



NORTHWEST TERRITORIES
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The Honourable Frederick Blake Jr, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

Members of the Legislative Assembly

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Minister responsible for NWT Power Corporation

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(Deh Cho)

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Minister responsible for Homelessness
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(Monfwi)

Ms. Frieda Martselos

(Thebacha)

Ms. Katrina Nokleby

(Great Slave)

Mr. Steve Norn

(Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh)

Mr. Kevin O'Reilly

(Frame Lake)

Ms. Lesa Semmler

(Inuvik Twin Lakes)

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Minister of Justice
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YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**Thursday, October 15, 2020****Members Present**

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

The House met at 1:41 p.m.

Prayer

---Prayer

SPEAKER (Hon. Frederick Blake Jr): Members, as your Speaker, it is my pleasure to welcome you back to the Legislative Assembly today. Our Chamber remains physically distanced, and we continue to operate in this COVID-19 environment. I want to thank all Members for their cooperation. Although physically distanced from each other, we must continue to work together. That is how we can best serve the people who elected us to represent them. I look forward to the debate and discussion you will have over the next few weeks. These decisions will have a direct effect on our residents.

I remind all Members to conduct themselves in keeping with the rules of this Assembly. Show respect for one another and for this institution. As your Speaker, I will do my best to lead by example. However, it is my role to enforce our rules, and I am prepared to do so.

Although the Assembly remains closed to the public, media are welcome in the gallery. We continue to broadcast and live stream our proceedings. It is important residents see and understand the work being done.

Throughout this sitting, interpretation will be offered into Chipewyan, French, North Slavey, South Slavey, and Tlicho. I thank the interpreters for their hard work. Please be mindful and try to talk slowly so they have time to interpret.

Interpreted video of our proceedings will be broadcast on our television channel and will be available on our YouTube channel.

Members, on October 8, 2020, it was Ombud Day in Canada. This year, the Northwest Territories marked this day with an ombud in place to serve residents. Later today, I will table the first annual report of the ombud.

Now, it is my duty to advise the House that I have received the following message from the Commissioner of the Northwest Territories. It reads:

Dear Mr. Speaker,

I wish to advise that I recommend to the Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories the passage of:

- Appropriation Act (Infrastructure Expenditures), 2021-2022;
- Supplementary Appropriation Act (Operations Expenditures), No. 2, 2020-2021

during the second session of the 19th Assembly.

Yours truly,

Margaret M. Thom, Commissioner

Thank you, Members. Orders of the day, item 2, Ministers' statements. Honourable Premier.

Ministers' Statements

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 63-19(2):
SESSIONAL STATEMENT

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also want to welcome Members back to the Legislative Assembly as we resume the second session. I look forward to working together as we endeavor to keep residents safe from COVID-19, support industry and residents, and make progress on our mandate commitments.

Mr. Speaker, when I delivered my first sessional statement in the House last December, no one could have predicted what the future was going to hold. This pandemic has been like nothing many of us have ever experienced. Over 37 million people worldwide have contracted COVID-19, and over a million people have died since the pandemic started. More than 9,000 Canadians have lost their lives to this virus in less than a year. Every country, community, and family is being impacted by COVID-19.

In Canada, provinces and territories grappled with how best to contain the spread of the virus. All jurisdictions took immediate steps to protect the health and well-being of residents in the face of a challenge we are still learning about.

In the early days, our efforts were swift. Our government responded to the orders of the Chief Public Health Officer and made protecting the health and well-being of residents and our communities a top priority. We implemented travel restrictions, launched ProtectNWT and 811, established border controls and isolation centres. We invested millions in personal protective equipment for both health and non-health workers, testing and contact testing, and ensuring the health care system was equipped to handle an increase in cases.

Mr. Speaker, our early interventions have paid off. Residents of the NWT have been safe; our communities have not experienced loss of life as a result of this virus; and our biggest risks are being managed. Like Atlantic Canada and other territories who implemented strict controls, we were able to limit COVID-19 in the NWT.

It is important to mention that our success in maintaining the low numbers would not have been possible without the collective support from all of us. Indigenous and community governments who supported our measures: MLAs, the media, and community leaders who helped spread the messaging; mines, private enterprise, and non-governmental sectors who put the lives of residents first, the many individual employees in various sectors putting their own lives on the line to help, and all the residents who abided by the Chief Public Health Officer orders were all critical to keep our numbers where they are today.

Mr. Speaker, the measures the Government of the Northwest Territories took, however, did not materialize on their own. Hundreds of public service workers stepped up to help in our efforts. Over 180 employees helped on the front lines, but behind this hundreds more within departments helped with the organization, policy development, and implementation of our COVID-19 response. Our employees are the backbone of this government and their dedication showed as they worked tirelessly to ensure our response was as effective as possible. I am extremely proud of our civil service and I sincerely thank them for all of their hard work.

Mr. Speaker, parts of the South have recently announced that they have entered their second wave and the number of cases in Canada is increasing to levels we haven't seen since the early days of the pandemic.

While our response to the initial outbreak of COVID-19 was successful to prepare for the second wave, we have to use what we have learned from what we experienced. One of the things we learnt was that having necessary resources housed in multiple departments was

challenging. Many of the requests and enquiries involved various departments which sometimes resulted in less than timely responses. We also heard that, as much as possible, people want the supports provided by the GNWT pre-pandemic. As well, we heard that our employees and departments were stretched thin trying to help with the pandemic response and doing the best they could to complete their normal work duties.

Keeping NWT residents safe during the ongoing pandemic continues to be our priority, and it is why we proposed the COVID secretariat. The secretariat will house the border patrols and enforcement team, isolation units, distribution of personal protective equipment to non-health care providers, 811, and ProtectNWT. The secretariat will focus on the COVID response which enables departments to focus on service delivery and implementing our mandate commitments.

Mr. Speaker, as was stated by the Governor-General during the Speech from the Throne recently, the last six months have laid bare the gaps in our society. As well as implementing the controls to enforce the Chief Public Health Officer's orders, we have also provided supports for residents and businesses to help during this pandemic. We invested in child care for returning workers, and financially supported our municipalities and Indigenous communities. We provided supports for businesses, employers, schools, students, and income assistance participants. As well, we invested millions in support of our most vulnerable members of our communities. Our response to COVID-19 will cost money, real money. But as one Indigenous leader reminded me, "How much money is one life worth?"

The COVID-19 pandemic has had significant impacts on our territory and economy and has created new challenges for pursuing the GNWT priorities. Recovery is key, and we need to ensure our people have jobs and our businesses are thriving. We also have to keep health and safety, housing, food security, and education, top of mind to improve the lives of all NWT residents. Now more than ever before, we need to be investing in our people and support them through this challenging time.

We know this will cost money and we clearly cannot do this alone. We have been meeting regularly with other jurisdictions and the federal government throughout this pandemic. Canada recognizes our unique realities, and the recent Speech from the Throne identified the exceptional needs of the North.

We will continue to work with all governments to ensure that when we talk about economic recovery, investment in housing, transportation, broadband,

energy infrastructure, and protecting the most vulnerable, the North continues to be recognized as needing special consideration.

We need to close the gap between northern and southern Canada, one that existed long before COVID-19. Canada's commitment to ensuring people aren't left behind aligns with the priorities outlined in our mandate to ensure a prosperous territory where our residents can thrive for generations to come. That's why, Mr. Speaker, we need to get on with the business of government. The COVID-19 pandemic is not going to end in the immediate future. While we must ensure we keep the health and well-being of residents at the forefront we cannot lose sight of the work we were all elected to do by residents of the Northwest Territories.

Mr. Speaker, our relationship with Canada is critical to our success as a territory. This morning, alongside Indigenous leaders, the YWCA, and Member of Parliament Michael McLeod, and Minister Chinna, we met with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau for a roundtable discussion on northern housing needs. This issue is important to our government, and we hope this meeting has kicked off a broader discussion for how we can find innovative ways to address the dire need for housing in the Northwest Territories. This is an example of our commitment to building strong, collaborative relationships with our stakeholders, Mr. Speaker, and we will continue to find ways to work with Canada, Indigenous and community government partners, and the NGO sector to improve the lives of our residents.

We must continue to work towards a strong North and a resilient economy. As we move forward, we will continue to pursue economic and social opportunities that provide sustainable benefits, as well as address the direct impacts of climate change that our territory is experiencing. We need to advance our long-term priorities, particularly when it comes to growing our economy and ensuring a healthy, vibrant, and educated territory for years to come.

Of critical importance as well, we must continue to work with Indigenous governments to conclude negotiations, define the implementation of the United Nation's Declaration of Indigenous People, and work with the federal government in the development of a National Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girls Action Plan.

