with the identified priorities of the 19<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly.

As a Regular MLA on this side of the floor, I can only imagine the complexities faced by the Ministers in guiding their departments, never mind running two of the largest departments of the GNWT: the Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment and the Department of Infrastructure. Mind you, all other departments are equally as important. However, these two departments are very important to the business community and the economic well-being of the Northwest Territories.

These two departments are faced with many challenges, including developing strategies and keeping contracts and money in the North for northern businesses and communities. This includes reconciliation with the Indigenous business community. I was always under the impression that

it was a simple process in relaying to the department heads the identified priorities of the 19<sup>th</sup> Assembly, and voila, we are on our way to making changes for the benefit of the residents of the Northwest Territories. I can only surmise the myriad of personality differences in the meeting rooms of Cabinet. There should well be healthy debates and total freedom of expression without repercussions to any Member. After all, we are conducting business on behalf of all residents of the Northwest Territories. The GNWT, including Cabinet, is more than about one person or their egos. It is not about us or our personal issues, but the issues for all of the Northwest Territories.

We all took oaths of office to represent in fairness the people of the Northwest Territories. As politicians, we have a duty to act in a professional manner while carrying out our duties, which includes having respect for each other's opinions. This Assembly must maintain that level of professionalism, diplomacy, and tact. As I had stated, this is an unfortunate situation and unprecedented actions in the early life of this Assembly and which are irreversible, coupled with the fact that the confidence of the Minister has been lost. The business of the Assembly must continue.

I will say with deepest regret that I will support the revocation of the Minister from Cabinet. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Deh Cho. To the motion. Member for Kam Lake.

**MS. CLEVELAND:** Mr. Speaker, I am standing in the Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories. It is a beautiful building whose walls tell stories of time, place, and people. This building connects culture, shared history, potential for tomorrow, and, Mr. Speaker, it connects us to one another. I should feel great pride to be standing here today representing the people of Kam Lake, but today I am frustrated, sad, and somewhat embarrassed.

Mr. Speaker, passion is okay. Disagreeing is okay. Confrontation makes us uncomfortable, but confrontation can create change. We all made commitments to challenge the status quo, to challenge the bureaucracy, to challenge our own way of thinking, but a failure to do those things is not why we are here today. While challenging one another is our duty, Mr. Speaker, it is also our duty to do so with respect for one another, respect for public servants, and respect for the office we hold. My constituents have also expressed their frustration. They have expressed that now is not the time, and they have expressed that there has been a lack of transparency that we have all committed to. They have asked us to adequately explain how we have found ourselves at this impasse. I have

encouraged my colleagues here to be open with us today but have no control over what others choose to share. What was shared with me was done so in confidence, and they are not my stories to share. One of the hallmarks of consensus government is the degree of confidential information that is shared between Cabinet and Regular Members. It is far above the degree of information that is shared between both sides in a party system, and many of my Cabinet colleagues have worked hard to engage and include Regular Members.

With the greater degree of disclosure and trust, comes a greater responsibility to respect confidentiality, especially when third parties are included. I understand the frustration of our constituents but hope that they understand that it is not my place to share information out of turn. As I stand here, Mr. Speaker, my Cabinet colleagues have expressed their inability to move forward with Minister Nokleby. I expect a Cabinet to be responsive to all stakeholders in a timely and accurate manner, and, while I have had a positive working relationship with Minister Nokleby, I have of course experienced some frustrating delays. I was on the understanding that this job comes with a lot of pressure, stress, and never enough time. Neither my moments of frustration nor any of the anecdotes that I heard from Regular Member colleagues would have singularly secured my support for this type of motion during a pandemic or during a Minister's first year.

Last week, I expressed that I was surprised by the announcement that Minister Nokleby's portfolios had been removed, and I was surprised. When we, the Regular Members, met with the Premier and Minister Nokleby in the spring to discuss expectations and a fresh start, I was very hopeful. Last week, I travelled to Hay River with standing committee, unaware of what was to come. On Wednesday, August 19<sup>th</sup>, MLA's received the press release in advance, one hour before its public release, and we met over the phone with the Premier before the press release went public. During this phone call, information was disclosed to us but not all the information we later received during this past Monday's Caucus meeting.

We all know that there are strong personalities in this room who operate with passion and the trust of their constituents on their shoulders and, as a Minister, the expectations of the entire territory. I stood and supported Minister Nokleby as she worked to settle into her portfolios as a first-time Minister, professional life in the midst of a pandemic, and substantial personal challenges. However, on Monday, as I sat and listened to Cabinet's detailed account, additional information emerged that challenged my stance and the value system that my constituents expect of me.