COVID-19 certainly has taken the focus of this government. However, departments have still made progress towards meeting our mandate objectives, and I am confident that we will be able to complete a number of our mandate areas during this term. During the February 2021 sitting, we will document

in detail the progress we have made on our mandate commitments.

Mr. Speaker, it was just over a year ago that we were all elected as the 19 MLAs to represent the people of the Northwest Territories. Who knew when we began that we would face challenges like no other government. Because of the seriousness of this pandemic and the needs of our residents, it is essential that we all work together. It is critical that Ministers and MLAs work together, along with Indigenous and community governments, businesses, non-government organizations, and residents, to find solutions to ensure the future prosperity of the Northwest Territories.

By working together on areas of shared priorities, we will advance our objectives and better serve the people of the Northwest Territories. Mr. Speaker, we must move forward collectively and collaboratively. We have no choice. The safety of our residents and future of the Northwest Territories depends on it, and, by working together, I am confident that we can find success as the 19th Legislative Assembly. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Members' Statements

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON WORKING TOGETHER

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am proud to say I was born and raised in the NWT. I was taught to respect all people, whether or not I agree or disagree with them, and most importantly, I was taught to be principled in my beliefs and to believe in others. What has this got to do with being a politician? I would say: everything. It reminds us that we are here not for ourselves but to represent those people who placed us here, the same people who are just trying to stay healthy, trying to raise a family, trying to put food on the table, and trying to keep a roof over their head.

Mr. Speaker, it has been a little over a year since we were sworn into office. When we first came together as newly elected MLAs, we all discussed the need to work together, the need to be respectful, and the need to be open and transparent, all so we could provide effective and meaningful representation for the people of the NWT. We agreed to standards we would follow. We have not lived up to those standards. At the outset, we all appeared to get along, and everything was friendly and respectful. It took only a short period of time to realize the first sign of splinters developing between Members. It had little to do with how we were going to work for the

people of the NWT but had more to do with egos and personal aspirations. It is apparent we have experienced some turbulence. However, collectively, it is now up to us to work through it while moving forward.

Mr. Speaker, I, or any of us for that matter, do not have time to child-mind Cabinet or Regular Members. We all know there are limited financial resources. We all know the priorities. We all know the mandate. Most importantly, we all know the issues facing our constituents and communities. We are here to address those very issues by providing collaborative solutions that will use our resources efficiently while providing positive and long-lasting benefits to the residents and businesses of the NWT. Mr. Speaker, it is time to put our personal differences aside, be respectful, work together, and, most importantly, listen to each other and our constituents. We have only three years left to actually advance the priorities we set for ourselves. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON LAND LEASES

MS. MARTSELOS: Mr. Speaker, one of my first Member's statements in this House was about the Department of Lands and their recent increase on the minimum price of lease rent cost for leaseholders on territorial lands, which is administered and managed within the lands department.

Mr. Speaker, the Department of Lands increased the minimum rent cost for territorial land leases by \$690. It went from a minimum cost of \$150 and jumped to a minimum land-lease cost of \$840 annually. This is a huge rent increase to absorb all at once. The rationale from the lands department for this large increase in rent minimums for territorial leaseholders is because the rates had not been adjusted for 20 years, so the Department of Lands decided to apply 20 years' worth of unchanged rent minimums and increase the cost all at once rather than staggering the increase at a nominal annual rate, as done with property taxes for example.

Moreover, Mr. Speaker, earlier this year, amid our government's initial response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Department of Lands put out a statement which waived the land-lease fees for all existing surface dispositions for the fiscal year 2020-2021. Cabin Radio reported on this story further on May 11, 2020, stating that the Government of the Northwest Territories would

collectively save residents and businesses \$2.7 million, \$1.4 million of which was provided relief to all the mines.

Mr. Speaker, I suspect that the Department of Lands would not have waived these costs if it only affected smaller leaseholders by regular people. I am convinced that the Government of the Northwest Territories only applied this waiver across the board because it primarily benefits the mining sector and large businesses.

Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, I firmly believe that all rights-based land-lease holders must be exempt from this policy and that all permanent and long-time residents of the NWT must be dealt with fairly. A 5- to 10-percent increase is sufficient for all residents I just mentioned. If anything, I think the bulk of the rent increases should rest with the non-NWT leaseholders. I will have questions for the Minister of Lands later today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON WORKING TOGETHER

MS. CLEVELAND: Mr. Speaker, today is the first sitting day of our second year. The air outside is fresh, and after seven long months of COVID, today is a good day to hit the reset button. Last night, I spoke with a bright young student named Maggie, preparing for today's class presentation on the NWT. I asked her about her favourite NWT thing, and her response was, "The ice castle." Her favourite thing is a local "king" in Carhartt's who cuts his castle from our frozen lake to create a community that vibrates with excitement, and I love that.

A year ago, I stood here and congratulated my colleagues because together we made history. I said last year was not only a turning point in history for the NWT but for the world. 2019 was indeed a global turning point. It gave us the non-refundable gift of COVID-19. This year, we have all been challenged and tasked with looking at our world differently. However, Mr. Speaker, while the GNWT is tasked with keeping Northerners safe, this Assembly cannot lose sight of our individual and collective commitments to the people we serve. We are all ready to see COVID go, but we need to continue to find ways to work with it.

Northerners have long been known for their resilience and ability to care for one another. This year, government has shown its ability to react to changing policies, finding funds and working differently in record time. While it may feel like COVID has slowed much of the world to a

screeching halt, it has also created momentum and opportunity. It is up to us to keep that momentum going. COVID is still a top concern, but I speak daily with constituents concerned with northern procurement benefit retention, training skilled workers, economic drivers for the NWT, as well as addictions and wellness supports. We have work to do, Mr. Speaker.

A year ago, we shared what we wanted to accomplish, and I asked us to define our collective "why." Listening to my colleagues, it is clear that we know our "why." Every day, we share stories of Northerners determined to survive and thrive, and with them, we work for a stronger North not for just ourselves but also for the next generation who want to be leaders in their own communities, this territory, or maybe even the ice castle. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON NORTHWEST TERRITORIES HOUSING CORPORATION ENERGY STRATEGY

MR. BONNETROUGE: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. The Government of the Northwest Territories has a living, breathing document titled 2030 Energy Strategy. The goal of this strategy is to guide the development of secure, affordable, and sustainable energy for transportation, heat and electricity, support energy efficiency and conservation, and promote renewable and alternative energy solutions for the NWT.

Mr. Speaker, it is quite exciting to see the Department of Infrastructure's energy division create such a document which shows promise of savings to cost-of-living items such as power costs and which could very well create long-term employment in the communities. The infrastructure department is incorporating this plan via wood-pellet boilers to most of the GNWT's infrastructure, such as schools, health centres, and airports, thus creating savings in fuel use and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Mr. Speaker, what I note is that the energy plan is not being put to action within the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation considering their stock of approximately 2400 units spread out across the Northwest Territories.

Mr. Speaker, I will have questions for the housing Minister at the appropriate time. Mahsi.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON FIRE SERVICES ON INGRAHAM TRAIL

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Firstly, I appreciate MLA Cleveland's passion for, she called it the "ice castle," but I feel I'd be remiss if I did not correct that. It is a snow castle. The Snow King would not allow me to get away with that.

Mr. Speaker, starting April 1, 2021, the City of Yellowknife's fire department will no longer respond to calls along the Ingraham Trail in my constituency, leaving residents of that area without fire protection.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to reflect on how we got there as I believe, if many systemic problems were not solved, my constituents still would have access to fire services. I believe, if we properly funded our municipal governments according to the funding formula we agreed to, they could probably find it in their budget to continue to provide emergency services. I believe, if we entered into proper MOUs with municipalities to provide emergency services outside of their boundaries, they would continue to provide this service. I believe, if we had settled Akaitcho and gave them the nearly half million square kilometres of their land back, we probably could have found a few square kilometres to give Ingraham Trail residents title to their properties, and they can, in turn, pay taxes and get services. I believe, if we address the fact that there are people living in recreational leases and we know that and we accept it, yet we do not address the problem, we probably could have found a way to provide them services.

However, Mr. Speaker, we have failed to do all those things, and as such, my constituents, after decades of service, will not be able to call 911 and get a fire truck if their house is on fire. I don't blame the City of Yellowknife for the decision. That is their mandate. I blame the Department of MACA for not responding quickly enough to resolve this issue such that we have six months to try and find a way such that none of my constituents picks up their phone and their house is on fire and no one comes.

Mr. Speaker, I am afraid the GNWT won't move fast enough to solve this problem, just as they have not moved fast enough to solve all of those previous problems that led us here today.