It became clear to me that Cabinet and Minister Nokleby are at a point that they cannot move forward from. If my constituents were given the information we were provided on Monday, I am confident that they would support my decision to support this motion. I am deeply disappointed that we are here, but the Minister's relationships have been broken. I know that this is the right thing to do. Sometimes in this job, you have to make very difficult decisions. This is a difficult one because I care about Minister Nokleby as a person and as a colleague, but I believe that this decision is the right decision.

At the end of the day, Mr. Speaker, we are in the middle of a pandemic, and our residents as well as our economy need our attention. We cannot afford to continue with a Cabinet Minister without portfolios. We committed to building an effective Cabinet, to achieving an extremely ambitious mandate, and, most importantly, we committed to the people of the Northwest Territories. If this motion passes, I will welcome Minister Nokleby to our side of the House. I look forward to moving beyond today's motion and to refocusing our attention on the lives of the Northerners that we serve. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** To the motion. Member for Yellowknife Centre.

**MS. GREEN:** Mr. Speaker, in the lead-up to the last election, I offered a series of campaign readiness workshops in Yellowknife in the hope of getting more women to run. The Member for Great Slave attended some of those sessions, along with some of the other women in this Chamber. I had high hopes they would be elected and bring their many talents to provide good governance and better the lives of NWT residents. The end result, as we all know, was the historic election of nine women from all across the territory, and from among that group a woman Premier and four women Cabinet Ministers. We had and still have so much to celebrate for the gains we have made in women's leadership, but obviously, it is not all good news. In the last Assembly, we had four revocation debates that concerned male Cabinet Ministers, and with more women in Cabinet, we're now having one about a woman, not because she's a woman but because her performance and behaviour in her Ministerial role is wanting.

Five months into our term, as people were getting comfortable in their roles, the coronavirus pandemic changed everything about life as we knew it. Providing good government took on a new importance as residents looked to government to keep all of us safe and help weather the economic fallout. The stakes then and now have never been higher for all of us but especially for Cabinet and especially for our economy.

Sorry, Mr. Speaker, I think I had gone out of order.

Mr. Speaker, we knew when we were elected in October that our economy was weak. The diamond mines are entering their last years of production. There are no new mines ready to provide the same number of high-paying jobs, contracts, taxes, royalties, and impact benefit agreements. There are projects pending, but it has been difficult to find investors. Oil and gas activity is minimal, and low global prices make it unlikely that that sector will rebound. The construction sector is not as robust as it once was, now that the new Stanton Territorial hospital is finished. Tourism, largely dependent on international visitors, was our one bright hope, but COVID has put that sector into a coma.

Mr. Speaker, the Cabinet's initial response to the economic fallout of the pandemic lockdown was encouraging. The Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment reduced fees for businesses, such as bridge tolls, proposed a new business advisory council, and provided access to loans and loan payment deferrals from the Business Development Investment Corporation. These measures were well received, but implementation fell behind.

As I said in this House in May, small businesses did not feel supported. Some firms managed to stay open and innovate to serve their customers. Even so, some reported a total revenue decline, losses which left them struggling to pay their rent, pay their workers, and order inventory. The Minister acknowledged that small business was in a tight spot, but she couldn't provide an answer about enabling BDIC to make grants available to eligible businesses. Instead, the federal government offered grants to businesses and wage top-ups.

Mr. Speaker, rolling out the SEED money when it was approved was another implementation fail. Members approved a three-month extension of money for government operations in March. At the same time, we approved program money for the whole of this fiscal year. That included \$4 million for the ITI program called Support for Entrepreneurs and Economic Development. SEED is an important program. It helps create new businesses and new jobs, but, despite the dire economic situation, the department didn't call for applications until two months after the spending was approved. This is a critical gap in timing. Employers were ready and willing to apply weeks earlier.

Another implementation fail is the time it took to set up the Business Advisory Council. The Minister announced it in March. It didn't come to life until June, and we haven't heard any more about it since. In the Yukon, the business advisory council was quickly assembled and helped the Yukon government to put together a \$10 million relief

package. Hearing from businesses early and often is a key to helping them recover.

Mr. Speaker, another issue is the weak government response to Dominion Diamond's decision to go into creditor protection. NWT businesses are owed \$13.2 million at a time when the economy is in steep decline. The government is also owed money. How is the government representing its interests and those of resident business owners during the creditor protection process? I asked the ITI Minister to write a letter of support to the courts for Dominion Diamonds, emphasizing its importance to our economy. It took months to get a response from her, and the response was "no." I found the reasons for not writing the letter unsatisfactory. If ever there was a time to walk the talk of supporting mining, this was it and yet nothing happened.