Mr. Speaker, I will have questions for the Minister of MACA, and I hope we can get an agreement in place with the City of Yellowknife and give them some funding such that my constituents can continue to have fire services. More importantly, I hope this government can make some action on all of those issues that got us here today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will have questions for the Minister at the appropriate time.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
RECENT RESCUES AND RECOGNITIONS IN
CONSTITUENCY

MR. NORN: Marsi cho, Mr. Speaker. To start off, I'd like to begin by welcoming all my colleagues back and getting back to the grind. This first year in office has been tumultuous to say the least, given the ongoing global pandemic that we are dealing with so far.

Mr. Speaker, going forward, I'm hoping to continue building on the work we've done so far since last year's territorial election. I know we dealt with a lot of deaths in our communities, a lot of elders, and it's very sad to deal with all our restrictions. I'm hoping, when all this is done, I really want to make sure that we have a proper chance to commemorate our elders, one's lost during this pandemic, and I really hope we do something in the House, too.

Moreover, Mr. Speaker, given through all the pandemic restrictions, we need to still continue living our lives and do things and keep moving forward. I want to recognize a few of my constituents. The first one I want to mention is Chaslyn McKay of Deninu K'ue. She's an 18-year old Dene and Cree who flew to Toronto last month to go in the Miss Canada Globe competition. She placed fourth. Her parents and the whole community could not be more proud of her involvement in this event and putting herself out there and pursuing her dreams. I wish her the best luck in future competitions.

Going just a little further north to Lutselk'e, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to acknowledge the recent re-election of Chief Darryl Marlowe of the AKDFN to his second term in office. I wish him all the best and I look forward to working closely with him and building upon positive working relationship since we built in the last year's election.

I also wanted to mention quickly: around the lake, right now, the wind is blowing really hard. It's treacherous out there, and encourage all of our constituents who are out in the water to be safe. I want to mention YKDFN, some of the members, rescuing some of their members out on the lake. Ni Hatni and LKDFN had a few rescues. In particular yesterday, in my home community of Deninu K'ue, I'd like to recognize a few gentlemen: Greg Lafferty, Scott King, and Brad King. They put themselves in harm's way.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to seek unanimous consent to finish my statement.

---Unanimous consent granted

MR. NORN: Marsi cho, colleagues, and marsi cho, Mr. Speaker. Mentioning those three gentlemen, they put themselves in harm's way to go out on the lake and to rescue a couple of the community members. Their boats sunk and they had to go rescue them. They're stranded. To do that, you have to be selfless. You have to be brave. For me, it was inspiring, and I'm really proud of them. To me, if we could draw some parallels, that, like I said, was inspiring. If we could follow their lead and pick up. Even if there's some rough waters out there, they went out there and faced diversity. They worked together, and they got the job done. Hoping we can draw that parallel here, and we can get through all this, work with each other. We're not going to always agree, but like I said, as one of my colleagues mentioned, we've got to be respectful of each other and look through, past your differences, because a lot of people are really depending on us in these times. Marsi cho, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
DOMINION DIAMONDS FINANCIAL SECURITY

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. On June 3rd, I made a statement in this House about the uncertainty and lack of Cabinet communications surrounding the creditor protection proceeding for Dominion Diamond affiliates. The latest news is that the proposed sale of Ekati Mine has fallen through because the insurance companies that issued surety bonds covering the reclamation liabilities would not agree to the deal. The surety bonds cover about \$280 million of the \$295 million financial security for work that is supposed to be done in place under various licences and permits.

The GNWT now has total discretion over the form of financial security for reclamation liabilities at Ekati and any other mine. It's my understanding that GNWT also has to consent to the transfer or assignment of the water licence, land leases, land use permits, and the environmental agreement covering the Ekati Mine if they're transferred to a new entity.

It's not clear what Cabinet's position is on these assignments, and whether any terms or conditions will or have been imposed. One of the terms and conditions should be that surety bonds are converted or changed to more reliable, irrevocable letters of credit from a chartered Canadian bank. Regular MLAs were never asked about or consulted about this matter.

I'd also like to know what sort of early warning system we have in place to ensure that GNWT is not left with a public liability from Ekati. Insurance companies seem to have a problem with the new entity. The site has changed ownership several times, and it's nearing the end of its life. We've already had some failures that the GNWT was not able to adequately anticipate or mitigate. For example, the bankruptcy of Strategic Oil and Gas and its Cameron Hills sour gas field. That should never have been accepted by our government under the Devolution Agreement. Then, there's North American Tungsten that also went under during our watch with a Mactung property as part of its financial security. I'll have questions later today for the Minister of Finance who has the lead on the Dominion Diamond creditor protection proceeding. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON COVID-19 RESTRICTIONS FOR FUNERALS

MS. SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First, I'd like to express my condolences to the families in my community and the surrounding communities in the loss of their family members over the last few months. Since I left this House in June, just in our region alone, we have lost a lot of elders, younger people in our region. We just lost another person yesterday.

During this time of loss, families are under extreme stress. In addition to this, they are mourning, they are trying to arrange for funerals, and they are trying to do it in their ways, in their beliefs, in their burial ceremonies that bring them peace, some closure, with the addition of COVID-19 restrictions in place. Never in my life have I ever attended an outdoor funeral.

As we are here, still in phase 2, the Emerging Wisely document states: no indoor funerals allowed; no exceptions for out-of-territory immediate family to attend that funeral without having to apply for an exception and wait for that response. Then, if they get approved, they come to the territory, and they have to wait another two weeks before they can attend a funeral. I find this rule to be disrespectful, no thought of how it affects the grieving process for our people and how families have to deal with this, with very limited mental health while they are waiting. This goes against the sacredness of the ceremony, and the burial process that I grew up with is being disregarded.

Mr. Speaker, what is even more upsetting is we see that non-NWT residents are given permission,

given exceptions to work in deemed-essential areas, like the mines, like construction, like infrastructure construction, other private sectors, as well as health. Why is this not considered with the same rules in place for family to attend a funeral, Mr. Speaker? We can go to church now with up to 25 people, with the ability to apply for more seats through the Chief Public Health Officer. This too is not right, Mr. Speaker.

I seek unanimous consent to continue my statement.

---Unanimous consent granted

MS. SEMMLER: We can go to church with up to 25 people, with the ability to apply for more seats, but this does not include funerals. That is not right. How does one measure a funeral ceremony is more risk and less important than allowing non-NWT-resident essential workers for infrastructure and mining projects, who are flying in from Edmonton on the same flight as all of us, that I go home on every time I leave Yellowknife?

The winter is on its way. We cannot deny families indoor funerals. This must be looked into. Our families need to mourn. They need to lay their family members to rest in a way that respects their culture and beliefs, Mr. Speaker. I am hoping that I am heard today and that we can do this in a safe way moving forward, to respect our families. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON ADDICTIONS RESIDENTIAL TREATMENT FACILITIES IN THE NORTH

MR. LAFFERTY: Masi, Mr. Speaker. [Translation] Today in the Northwest Territories, everyone is dealing with the alcohol and drug problem. We do not have a treatment centre in the Northwest Territories. We used to have one, but we no longer have one. Anyone who wants to go to treatment, they go down south, and monies are being spent on it. [Translation ends].

Mr. Speaker, we spent a quarter of a million dollars last year sending Northerners south for residential treatment. This is a leakage of revenue that could have been spent on northern jobs and business opportunities. However, more tragically, it is a disservice to Northerners who stand a better chance at recovering when their addiction treatment is provided here in the Northwest Territories.

Mr. Speaker, recalling a recent statement in this House, I am encouraged that the sad state of

affairs may soon be over. I refer to a promise last June by the then Health and Social Services Minister, who was looking into again providing residential treatment here in the territory. This was partly in response to the difficulties of travel during the pandemic, but it was also in response to the department's mental health and addiction recovery action plan tabled in 2019, which promised more options for community-based addiction recovery.

Mr. Speaker, I asked the government in May for a progress report on this plan for restoration of residential treatment here in the territory. I asked for it to be provided during this sitting. At the appropriate time, I will have questions for the Minister of Health and Social Services about how her department is progressing on this very important issue. Masi.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON EULOGY FOR MARY LOUISE NORWEGIAN

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mary Louise Norwegian of Rabbit Skin River was born to Joseph and Elizabeth Augier Norwegian, March 8, 1938. She was very close to her dad, who taught her everything traditional and how to survive in the wilderness. She was the second-youngest of her siblings. She had four sisters and five brothers.

Her favourite times of the year were spring and fall. In the springtime, she would trap beaver, catch fish, and collect birch sap for syrup. In the later summer, she would travel up to her cabin on the Horn Plateau, where she would hunt moose and caribou, fish, and pick berries. On quiet fall days, she would spend time sewing and doing other crafts. As well, she enjoyed watching the ducks, geese, and swans that would stop by the cabin at her lake as they said good-bye, as they continued on their journey south. She used to say, "This is the most beautiful place on Earth. It must be like this at heaven's gates."

She did her very best to raise her children, eight, as a single parent, and passed on her traditional knowledge. Mary Louise was very proud of the fact that she was the first traditional woman to own her own home and land in the village of Fort Simpson. She had the opportunity to go on a traditional exchange program to Siberia for a couple of weeks. She would always say, "The people are so kind to us and would share what little they had with us." Many times, she got close to death. There was one time she was alone at her cabin and cut her thigh to the bone with a chain saw. When she would tell this story, she would say, "My bush radio saved my life."

For many years, she worked at the Fort Simpson health centre as an interpreter and a caregiver for elders, and she prepared loved ones for burial. She received a Wise Woman Award and was very honoured for this acknowledgement. She always said she was thankful she had the education and always challenged herself to be better. Life could be rough, especially at residential school, but without education, it could be a lot worse. She never gave up. She told her nephew, "Living off the land only is over. We cannot go back. Learning and training oneself is to be the best you can be so you can learn to use our precious lands properly and help each other."

In her last few years, she suffered from Parkinson's disease and wasn't able to go to her cabin, but her spouse of 25 years, A.J. Augier, was by her side, cheering her up and assisting her where he could. He held her hand to the very end, as she took her last breath on July 20th. The family would like to thank the staff at the long-term care home for the excellent service they provided their mother during her time there. She will be sadly missed by all.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Nahendeh. Our thoughts and prayers are with the family. Members' statements. Item 4, returns to oral questions. Item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery.

Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery

MR. SPEAKER: I would like to welcome two people of the media here with us today. I would like to thank you for joining us. It's always good to have an audience. I hope you are enjoying the proceedings.

Item 6, acknowledgements. Item 7, oral questions. Member for Monfwi.

Oral Questions

QUESTION 343-19(2): ADDICTIONS RESIDENTIAL TREATMENT FACILITIES

MR. LAFFERTY: Masi, Mr. Speaker. [Translation] I made a statement regarding a treatment centre, so I would like to ask Health and Social Services a question. [Translation ends] The Minister of the Health and Social Services department promised to consider [microphone turned off] ...treatment in the territory and followed by mental health and addiction recovery action plan. Mr. Speaker, the TRC's 94 recommendations, number 21, states that: we call upon federal government to provide sustainable funding for Aboriginal healing centres to address physical, mental, emotional, spiritual harms caused by residential schools, and to ensure the

funding of healing centres in Nunavut and the Northwest Territories.

Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Health and Social Services. My first question is: in light of her department's promises that I've stated in my statement, when can Northerners expect an end to the ill-advised practice of sending Northerners to southern institutions for addictions recovery? Masi.

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

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Member for Monfwi for that question. I'm unaware of a promise by the Department of Health and Social Services to revisit the question of southern-based in-facility addictions treatment. In fact, recently, in response to a call for proposals, six facilities in total, two new, were approved for southern-based addictions treatment. The reason it's in the South is because people can get in right away. They can choose the place they want to go. They can be in a co-ed or a gender-specific facility depending on their preference. They have access to a range of services, which we simply don't have in the Northwest Territories. I just want to be very clear that where we're focusing as a department is on aftercare on things like on-the-land healing and what supports we can put in place to help people hang on to their sobriety when they come back. Thank you.

MR. LAFFERTY: Obviously, there is a bit of a challenge here to accept that six new southern institutions that we've continued to send our people for some sort of addictions treatment there. People leaving the North, again, funding and money leaving the North, we're talking about millions. We're not talking about ten thousand here and there. Millions, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to know what option is the Minister considering for the return to residential addictions treatment here in the Northwest Territories. Once we had that before, could we have that again in the Northwest Territories?

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you to the Member for Monfwi for that question. The departmental budget for addictions treatment this year is \$2.3 million. There has been a decrease in the number of spaces available, which is why the department added two more facilities so that there is appropriate distancing during the pandemic. We know that 45 people have attended in-patient treatment in the first six months of this year. Fifteen of them have completed their program. We're going to be low on numbers this year, there are more typically around 200. The last treatment centre we had open in the NWT was Nats'ejee Keh on the K'atl'odeeche First Nation. It failed for the reason that other treatment centres had failed: a lack of

suitable staff, the inability to be able to do intake at any time, and issues around confidentiality and people actually wanting to leave the North and all of their triggers for substance abuse and have a new start in the South. Thank you.

MR. LAFFERTY: We have new, I guess, southern institutions that the department is planning to work with. At the same time, given the amount of time that individuals can apply to go to southern institutions there is a waitlist at Poundmaker's of up to six months. If we had that here in the Northwest Territories, utilizing our own people, our elders, our healers, on-the-land program, it would go a long way. The next question I have for the Minister is: since there is no option to consider Northwest Territories residential healing centres here in the Northwest Territories, to what extent has the Indigenous governments, Indigenous healers, Indigenous elders, been engaged or consulted in developing those options as called by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission calls for action numbers 21 and 20?

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you for the question, Member for Monfwi. The situation with facility-based treatment is to provide a range of options. Poundmaker's is one of the six. Aventa, which is for women, is another; Edgewood in B.C.; Fresh Start, which is for men in Calgary; and an Indigenous Healing Centre called Renascent in Toronto and another called the Thorpe Healing Centre in Lloydminster. There are a lot of different choices there for people to make. This is a matter of public policy that affects all residents of the NWT. Also, more particularly for Indigenous organizations, there is on-the-land healing, which has a dedicated fund of \$1.8 million and which is available to all Indigenous government organizations that make applications for it. That money is still available for this year. I really would encourage the Member to ensure that his IGO has applied for this money so that they can do their own on-the-land treatment. Thank you.

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

MR. LAFFERTY: Masi, Mr. Speaker. The Minister talks about choices. We don't really have many choices here in the Northwest Territories. We have six southern institutions that we send our own people there. They come back. I've witnessed myself, in my region, one individual came back from treatment, ended up back on the street, and unfortunately, the individual passed away this past summer because there was no after-care program. This is a real issue, a real live issue, Mr. Speaker. The Minister talked about the on-the-land treatment program funding. What kind of funding is available compared to the southern institutions that we're spending millions? How much are we spending

here in the Northwest Territories on-the-land program? Has that been also incremented over the years? That will be my final question, and I will come back to it as well, Mr. Speaker. Masi.

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thanks again to the Member for Monfwi. The budget for the on-the-land healing program is \$1.8 million. The budget for the southern treatment is \$2.3 million, so there is a difference there of \$500,000. The on-the-land treatment program was last increased last year in the last main estimates. There is a robust amount of money available there. As I mentioned before, that fund has not been completely spent. On the contrary, only a couple of Indigenous government organizations have applied for it. I really encourage everyone who has connections with on-the-land healing to make applications to this fund so that this piece of after-care can be made available to all our residents. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 344-19(2):
MINE FINANCIAL SECURITIES

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, monsieur le President. My questions are for the Minister of Finance who has the lead on the Dominion Diamond Creditor Protection matter. It's my understanding that GNWT also has to consent to the transfer or signing of the water licence, land leases, land-use permits, and environmental agreement covering the Ekati Mine to any new entity. Licence and permits must be in place for any new owner to operate. Can the Minister confirm that the GNWT must consent to the assignment of a number of licences and permits to any new entity for the Ekati Mine? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That is one of the critical roles that the GNWT plays, is that we are responsible as part of the bidding process that we would ensure that any prospective bidder, any prospective buyer, can undertake the requirements of the environmental licence and that includes undertaking or accepting the securities in a reasonable form. Thank you.

MR. O'REILLY: I want to thank the Minister for confirming that. If the insurance companies would not agree to the sale of the Ekati Mine to the new entity, it raises questions of what our Cabinet's position is. Regular MLAs were not consulted in any way on this sale. Can the Minister tell us what Cabinet's position was or is on the sale to the new entity and who else it was conveyed to and when?

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: It's not the GNWT that gets consulted on the sale of this company between private entities. There is an ongoing negotiation that is taking place between Dominion Diamonds and prospective bidders. It's not one into which the government should be putting its hand. Ultimately, in this case, being a CCAA proceeding, the court would be overseeing that process and would be overseeing that sale. What the role of the GNWT is, is to again ensure that our environmental process is respected, that securities are held in an appropriate manner, and at that point that is our role, that is the role that we perform.