Turning now to the Department of Infrastructure, Members have talked about the need to spend government dollars in the North as much as possible. We've been told that building infrastructure is a key economic driver in the NWT. When I learned from the Member for Monfwi that not a single heavy-equipment operator had been hired from his region for construction of the road to Whati, I wondered exactly what kind of benefits the region and the territory were getting from this \$411-million investment. It turns out they are fewer than we expected and hoped for. The same pattern was about to repeat itself with the Behchoko access road until the Tlicho leadership put its foot down and the Premier had to broker the compromise her Minister should have been leading.

Mr. Speaker, recent reporting on contracting for the Slave Geological Province Road indicates an even more disappointing result. Only 9 percent of the \$1 million spent to date has been spent with northern companies. There, too, procurement left the Yellowknives Dene on the sidelines, resulting in them withdrawing their essential support for the project.

It's worth noting the importance of prioritizing Indigenous procurement because of the potential of Indigenous-led companies to employ Northerners, particularly those who live in the small communities. This is one of the key areas where government can influence the delivery of employment and contracting benefits to northern firms and workers. Private companies, such as the diamond mines, and Indigenous development corporations spend most of their contracting money with northern companies. Why can't the government do the same?

Mr. Speaker, these are my observations on the Minister's performance of her broad departmental duties. My committee work has not brought me into

regular, direct contact with the Minister, but where I have had the opportunity to assess the Minister's performance of these duties, I have found them poor.

Mr. Speaker, in addition to performance issues, the Member for Great Slave continued to struggle to manage her office. I forwarded a dozen questions on behalf of constituents. A few times I got a timely response, but more often responses were late or didn't happen at all. These are requests for help from people in trouble, and going to their MLA is often their last hope. Now more than ever, providing timely responses to constituents and businesses is critical. Further, the Minister did little to engage Regular MLAs in departmental initiatives, and when she did, I had little sense that our input was respected or valued. I don't have many meetings with the Member for Great Slave, but I have witnessed her behave inappropriately, swearing in explosive and shocking anger. This is not the behaviour I expect of a Minister and a colleague.

Mr. Speaker, when the last sitting began, Regular Members discussed a motion of revocation, a motion I supported for the reasons given above. These concerns were presented in the House as Members' statements. Regular Members also met with the Member for Great Slave. We told her unequivocally that we needed to see improvement and we needed to see it immediately. The Premier sat in the same meeting and offered a resolution. She said she would support the Minister to make the necessary changes in the areas we'd highlighted. The Member for Great Slave promised to address our concerns and manage her office in a way that was more responsive to us and to our constituents. The fact is: That promise was not fulfilled. If anything, the situation is worse.

The Premier has documented her attempts to help the Member for Great Slave to get on track with both performance and behavioural issues, but the Minister has failed to make the necessary improvements. Members have invited the Minister three times to respond to these criticisms, and she has chosen not to take us up on this. She has decided to drag this process out in ways that are both expensive and frustrating. I support the Premier's right and decision to remove her portfolios.

Mr. Speaker, I have heard the current impasse described as a cat fight. I reject and I am disgusted by that characterization. It would not be applied to two men who disagree with one another. It is sexist and demeaning. To be clear, the situation we are discussing today is not an argument against electing women. Women are fallible just as men are. We won't all succeed, but the failure of one is not the failure of all. There is enduring value in having women in leadership to represent the

perspectives of half the population, even if there are predictable bumps in the road.

We are here, all of us, men and women alike, Mr. Speaker, to govern the Northwest Territories. We need to continue our best efforts to find ways to work together. We must regain public support for the good work we do as we focus on rebuilding our economy as our top priority. It's time for the chaos created by the Member for Great Slave to end. I support the Premier's right and decision to remove her portfolios, and I will be voting in favour of the motion of revocation. Thank you Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Yellowknife Centre. To the motion. Member for Nunakput.

**MR. JACOBSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today, I stand here as a Member representing my community and my community's area of Nunakput. I have told the Members here that we brought issues forward and we always had good response. I have a good working relationship with the Minister. She has come to my communities. Biggest thing I told her this year: get my sealift done. Sealift's all done in my communities. I don't have to worry about food and fuel for the communities that I represent on the coast.

We have so much work here to do. I never heard the whole story. I heard one side of the story. We gave the Minister a couple times to come forward to speak and three times now refused. At the end of the day, we are all here to work for the benefit of our people. Sitting up in my office today, you take a look at your code of ethics, and you think, "Why are we here?" Your code of ethics and your code of conduct as a Member, you try to work together, all 19 of us. We all don't get along, but we're passionate about what we are trying to do to benefit our people. The people, that's who we work for.

I really think that we have to take a step back. Since COVID-19 has happened, it has been tough on everybody, communities, Members, personally, but trying to work together to make sure we get through this pandemic in a way to still provide service to our people, to make sure that is happening, and trying to support our leadership.

I supported Minister Nokleby upon her run for her position she is at. She did all what I needed for my riding, to minimize everybody's complaints on her and stuff like that. I had a good working relationship, and for the people of Nunakput, my leadership back home, they were happy with her when she came up to Tuktoyaktuk on the highway. We were waiting for the barges to come up, and then we were going to hit the outlying communities to visit constituents, but that's not going to happen now. Whoever is the new Minister is still looking on the outside, not just

Yellowknife as a whole, but looking at all of our 33 communities that we represent.

Today, the information for me to make the decision to revoke the Minister, I don't have that information. I can't make a sound judgement on what is happening today. I don't have the information for myself. Everything that she has done with me, I had no problem. She has been working with us and working with the construction companies back in the Delta, and that's all of them, touring all of the Delta. Today, Mr. Speaker, I don't have all of the information. I am not satisfied with what I have got, so I am going to have to abstain from the vote. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Nunakput. To the motion. Member for Yellowknife North.

**MR. JOHNSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think I speak for most of us in that I am saddened that we got here today, and many of us could picture a path where we were not standing here, and I hope we can find a path forward, moving forward.

I believe that any one of the allegations heard here today would constitute grounds to remove a Minister. No public servant should ever fear their Minister making degrading comments about them. In fact, any time any of us run into any of the vicious rumours that surround this job, I think it is our duty to tell that person to stop gossiping and get back to work.

I am happy that more of the information came out today and that we can have the benefit of public scrutiny and a proper process. I thank the Premier for that. I would ask for further explanation on the point of the Minister insisting on having meetings without staff present. All meetings are required to be logged in a registry, and I believe that, if the Premier or staff know of any meetings that are not in the registry, that it be updated.

I have witnessed some of the behaviour alleged here today, and I think that it is important that we have given the Minister multiple opportunities to defend herself to all MLAs in a proper process, and she has refused to do so to date, Mr. Speaker. Therefore, many of us, if the Minister decides to speak, will be hearing her side of the story for the first time. That is unfortunate that that has occurred. However, I have spoken to many of my constituents, and I have spoken to many of MLA Nokleby's constituents. There is no doubt that she has worked hard to engage with many stakeholders and has done some great work with them. Those efforts must be acknowledged. Yet, based on what has been said here publicly today, I believe there is a cause to remove MLA Nokleby from Cabinet.

We all need to move forward. We need to change our processes such that this information came out much earlier, at the time it occurred, and did not swirl around for months in a rumour mill. Cabinet confidentiality is key. It is designed to protect the difference of opinions and allow healthy debate. However, I don't believe it is designed to protect poor performance of a Minister or breaches of our code of ethics.

Mr. Speaker, I hope we get out of here and reflect on those processes and make sure that we operate a much more transparent government. It is time for us to get our house in order, put this behind us, and govern this territory. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Yellowknife North. To the motion. Member for Great Slave.

**HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today is a sad day, not only for myself personally, but for my constituents, the people of this territory, and for some of the people in this room.

Last October, I ran for Cabinet on a platform of change and made promises to do whatever I could to improve the lives of the people I represent and the lives of every resident of the Northwest Territories. I was excited by the opportunity to utilize the Ministerial positions that I was granted by my colleagues to carry out this goal.

As a Minister, I worked hard, and I endeavoured to make positive changes in my departments wherever I could. I stayed true to who I am, true to those who elected me, and true to every community member in this territory. I would not accept that things should stay the same simply because that is just the way that things have always been done. I had many concerns with current practices, including what I call "gaming the system." I properly raised those concerns with my Cabinet colleagues at every opportunity. I will continue to raise those concerns, whatever my role in this Assembly may be.

In all cases, I carried out my duties with integrity and passion. Was I perfect? Of course not. Was I outspoken? Of course I was. That is who I am, and I will always remain honest and open in my interactions on behalf of those who elected me. There is so much work to be done and only so many hours in each day. I am always striving to get things done as quickly and efficiently as possible for the people who sorely need the services and support we, as a government, can provide.

One of the challenges of working within our current government is the level of secrecy that is demanded by current conventions, especially at the

Cabinet level. I reject the idea that consensus government requires such extreme levels of secrecy. Secrecy and innuendo are the hallmarks of corruption and backroom dealings, not the transparent and accountable government that the public deserves. The toxic culture of secrecy has allowed my character and professionalism to be disparaged, while not allowing me to respond, reply, or defend myself. This is not right.

I reiterate that I have always worked hard and that my record as Minister speaks for itself. I am disappointed that I have been unfairly admonished without any due process and based on nothing more than gossip, hearsay, rumours, and bruised feelings. The people of the Northwest Territories deserve so much more from this government, and certainly, no one has time right now to waste on such matters.