As far as the thoughts of Cabinet, number one again is to preserve that environmental process that we have, and number two is to provide an environment and an atmosphere that will ensure a profitable mining industry. If we are able to do that, then it is certainly my hope that there will be, ultimately, a successful bid on the table and that the mine will reopen, but it's certainly not our role to reach inside of that private entity process.

MR. O'REILLY: I want to thank the Minister for that. Of course, we are at the table in those proceedings. Apparently, we have legal counsel there, and we do have a say in terms of the transfer of any of these licences, so I hope that it is exercised in a reasonable way and that this side is consulted. The Dominion Diamond news release said that the insurance companies that issued the surety bonds refused to agree to the sale to the new entity, so can the Minister explain what is going on? Why won't these insurance companies agree to the sale of the mine?

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: I certainly wish I could give a detailed explanation of what is going on, but again, there is a large degree of what is going on is between private entities. I realize that, on the one hand, one news release is saying perhaps that one side of the deal walked away, but it may well be that another party might be saying the opposite, that it was, in fact, another member of that negotiation that were the ones that walked away or wouldn't agree. I think there needs to be some caution exercised before one of us here necessarily assumes what is happening. From our perspective, some of the parties are keeping us informed on their perspective, on what they see happening in that sale.

Again, our role, really, is to ensure our end of it is moving along in a reasonable fashion, and that is protecting the environmental process and ensuring that, to the extent that there is a bidder who may require the assignment of the environmental securities or the environmental agreement, we do what we need to do to ensure that that happens expeditiously. The Government of the Northwest Territories is not going to suddenly upend or

change the environmental process that exists, the environmental agreements that exist, so at this stage, if the Member requires me to allay those fears, then I am certainly happy to do that. Our hope is that this mine will reopen and, if it does, it will be assuming the environmental agreements that are already in place.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. I want to thank the Minister for that. Of course, we all want to see the mine reopen, but I just don't want our government to get short-changed or the environment to get short-changed in the process. For the first time I can recall, GNWT accepted surety bonds as financial securities for this particular mine. Insurance companies don't stay in business by paying out. Can the Minister tell us whether it is Cabinet's position that these surety bonds should be converted to or replaced by the more reliable and irrevocable letters of credit issued by a Canadian chartered bank, and whether the GNWT has put this as a condition of sale or assignment? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: It was always an expectation that, over time, the surety bonds that were being held for this particular mining industry would convert over to irrevocable letters of credit. Right now, to be very simple about it, it's not a concern right now. From the perspective of the government, the surety bonds that we have can be called upon by the government if we need to, so from our perspective, they provide adequate security and assurance that, if the bonds needed to be called, if the securities needed to be called, they would be there. What they did provide was some flexibility to the company when it was initially undertaking the environmental agreement process. So that flexibility was there. It comes with protection for the GNWT, and at this point, there is really, from our perspective, no concern in continuing as it is right now and no intention of changing or reducing the level of security that we have or the form that it's in. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 345-19(2):
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES HOUSING
CORPORATION ENERGY STRATEGY

MR. BONNETROUGE: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. The Northwest Territories Housing Corporation has approximately 2,400 public rental units spread out over the NWT. Let's say, for brevity, the units each consume approximately 1,200 litres of diesel fuel per month. The total for the year for 2,400 public rental units is approximately 34.5 million litres of

diesel fuel consumed every year. If you were to stick a dollar figure on that, we use an average of a dollar per litre. We are looking at \$34.5 million per year from the use of diesel fuel. Mr. Speaker, I would like the Minister to commit to developing an energy action plan for the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation that will reduce the use of fossil fuels and incorporate wood pellet boilers in the public rental units. Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Deh Cho. Minister responsible for the NWT Housing Corporation.

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for your comments. Working on the energy plan for the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation is a priority. Right now, we have \$3.9 million under the Low Carbon Economy Fund that we worked on with the Department of Infrastructure to try to alleviate the utilities and the oil and gas within our public housing units. We have also had biomass projects throughout the Northwest Territories. We do have 2,600 units throughout the territory. The Housing Corporation is working toward administering more energy efficiency within those public housing units. I will commit to developing a plan. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. BONNETROUGE: That is good news to hear. We are constantly reminded of the date 2038. Nobody knows in the communities, the Indigenous communities, what that date really means. Most people are in fear of that date, that they will have no more units available for rent, for housing of our people, because every year from now until that date the funding from the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, the CMHC, will deplete until there is no more funding available for operations and maintenance on that date. Will the Minister act now in developing an energy action plan to extend the public rental housing program beyond 2038?

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you, Member, for your comment. My answer, as I just reiterated, is: yes, we will be working towards an energy action plan.

MR. BONNETROUGE: It's nice to hear that again. I look forward to the energy action plan that is innovative in the use of our natural resources and that creates employment for our communities. It is much-needed employment, and I really look forward to that report. Hopefully, it's not going to be too far into the future, that we will have something in front of us for review.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. I will let the Minister respond. Minister responsible for the NWT Housing Corporation.

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you, Member, for your comments. Like I said before, energy efficiency is a priority of the Housing Corporation in developing our units. I do recognize that we have declining CMHC funding as of 2038, and the Housing Corporation is working strategically on what we are going to be working with after the 2038 mark has come. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 346-19(2):
EMERGING WISELY PLAN APPROVAL
PROCESS

MS. SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I understand that the Chief Public Health Officer has the power to make all of the rules that have been in place and is not to be politically influenced, and we have heard this from the Premier and the past Minister. When this Emerging Wisely document was created, I would just like to know if this document was run by Cabinet before it was released to the public? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes. This is before my time over here, but my understanding is that, yes, Cabinet did have a chance to review the plan before it was made public. Thank you.

MS. SEMMLER: I also understand that there has been many changes to this document, and we've heard Dr. Kandola has said this, that it's a moving doc. It's a living document. There's been a lot of changes in there. There's been a lot of changes with the essential workers, who gets exceptions, who can get exceptions to go to communities now. How is this information passed onto the CPHO if there was no one to influence her decision on making changes?

HON. JULIE GREEN: Just to be clear about what's happening here, the CPHO provides medical advice, and the Department of Health provides policy about how to implement that medical advice. As you know, people can apply to ProtectNWT or call 811 and ask for some kind of exception to the orders as they are written now, such as no long-term isolation, that they can go to work during the day, or that they can go to a community that is not a hub community, and exceptions of that kind. Those are given to her office, and she makes a choice on an item by item basis by assessing the risk. That's her primary measurement.

MS. SEMMLER: During the public briefing that we had in September, I did ask the Minister if they could review the restrictions around funerals, and I'm just wondering if the Minister can tell me if the CPHO, if you know that they are reviewing this rule?

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you for the question. Yes, the CPHO is fully aware that outdoor funerals, if not already over, will be over in a matter of weeks because of the temperature outside. It's my understanding that the protocol that's in place now will remain in place but she is actively reviewing the funeral protocol, and that there is a possibility of revised public health orders next month, and that this would be the time we hear what she's decided about funerals.

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

MS. SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just have one question to the Minister: if she can ask the Chief Public Health Officer if she could move this up. Lakes are freezing at home. In the North, we've already got blizzards going. We can't have outdoor funerals already. It's already too cold. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. JULIE GREEN: I have the opportunity to meet with the CPHO every week, and I will certainly make that point to her, that it's urgent that there be an alternative to outdoor funerals so that people can grieve in a more comfortable, controlled environment. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 347-19(2):
VIRTUAL CARE DURING A PANDEMIC

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In March of this year, I asked the then-Minister of Health and Social Services about virtual care in the Northwest Territories. Since then, the GNWT has put together a three-phased approach to virtual care to address healthcare needs in the face of a global pandemic. In regards to the advances that were made through the COVID-19 pandemic as far as virtual care is concerned, I would like to see the changes and advances that were made continue their momentum. I'm wondering: for phase two, the virtual care initiative identified a need to create secure messaging between healthcare providers both within the Northwest Territories and with southern care providers, what work has been done to date to address secure information sharing between service providers? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. Oral questions. Minister of Health and Social Services.

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The particular focus of the virtual care work is between in-territory providers, health providers, and in-territory patients. There has been some work done, although COVID-19 reorganized priorities, and that work has slowed down. We already have a head start because the secure messaging will be through the territorial EMR system, which is available in every health centre and cabin that we have, so there is widespread availability once the secure messaging is developed for application across the NWT. The only other loose end is that we need to continue work with physicians in Alberta on them being able to access patients here, that they have the appropriate licensing, that we have compatible medical records, and that they can talk to one another effectively. Thank you.