Again, I will simply reiterate, within the unfortunate bounds of the secrecy that I am forced to adhere to, that this decision was much more to do with others than it does to do with myself or my performance working for the people of the Northwest Territories. If this truly had to do with my performance as a Minister, there are measures that could have been taken well before now. I look forward to working with all my colleagues to continue doing what is best for the people of the Northwest Territories. I will always fight for the betterment of every person in this territory no matter where I am sitting in this House. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Great Slave. To the motion. Member for Yellowknife South.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have spent over a decade as a criminal defence attorney, which is a male-dominated profession, especially in the Northwest Territories. With small exception, I have had no direct experience of gender discrimination in that role. However, in my professional responsibilities defending charges of sexual violence and intimate partner violence, I have occasionally had questions from other women about my work. There was an implication at times that, perhaps, I was not supporting women because I was discharging my duties as defence counsel.

Usually, when engaging and discussing the context of the rule of law, the reasons why systems are the way that they are, the integrity and the ethics that I bring to that role, most of those conversations ended in an agreement that more women in criminal practice were better and that supporting women in criminal practice would, in fact, better the system. It has been disheartening, recently, in my role as an elected politician, again, a historically male-dominated profession, particularly in the

Northwest Territories, that there are implications, largely on social media, that the motions of non-confidence may be the result of gender discrimination, and that the women who have supported the last motion or who may support this motion are themselves part of the patriarchy, seeking to keep women out of elected office.

Mr. Speaker, the question of whether this would be happening if she was a man could apply equally to some of the public comments that have been recently levelled at the Premier, but Mr. Speaker, being stymied in my roles because of my gender has not been my experience in this Cabinet, and I do not believe it is relevant to this motion.

On that vein of why we are here, Mr. Speaker, I am concerned that the Minister lacks insight on why, in fact, we are here, and that this may, indeed, be symptomatic of a much larger and deeper problem. It may exemplify a lack of ability to critically assess the true nature of the problem or to accept responsibility for the actions or behaviours that have brought us here.

As Ministers, we sit on the most important decision-making bodies of government. The decisions for which we are responsible have dramatic impacts on the people of the Northwest Territories now and in the future. Some of those processes simply must be kept confidential, as they are across governments, across Canada, and across the world.

As a Minister of this government, I believe I do have an obligation to the people of the Northwest Territories to do my best to ensure that our decisions are made based on rational process and sound judgement. The discussions that we have should be reflective of our diversity and of the people who we represent across the whole of the Northwest Territories. Our processes must include debate, and they must include disagreement. I believe we all have an obligation to respect one another during those debates.

My purpose in standing today, Mr. Speaker, is to speak to my decision-making process and my exercise of judgement that is leading me to support this motion. Many of the specific events, words, and actions that have led me to make this a vote of support took place in Cabinet or in meetings between Ministers and MLAs, which I do believe benefit properly from some confidentiality. It helps to encourage fulsome evaluation, full and honest debate, but it leads to a process when matters can, in fact, go public, whether on the floor of this House or through other processes open to Members of the government.

What I want to focus on, Mr. Speaker, are two qualities I think are essential to an effective

Minister. I will do my best to be specific, keeping in mind the reasonable limitations I've just described. The first one is teamwork. As we were working to respond to the economic impacts of COVID-19, rolling out programs and supports across departments, the Department of Finance, like other finance ministries across the country, was working to oversee and ensure our ongoing fiscal responsibility and viability of programs. Having been directed by the Premier to work on a particular issue jointly with the Minister's office, my office began to execute on that task, but we were met unexpectedly with resistance. That resistance evolved into a bizarre contest for control over programs, for announcements, and subject matters that the Minister appears to believe were exclusively hers. To be honest, I never fully understood what it was that was being fought over. I want to assure the public this did not impede my work or that of my department.

Mr. Speaker, this was emotionally exhausting for me and for my team to navigate. The dust eventually settled, and, for reasons I also do not fully understand, seemed to blow by. It was always my intention to continue a functional relationship with the Minister and her office. What I expect, though, that the public in fact wants from all of us is the very opposite of what was occurring in this entire period, was that we must work as a whole of government, not in silos, that we should not put up blinders around ourselves as Ministers or around our departments, and that we must use all of the resources of government, as a team, to address the challenges facing the whole of the Northwest Territories. As well as Ministers and under the leadership of the Premier, we are the points of accountability for our departments, and, in my view, an effective Minister should not point to the department team or its individual members and cast them down. Being the point of accountability, Mr. Speaker, it is my responsibility as a Minister to step up and drive a solution when a problem has come to light.

My concerns over whether this Minister has the qualities of a good team player or a good team leader do not arise because of a single event, do not arise over the personal events I've described; it is the totality of observations, including the reaction that I observed in response to the non-confidence motion in June. This in totality gives me reasons for supporting this motion.

The second quality I want to speak to is that of humility and accountability, and that is the ability to identify and challenge one's own errors or biases. In my view, one of the most literal reasons that we are in fact here today and compelled to air all of this on the floor of this House is because the Minister appears unable or unwilling to acknowledge when she might be in error. I want to be told when others

disagree with my judgement or when they disagree with my assessment of a problem. This helps point out flaws in my reasoning, and it can help strengthen my reasoning, through discussion. However, after eight months of difficult interactions with MLAs and other Ministers, after a notice of non-confidence in our last session, and with departments in strife, here we are. This process is embarrassing for all of us, and it is embarrassing to the dignity of this House. To be put through it does lead me to question what respect Minister Nokleby has for all of her elected colleagues. It is hard in the role of an elected politician to sometimes have to admit that we, or perhaps the departments for which we are accountable, may have made a mistake and to have to stand up and say "sorry." It is hard, but it is an essential part of this job. From my observations over the past few months, including the response to the motion in June plus this very experience this week, I am concerned that Minister Nokleby lacks the humility required to accept a relevant level of accountability for a Minister.

It is reasonable now, Mr. Speaker, that people are waiting for a single event or incident that will help to explain the dramatic step that was taken such as a motion of non-confidence or the pulling of portfolios, but, in many ways, this is more similar to the proverbial straw that brings a camel to its knees. Individually, looking at once piece of the straw, it is not likely that we would be in the Assembly right now speaking to a motion of non-confidence. However, this is not one straw. This is not even a handful of straw. Having considered the qualities I believe are necessary for the best possible functioning of Cabinet, taking into account my observations and experiences over the last several months, including and particularly the last six weeks, having also met and heard from the Premier as well as Cabinet and MLA colleagues in confidence, I am looking at an overwhelming mound of straw that does lead me to support this motion.

There is one last category of concern that, if accurate, could have been the proverbial straw. We have a responsibility as elected leaders to do our best to ensure that the government is effective, responsive, and best reflects the people and values of the Northwest Territories. We have a responsibility for our processes and for holding one another to account. My other concerns arise from comments that have been attributed to the Minister, but they have come to me second-hand. In general, words not received directly, with no opportunity to evaluate the source directly or the opportunity for the proposed speaker to rebut, should be treated with caution. For me, one person's recollection of what may have been said by a Minister within a department or at a stakeholder meeting or to

another Member of this House could well fall within this category warranting such caution. However, when recollections of statements made about the government, made about stakeholders, or made about members of the public service begin to take on a pattern repeated by more than one source, well, then this is the kind of information that must be considered. If true in this case, they are very concerning. While I want the public to know as much as possible about what has gone on in my thought process when considering this motion, I will not discuss details that risk identifying individuals not present. Indeed, the public should know there is in fact a rule of the Legislative Assembly that we will not identify someone in this House who is not present themselves to speak to the matter raised. That, Mr. Speaker, is due process.

One final note: more than one of my 18 colleagues have expressed to me that they feel fearful to speak too forcefully in support of this motion lest they be subject to "wrath." Honestly, I share some of those feelings. However, Mr. Speaker, I did not seek this office to come here and allow myself or any other Member of the Assembly to feel intimidated. For all of these reasons I will vote in favour of the motion. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Yellowknife South. To the motion. Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes.

**MS. SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Sitting here after I have written my notes, it has become abundantly clear that we have a Premier, Cabinet, and MLAs, including myself, who have lost confidence in Minister Nokleby and that we are now in a position where we have a sitting Minister without a portfolio, without leading a department. This is not what I had intended when I cast the ballot in the fall for Cabinet, nor do I think it's what the constituents for Inuvik Twin Lakes or the rest of the NWT would have approved of. I will, however, state that there have been numerous performance issues raised, and I'm not going to get into them again as all my colleagues have spoken, well, the majority of them on the Regular side. There have been conduct issues, and we did raise them in the spring. We raised them as Regular Members to the Minister and the Premier in this meeting. There was a commitment, there was a public statement of a commitment, to these. Some have been approved with some Members; some Members have not. I and as my colleague have had a better communication with this Minister from her office, though, there has been still faults, but that is not what I am going to speak to today. It is the recent serious concerns that have come to light.

This has challenged me to my core of who I am, what I stand for, and why I am here. If the Minister was not available to us on numerous occasions

where we could address this, I have been left with no choice but to have this in the back of my mind and not be able to deal with it.