MS. CLEVELAND: That leads quite nicely to my next question, and I just want to confirm first, though. Are there currently no out-of-territory physicians practicing virtual care with NWT residents?

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you to the Member for an opportunity to provide that clarification. Stanton Hospital has five southern service providers providing virtual care, and the family physician group has one southern service provider providing virtual care.

MS. CLEVELAND: A standing barrier to providing virtual care is the barrier created by differential licensing requirements which the Minister touched on, and there's different requirements straight across Canada. What work is being done to simplify the registration and licensor processes to enable qualified physicians or healthcare providers to provide virtual care across provincial and territorial boundaries?

HON. JULIE GREEN: The department right now is working on adapting the Alberta College of Physicians and Surgeons physician standards, and those standards include a telehealth standard. What the department is doing is adapting those to NWT circumstances, step one. Step two, engage the key stakeholders with the content such as the NWT Medical Association and the Health and Social Services Authority so that they can provide their input into that. Finally, there may be a need for a legislative change in the Medical Profession Act, and if that's the case, we would certainly expedite work on that.

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

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One of the things we hear quite often in this House and also within committee work is the need for cultural sensitivity straight across the North in all the work that we do. I'm wondering: how is the GNWT working to ensure that the cultural, technological, and language needs of all NWT residents are being met through virtual care?

HON. JULIE GREEN: The answer is that the service now is not entirely seamless, but if residents normally receive service in an Indigenous language in the health clinic in their community, they will continue to receive those services. New patients, it then falls to interpreters who are available in the health clinic or the health centre to interpret for that individual who is the patient. There is every effort to accommodate people to speak their first language and to receive services that are culturally safe and appropriate. Having said that, the technological end of this about connectivity in every community and how robust the bandwidth is, this is a failing in our system that we need to address. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 348-19(2):
COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN CABINET AND
REGULAR MEMBERS

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Communication between Cabinet, Regular Members, and constituents is very important if this government expects to get most of our decisions right. COVID threw a curve ball at this government's communication plan. I would ask the Premier: now that we have a year behind us and we have somewhat of a track record managing COVID, how will she ensure that we get our communications back on track between Cabinet and Regular Members? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do agree with the Member that communication has been difficult over the last few months. Once COVID-19 hit, lots of us could not be -- usually, we are in the House all the time. There were workplace things that had to be done. There were a lot of issues that came up. Communication is one of the hallmarks of consensus government. Before the pandemic hit, it was common to see Ministers and Members in the House on a regular basis, and both sides of the House would walk the floor and talk to Ministers or MLAs, not only about issues but just building that relationship and sometimes just going for lunch. Those things are gone, Mr. Speaker, since COVID-19, and so, like I

said, we need to learn from the lessons that we have experienced over the last few months.

Communications, we are focused on our health and safety, and we kept trying to do the communications through normal processes, so we offered our list of briefings to committee all the time, not even thinking that committee did not have the opportunity to gather as much, just like we were. We realize that was a mistake, so how we are working on it going forward is: we are going to provide more briefings, written briefings, to standing committees in advance, not just waiting to say, "Can we present to you?" We will still give standing committees the opportunities to look at them and decide if they want a briefing on it or not, but we have to recognize that we are not always going to be in the House now.

I do say that we do have an open-door policy within the GNWT. A lot of Members phone me in the evenings. Pick up your phone if you need something. Give me a call. We can do virtual communications, as well, whatever it means. Life has changed for all of us, and I do not know when it's going to go back, so we have an obligation, all of us, to try to make sure that we are still reaching out to each other by the means that we have available.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: This government has had a few problems with putting our message out to the public. The big one is the establishment of the Covid-19 Coordinating Secretariat. People were angry, and they let us know about it in no uncertain terms. I would ask the Premier: has she had time to reflect on this, and how will this government address the way we communicate with the public in the future?

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Communication is one of the areas that, again, is often undervalued within a government and yet is so critical. It really came to the forefront when COVID-19 hit how much we relied on our communications in the GNWT. I have to be honest, Mr. Speaker. In previous years, when we have had so many priorities and so many mandates, government had to make tough choices, and often it was the decision: do we increase our communications, which we need desperately, or do we provide the program that is in our priorities and mandate? I hate to say it, but oftentimes communications took the hit.

I understand that, but our communications team is trying to do their best and is stretched thin, as I had stated earlier. However, we owe it to the public. The secretariat was a great example and a great example of how the first question: how we are going to relate with Members better? Usually in previous governments, what happened was that we would present an initial brief to the Members; we

would take their feedback; we would work on it, give and take; we would go back, present it; and then we would go public. The secretariat, all in all, all of us recognize that that process was not followed properly, and we did not do a good job of communicating, myself communicating, to the public. However, I don't want to lose sight. The secretariat, we should not be focusing so much on the lack of communication.

We need to focus, on the secretariat, about what it is. It's bringing our isolation units, our border controls, our PPE, our 811, and our Protect NWT together so it's cohesive, in one department, and people can get back to work. We are working on our communications. We recognized it was a huge issue. We have spent a lot of time with our communications team to try to get better on that, and we will be coming out in the future with more communications. However, Mr. Speaker, I do want to give credit. The communications team has taken a beating over the while, and they are doing the best they can with the resources they have, as well, and I do want to say that I am proud of all of our communications people.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Mr. Speaker, various businesses throughout the NWT have been suffering financially over the last few months. Can the Premier confirm what communication strategy is in place to ensure that businesses are being heard and responded to in a timely manner?

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: When I first began here a year ago, I said that I wanted to engage with stakeholders more, businesses or stakeholders, a sector. I do believe that Ministers, again in the beginning, were engaging, out there talking to businesses, doing the best they could, and then COVID-19 hit, and everybody went into lockdown, right across the territory. That impacted our communications, no doubt.

However, now that we have a little bit of knowledge on where we are going, the systems we need in place to deal with COVID-19, all Ministers have been back at it and trying to engage more with stakeholders. It's not only about telling our stakeholders, businesses or whoever, what we are doing. I have been firm about that with Ministers, Mr. Speaker. It's about engaging them before we make the decisions whenever possible. Again, like I said, we kind of have a little bit of a handle on what we need for COVID-19. The secretariat will deal with that. Departments are trying to get back to normal business and meeting our mandate, and stakeholders engagement is critical within that.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The people of the NWT want a champion. They want a leader, and they want to hear from that leader. In this instance: the Premier. They want her to show leadership and create enthusiasm by providing relevant information in a timely manner, not only on COVID matters but, just as importantly, the economy. I ask the Premier: how will she accomplish this, that is, becoming a champion for the NWT?

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Again, like I said, rushing, all of departments rushing, all of us rushing to try to figure out what we needed to do to keep our people safe, I dropped the ball on communications. Again, I did not realize how important it was. The secretariat, the issue with the secretariat brought it to the forefront. It told us that we need to do better, and so, like I said, our communications team is doing the best they can with the resources they have. However, we took the time. We stepped back after that, and we took the time. We have met with our communications team and all of Cabinet, in honesty, and we looked at how we are actually going to have more of an all-of-government communication strategy, how we are going to get out into the public more, how we are going to reach the public and work with the media more. We just finished that exercise. You will see more in the coming weeks on how we are going to actually implement our communications strategy going forward. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 349-19(2):
LAND LEASES

MS. MARTSELOS: Mr. Speaker, my question for the Minister of Lands is: how is his department going to undo a major poor decision of the 18th Assembly that should have not happened without proper, meaningful consultation on the land leases? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I have committed previously in this House to the Member and others, is that I have made a commitment within the next three years to have the public land regulations in place. We are still on stride right now. We have two and a half years left in that commitment, and we are trying to get it done in that timeframe or sooner. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. MARTSELOS: The Minister's responses to my office regarding land leases is unacceptable. After getting up in the 18th Assembly 72 times addressing

this issue to the former Minister of Lands, why is this Minister not true to his convictions and not proactively changing the way he's dealing with this whole issue?

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: I empathize with the Member. Yes, I was up there 72 times asking for it, and yes, I found the answers unacceptable. However, as soon as I became the Minister, I directed the department to complete the regulations to move forward. Just so the Member understands, I also was asking questions, written questions, and bringing forth to the Minister about the challenges when we had residential leases and get that changed. For 31 times, I asked them that, and we were able to reduce that fee. I understand the Member asking the question and not being happy with it, but sometimes when we get answers, people are not happy.

MS. MARTSELOS: I'm very concerned about the contents and tones of the threatening letters being sent to the people of the Northwest Territories who have land leases and especially to my constituents of Fort Smith. Will the Minister consider changing his department's policy and review the rationale of doing the right thing?

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: The letters being sent out to leaseholders are a legal document and should not have the tone, and we apologize if people see there is a tone to it. What we encourage the Member to do is to get her constituents to reach out to our regional office and to have the conversation with our regional staff so they can better understand what we are trying to do.

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

MS. MARTSELOS: Mr. Speaker, the letters are coming from Yellowknife, not from the regional office, just for correction. Given the effects of this ongoing pandemic and its impacts on everyday life, would the Minister consider, for the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic, placing a freeze on all land leases for rights-based permanent and long-term residents? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Again, I would encourage the Member to get her constituents to reach out to the regional office so they can better understand that. We're in a pandemic. We came up with a solution presently, and so we were happy to waive the fees for a year, starting April 1, 2020, which was \$2.7 million from our coffers. It was a commitment we made during this Assembly, during this fiscal year, to do proper things for our residents. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 350-19(2):
FIRE SERVICES INGRAHAM TRAIL

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs. What is the department presently doing to make sure my residents on the Ingraham Trail do not lose fire services? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Member, for your question. MACA is currently in conversation with the City of Yellowknife. They did establish a working group, and we are looking at the property taxation act and also the Area Development Act. We're trying to see what options are made within those acts that would be able to work with the Ingraham Trail and looking at the services to be provided there. Also, looking at if we were able to, under the taxation act, have the residents at the Ingraham Trail contribute to that so we can look at other financial means for providing fire services to the Ingraham Trail. Thank you.

MR. JOHNSON: My concern is that the municipality has been asking for changes to the Property Assessment and Taxation Act for decades, and Ingraham Trail residents have been asking for a resolution to how their taxes and fees are spent for decades. We simply have months to resolve this problem. I believe there are some longer-term solutions, such as a volunteer service, perhaps, such as incorporating the Ingraham Trail such that they can have some control in their governance, but that can't be done in the next six months. Will the Minister approach the City of Yellowknife with funding for an MOU to buy us some time to resolve this issue?

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you, Member, for your comment. Currently, right now, the working group has just been established. Conversations are happening between MACA and the City of Yellowknife. There has been no conversation about the financial means right now. It is too premature to establish any financial obligation or financial commitment to the Ingraham Trail, but just for the Member that we are in conversations and these discussions are happening.

MR. JOHNSON: What's happened over time is that we have allowed more and more people to live on the Ingraham Trail such that it has close to 200 constituents out there, making it larger than many of our communities in the Northwest Territories. Coincidentally, we have not adjusted our Hamlets Act, which has a threshold of 25 residents. They could incorporate tomorrow and would be entitled to

millions of dollars such that I do not think it is too early to be having the financial conversation. If we do not address this now and if we lose fire services, I'm going to recommend incorporation, and I'm going to get millions of dollars when this is a \$100,000 problem. Can the Minister put a dollar amount to this and go to the City of Yellowknife?

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you, Member, for your comments. We have to consider that there is a consultation period that needs to happen within the City of Yellowknife. There are jurisdiction issues. Looking at providing fire services to Ingraham Trail is quite complex. This is not the only area within the Northwest Territories that is affected by this conversation right now. Just for the Member's sake, we are in the conversation with the City of Yellowknife. This is happening, and I will keep the Member informed as we progress.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My other concern is that there are a number of residents who I am sure do not know that their fire services got cancelled after decades, and I'm worried that they are going to call for fire and either we will be liable or the City of Yellowknife will be liable, as no one told them this service was cancelled. Can the department reach out to all those who have cabins on the Ingraham Trail and inform them of the cancellation of the service and our plan to remedy it?

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you, Member, for your comments. Within the working group that has been established, we are looking at an approach of how we are going to be addressing and consulting with all of the residents at Ingraham Trail. I will keep the Member informed as the department progresses. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 351-19(2):
ADDICTIONS TREATMENT SERVICES

MR. NORN: Marsi cho, Mr. Speaker. Holy, we give an initiation to our new health Minister today. I had a couple of questions for the Minister after hearing my colleague from Monfwi's statement on addictions and addiction services. I have a quick preamble. I'll keep it brief. I heard that there is \$1.8 million allocated for on-the-land funds available for healing. For me, I think it's important to have good metrics in place for aftercare and stuff, to make sure that we follow up with our people who are healing and make sure that they're doing well, and also to let us know if we're doing a good job and if our programs, our funds for programs, are

successful. I don't expect a response too quickly to this, but I guess my first question is: can we have a breakdown of the \$1.8 million so far this year, and where are they being used, and how much has been used so far this year? Marsi cho.

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

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you to the Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh for that question. The total budget for on-the-land funding is \$1.095 million and the mobile treatment after-care funding, and these are often pooled together, is \$729,000, so the total is \$1.8 million. Of that, \$482,631 has been spent, and the two IGOs with agreements in place are the Dehcho First Nations and the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation. Each IGO is allocated the same amount. The on-the-land funding available to each IGO is \$125,000, and the mobile treatment after-care funding is \$66,350. I can make a copy of this page, and I can make it available to the Member so that he has that in front of him. Thank you.

MR. NORN: I think it's important, and I had another question going back to after-care reporting. I'm just wondering if there are measures in place before people go out to treatment that there is a follow-up to say, maybe two months, three months, six months down the road, just checking on them to see if they are doing well and if their treatment has been successful or not and to do those kinds of increments.

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you for that question. I am very interested in that follow-up, as well, and it's my understanding that the department will start surveying people who go out to facility-based treatment and check in with them, whether they stay for the full time or they leave early, and to check in with them more than once when they come back, to find out whether they've been able to retain their sobriety.

MR. NORN: I did have one final concern. I think maybe it's just a communication case; I'm not too sure. Maybe it could be an opportunity for the department. If all of this money is not being accessed throughout the year, I'm just wondering if that is something the department can look at. In, say, the past couple of years, have there been carry-overs for this fund, for the on-the-land fund?

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you very much. I don't have a ready answer to that. I know that it's only recently that this money has been increased to \$1.8 million and, given the pandemic, I wonder if there will be a carry-over this year because, at this point, we've only spent about a third of it. I can, however, get you more specific information and provide that in a written response.

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

MR. NORN: Marsi cho. Yes, thinking about it, I do have one final question. I will start with a beginning comment. There is the new announcement of sending our residents to Lloydminster and Toronto. Again, I feel like this is a missed opportunity. I really feel that we need to get more value out of our programs and where we are spending our money. Again, it pains me to see our funds go to the South, and I really feel this is an opportunity to bring them back. I know we can't address all the issues in terms of drug and alcohol addiction, because it is a problem, we all know that in this room, but if we could revisit not having our residents leave the territory and find more ways to keep the money in the North and not leak money, have this economic leakage, per se. I guess my final question is: is there still an appetite to do this within the department? Marsi cho.

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you to the Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh. There is no current plan to establish a facility-based treatment option in the Northwest Territories. The last one was Nats'ejee K'eh. It cost as much to run Nats'ejee K'eh as it does to contract the six other places in the South, and so we feel that it's better value for money to have the facility-based treatment in the South, notwithstanding the fact that that money is not being spent in the North. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 352-19(2):
MINE FINANCIAL SECURITIES

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. I want to ask some more questions of the Minister of Finance around the Dominion Diamond situation, and I apologize. She doesn't have these questions before her. I know that, in her responses to some questions I asked earlier today, she talked about how the GNWT is involved in these proceedings and that they make sure that the court knows about the business interests at stake. Of course, we all want to see the mine continue, but one thing I didn't hear the Minister talk about was: we have a lot of workers at the mine site. Some of them are actually organized, as well, and there is a \$20-million deficit in the pension fund. Of course, we would want to make sure, I hope, that any workers who might get laid off would get proper severance and so on. What is the position of our government with regard to the workers and the shortfall in the pension fund at the site? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is one of the difficult parts of this entire proceeding, is that we see and we feel very keenly the fact that it is residents of the Northwest Territories who are going to be affected, and it is difficult when there are few levers that the government can pull to necessarily protect every single time every single employee who is being affected by what is happening with Dominion.

Again, we want to ensure that we are providing an atmosphere that allows that mine to reopen while protecting our environmental securities, but insofar as being able to do a lot in terms of directly impacting on the protection of those workers, we are not going to be in a position to do much, aside from continuing to advocate at the process itself, with legal counsel at the process, to explain to the court and make it clear to the court that this is not just one small mine with only a handful of people there, that it is actually a tremendous contributor to employment in the North, both directly of those who are affected, but also indirectly to a number of northern businesses. We are playing that role, we are speaking out, and I believe that our message is getting through. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. O'REILLY: I want to thank the Minister for that. I just hope that part of our messaging is that we have workers at the site. They do have rights, and we want to make sure that they are protected, because, if pensions aren't paid to these workers, guess what? They are going to come back, and they may end up on Income Assistance. It's going to cost our government something, as well.