Like I said, I have witnessed conduct of the Minister that is unacceptable for any Member of this House to any other Member, and, out of respect for the process, I will also not go into any details. The Minister has been offered, like I said, opportunities this week to have herself heard but has not taken this offer to the Members. This leaves us all in a situation where we are going to make this decision today with all we have heard from her.

I, as the MLA for Inuvik Twin Lakes, have to make the best decision for my constituents, my community, and the residents of the NWT, and I make this decision with full confidence that I have no doubt that this is the right decision. My support is behind the Premier. I support the decision she made is the right decision. However, if this motion is passed, the Member for Great Slave will become a Member of the Regular Members' side, and I will continue to work with her, and I will continue to communicate with her, and I will continue to work together for the betterment of the people in the Northwest Territories as Regular Members.

Mr. Speaker, I will be supporting this motion and supporting the Premier's decision with regard to revoking Minister Nokleby's appointment. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes. To the motion. Member for Nahendeh.

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am going to try to get straight to the point. We have heard everybody speak. The significance of revoking a Minister's portfolio and asking to have them removed from Cabinet is not something that is taken lightly.

I recognize the public wants to know why and what is happening. I can't and will not speak about what is happening in meetings in confidence and conversations. That is between Cabinet and our colleague and Caucuses and my meetings with the Minister on related issues.

The Premier has taken this very seriously and has worked with the Minister to repeatedly offer her support, counsel, and more. She has worked really hard for us in Cabinet and for the residents of the Northwest Territories. She has allowed us the opportunity to speak and vote as we see fit. I have to thank the Premier for that. From what I have seen, the Minister has not taken responsibilities for her failing or taken advantage of the support offered to her. We were given opportunities from the Premier and from colleagues to work to improve our

way of doing business, and unfortunately, it has not improved.

As a result, the Premier has made the incredibly hard decision to revoke the Minister's portfolios. I do know that this decision was not made lightly. This decision was made after exhausting all options to get this situation back on track. I had numerous conversations with the Premier and Cabinet on how we can improve our way of doing business for the residents of the Northwest Territories. I have heard a number of our colleagues here on why we are here. It is for the people of the Northwest Territories, regardless of if we are on Cabinet side or AOC side. I have had the pleasure to be on AOC side, and I have had the pleasure on being on Cabinet side. Cabinet, we have the opportunity to have very heated discussions, very passionate comments, and we all don't agree. We have voting processes, but, at the end of the day, we come out in unity. We have that opportunity, and I have to thank the Premier for that. She allows us to speak for our residents, and speak for our ridings, so I have to again thank the Minister. There are lots of things that are happening out there that people are not informed, and unfortunately, they are not going to hear everything, but I do have to say, I thank the Minister for her work. I have had some good working relationships with her. However, I have had worse ones, and I have to be honest about that. Anybody knows in the 18<sup>th</sup> Assembly, I stood up in the House to be the only one that supported or didn't support something or was in the minority lots of times, but it is what your job is. You need to represent and you need to have the integrity to represent your own beliefs. At the end of the day, you need to do that.

At the end, I applaud the Premier for doing this. She is going to take a beating on it. I am going to stand for her, and I have stood for her, and I have stood for my colleagues here. We are going to take a lot of guff for this, and we are, but it is life, and it is a life of a politician, and sometimes, you have to make that hard decision. Therefore, I will be standing up with the Premier when it comes to this motion. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Nahendeh. To the motion. Member for Inuvik Boot Lake.

**HON. DIANE THOM:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today is one of those hard days we have had as Legislators. We are being asked to consider a serious step of removing a Minister from Executive Council. Unfortunately, at this time, the relationship between the Premier, the Cabinet Ministers, and Minister Nokleby is not functional and cannot be repaired. Consequently, I see no choice but to support the motion of the revocation. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Inuvik Boot Lake. To the motion. Member for Hay River North.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I won't say much. To say any more would be gratuitous at this point, but I have to express my support for the Premier. Steps were taken to try and remedy the situation, but we have reached this point, and it is unfortunate. However, I think if there is anything positive that comes of this, it has unified the vast majority of the Members of this House, and I think going forward, that is something you can build on. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Hay River North. To the motion. Member for Sahtu.

**HON. PAULIE CHINNA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today, it is unfortunate why we are gathering here today and hearing the statements from my fellow colleagues. However, also, realizing that we were up against a really different time, we were up against the pandemic and adjusting our programs and services and trying to accommodate what lies within that and how we are going to be distributing and how are we going to be seen as a government. Today, I do support the Premier for her decision. According to what has been displayed is there's been conversations that have taken place at this time. It is really unfortunate. I don't take this very lightly, but I am optimistic. I am optimistic to be working with my colleague on the other side and welcoming our new colleague to come and work with us at the Executive Council. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Sahtu. We will let the mover finish the motion.

**HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the mover of the motion, I want to make some closing comments.

Today was a challenging day as we dealt with an important issue. It is the authority of the Legislative Assembly to remove a Member from the Executive Council, and we will know that decision shortly. As Premier, I exercised my authority under the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act in removing the Minister's portfolios. That authority is further described in the Members' Handbook.

The issue before us is a question of confidence in Minister Nokleby. I set out today the issues of professionalism and integrity with Minister Nokleby and the failure of the Minister to address them despite commitments to Members and myself to do so. I also want to touch on some issues that Minister Nokleby, the public, and others have raised.

### Corruption

This is not a case of a crusader against corruption being persecuted. You do not crusade against corruption by firing every staff member you hear a rumour about. You do not fight against corruption by failing to record meetings with those seeking to influence you. As a Minister, you are expected to listen to a range a perspectives, do your due diligence, investigate, ensure that human resource processes are being followed, and make sound decisions based on facts. You fight corruption by working with your colleagues, not against them, focusing on common goals.

Minister Nokleby was advised repeatedly that, if she has an allegation of wrongdoing, the proper process is to report it and have it investigated. I can also share that, in a case where an issue raised by the Minister was investigated, it was determined to be unfounded. You fight corruption by reporting it is ensuring that the full investigation is completed. Mr. Speaker, I came into government to fight the status quo, to focus on those most in need. I remain committed to that. Acting on rumour and innuendo is not the way we should be doing things as Members of this Assembly and as Ministers.

### My Leadership

Minister Nokleby would have you believe that none of the issues raised, either in the last sitting or now, are related to her at all. She told me that. My obligation as Premier is to lead the overall management of the executive branch of government, including taking disciplinary action that I deem necessary around the conduct of Ministers. I have done that, even when it was difficult to do so.

Mr. Speaker, I stand here today with Cabinet. Most times, in matters such as this, Cabinet does vote in solidarity. However, Mr. Speaker, I have told Ministers that they are free to vote with their conscience and that I would not invoke Cabinet solidarity due to the accusations on social media against myself.

As Members, we all agreed to the Code of Conduct. We agreed to ensure our conduct does not bring the integrity of our office or the Legislative Assembly into disrepute. We agreed to treat each other appropriately, without harassment. We agreed to take appropriate steps to protect the confidentiality of personal information and other confidential information. I have an obligation, Mr. Speaker, to deal with the issues I see, issues that are raised and raised by the outside of this Legislative Assembly. I have done that.

Mr. Speaker, we are all only human, and we will make mistakes. However, acknowledging, learning from, and changing the behaviours that led to our mistakes is the way that we show true leadership. I ask that all Members show the leadership that the

public demands of us and vote based on the knowledge they have now, both in our confidential meetings and publicly today. I ask that Members vote based solely on doing the right thing, not for ourselves as politicians but for the residents of the Northwest Territories. We have many urgent issues to deal with, including COVID-19, housing, education, creating prosperity, and taking care of our most vulnerable. It's time to return our focus to those issues.

In my speech for Premier, I made the following statement: If we work together within the true spirit of consensus government, we will be able to tackle these challenges together and achieve ultimate success for this Assembly, for all communities, and for all residents of the Northwest Territories. I still believe this today, Mr. Speaker. Circumstances may have changed, but the importance of the work in front of us has not. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Range Lake. The Member has requested a recorded vote. All those in favour, please rise.

#### RECORDED VOTE

**CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer):** The Member for Range Lake, the Member for Hay River South, the Member for Thebacha, 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, the Member for Yellowknife South.

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

**CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer):** The Member for Great Slave.

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

**CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer):** The Member for Nunakput.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The results of the recorded vote: 16 in favour, one opposed, one abstention. The motion is carried.

---Carried

Motions. Item 17, notices of motion for the first reading of bills. Item 18, first reading of bills. Item 19, second reading of bills. Item 20, consideration in committee of the whole of bills and other matters. Item 21, report of committee of the whole. Item 22, third reading of bills. Mr. Clerk, orders of the day.

#### Orders of the Day

**CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer):** Mr. Speaker, there will be a meeting of the Territorial Leadership Committee in this Chamber tomorrow morning at 9:00 a.m. Orders of the day for Thursday, August 27, 2020, at 1:30 p.m.:

1. Prayer
2. Ministers' Statements
3. Members' Statements
4. Returns to Oral Questions
5. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery
6. Acknowledgements
7. Oral Questions
8. Written Questions
9. Returns to Written Questions
10. Replies to Commissioner's Address
11. Petitions
12. Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills
13. Reports of Standing and Special Committees
14. Tabling of Documents
15. Notices of Motion
16. Motions
  - Motion 13-19(2), 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
23. Orders of the Day

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

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 3:32 p.m.