I guess this really gets to the broader question of communications around what we're doing. I don't want to get into the specifics of the court proceeding, but the only place I can find any information about this is in the media and on the receiver's website. I see that the court protection has been extended now to November 7th. How does our government actually communicate what it is doing in terms of the court proceeding, and how is it trying to communicate that to the broader public, as well?

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: The court proceedings are public proceedings and so, to the extent that our counsel is present and speaking at those proceedings, that certainly is a public forum and a public arena where that message is being transmitted. Beyond that, I don't think I have turned away a single media inquiry to ask further questions about this. I have spoken to the media on many occasions about that and will continue to make myself available to do that, and I am more than happy to continue to answer the Member's questions here. It is certainly my expectation that that message is going out, and it is being made

clear. We're using every opportunity we can to get that message out.

MR. O'REILLY: I want to thank the Minister for that. I would just like to know a little more about how she intends to keep Regular MLAs informed about what is happening and what the position of our government is that is being put forward, moving forward.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: To the extent of keeping Regular MLAs informed, to date, the last couple of occasions where more information became available to the Department of Finance or the Department of ITI, in fact, I think the very last time that we received information in the morning, we turned around and got that out to MLAs that same day, within hours. We are going to continue to try to work on that kind of time scale so that, when we get information about what might be occurring from one of the parties that is relevant to these proceedings, we will turn that around as quickly as we can. As I said, in this case, it was within hours.

Beyond that, with respect to the position of government, with respect to the MLAs, we will certainly include that there. As far as putting out media information and media announcements, again that is, in fact, that same example. That same day, not only did we first get information out to MLAs. We then, within a few hours after that, got an information statement out to the media. While a turnaround time of hours, Mr. Speaker, is asking a lot of the staff and the departments, we have managed to meet that kind of time scale, and we will certainly continue to do our best in the future to do so.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. I want to thank the Minister for that, and I will acknowledge that, pretty quickly after some time she finds out about these things, she does share it with us. I want to give her credit for that. However, it seems to be changing almost daily or monthly, and I am just wondering what kind of lines of communication our government keeps with some of the creditors, Union of Northern Workers who represents some of the workers at the site, even the insurance companies that have the surety bonds, Dominion itself, if the Minister can speak in broad terms about the lines of communication with other parties around this issue? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Perhaps I am not sure if "irony" is quite the right word, but the pace of private industry certainly does often move quite a bit faster than government. It's a bit interesting that,

as a representative of government, I am being asked to try to keep up with what's happening in private industry. That really is the nature of this. There is ongoing communication between these private parties and an ongoing process of bids. In one case, one bid was withdrawn. We are certainly hopeful that another bid may well come forward so that, again, ultimately, this mine can reopen.

As far as communication, Mr. Speaker, there is an ongoing court proceeding. We always have to be conscious of that in terms of the kind of communications that we have and discussions that we have. There are communications open between the department and certainly with Dominion. As with any business or industry here in the Northwest Territories, that line of communication is there, similarly with the surety bond holders. Those lines of communication are there but certainly will not make me privy to the kind of internal conversations or negotiations that they have ongoing between them. Certainly, to the extent that we receive information about what is happening, we will certainly continue to do our best to make sure that the people of the Northwest Territories and businesses are kept aware once we hear that something is happening or maybe changing. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. The time has expired for oral questions. We will move on. Thank you. Item 8, written questions. Member for Kam Lake.

Written Questions

WRITTEN QUESTION 17-19(2): COVID-19 SPENDING IMPACTS

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have three sets of written questions today. The first is for the Minister of Finance, and the question is:

1. What has been the impact of COVID-19 spending to date, including the number of dollars that have directly contributed to our gross domestic product;
2. The number of businesses saved;
3. The number of jobs saved and/or recovered;
4. The projected impact of new or proposed spending; and
5. How many businesses and jobs were lost in the Northwest Territories as a result of COVID-19?

WRITTEN QUESTION 18-19(2): CAPITAL BUDGET CARRY-OVERS

MS. CLEVELAND: Mr. Speaker, the second set of questions is also for the Minister of Finance.

1. Over the last five years, what amount of the capital budget has the Government of the Northwest Territories carried over;
2. What has been the reason for the carry-overs, by category;
3. Do the reasons point to internal or external capacity challenges within the Northwest Territories; and
4. What gaps does the Government of the Northwest Territories identify to facilitate spending government capital dollars?

WRITTEN QUESTION 19-19(2): HOMEOWNERS INSURANCE

MS. CLEVELAND: Mr. Speaker, the third set of questions is for the Minister responsible for the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation. According to the Northwest Territories Bureau of Statistics, 42.7 percent of Northwest Territories homes are in need of at least one major repair, and Government of the Northwest Territories major home repair funding programs require applicant homeowners to have homeowners' insurance, but, because of the remote location and limited services available in most northern communities, residents do not qualify for homeowners' insurance.

1. How does the Government of the Northwest Territories intend to support homeowners in remote northern communities to access homeowners' insurance;
2. How many Northwest Territories homeowners do not qualify for home insurance because of their community location; and
3. How does lack of homeowners' insurance and associated disrepair drive northern homelessness?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Kam Lake. Written questions. Item 9, returns to written questions. Mr. Clerk.

Returns to Written Questions

RETURN TO WRITTEN QUESTION 14-19(2): CONTRACTS FOR WORK RELATED TO THE TALTSON HYDRO EXPANSION

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer): Mr. Speaker, I have a return to written question 14-19(2), asked by the Member for Frame Lake on June 10th, to the Minister of Infrastructure,

regarding contracts for work related to the Taltson hydro expansion.

A request was made to provide details of all the contracts entered into by the Government of the Northwest Territories for work related to the Taltson Hydroelectric Expansion Project, including studies on submarine transmission lines, from September 1, 2015, to present, indicating whether any of the contractors were or are registered under the Business Incentive Policy. There was an additional question about planned actions to maximize northern employment, training, and business opportunities in future contracts related to the project.

Mr. Speaker, in response to the Member's first two questions, later today, at the appropriate time, I will table the detailed list of the contracts entered into by the Government of the Northwest Territories for work related to the Taltson Hydroelectric Expansion Project, including whether the contractors' Business Incentive Policy status received any consideration in the evaluation of the proposals or bids.

Through the public procurement process, the Government of the Northwest Territories supports territorial and local content through the application of the Business Incentive Policy. To date, contracts entered into for the Taltson Hydroelectric Expansion Project have been very specialized and technical in nature. The Business Incentive Policy was applied in each competitive contract evaluation. Sole-source contracts and contribution agreements do not include the Business Incentive Policy as part of the selection process.

Mr. Speaker, regardless of the method of procurement taken for each specific project-related activity, the Government of the Northwest Territories strives to maximize the benefits to local residents and businesses from the project. For example, the two contribution agreements entered into with the Arctic Research Foundation to complete specialized studies on Great Slave Lake exemplify how the Government of the Northwest Territories and the project partners are working to maximize local benefits, even for procurement falling outside of the Business Incentive Policy. These studies will provide a wealth of hydrographic data, including detailed mapping, soil sampling, and lake-bottom profiling. Arctic Research Foundation's work was supported by local equipment, labour, guides, and boat crews, and was used as an opportunity to host local and Indigenous youth through the Northern Youth Leadership Program to develop leadership and life skills. Over a period of two seasons of work, the Arctic Research Foundation has spent \$900,000 on northern content.

Regarding the Member's third question, the Government of the Northwest Territories is advancing the Taltson Hydroelectric Expansion Project with the Akaitcho Dene First Nations, the Northwest Territory Metis Nation, and the Salt River First Nation as project partners through a memorandum of understanding that is expected to be signed shortly.

Mr. Speaker, the MOU will allow the four parties to work together to ensure northern employment, training, and business opportunities are maximized by using a collaborative approach to project development. In the lead-up to the signing of the MOU, the three Indigenous groups have, over the last three years, collectively received \$350,000 in funding to support their participation on a project working group and steering committee as part of the establishment of the MOU.

Much of the work completed for the Taltson hydro expansion to date has been of a highly technical nature, requiring the support of specialty consultant firms. As the project moves beyond technical design and towards baseline fieldwork, regulatory approvals, procurement, and construction, the skill set requirements will broaden, and the project is expected to provide more opportunities for northern businesses.

Mr. Speaker, ensuring that the benefits flow to Northwest Territories residents and businesses through the ongoing work to expand the Taltson hydro system will be an important consideration as we advance the project. It will be several years before this project is able to proceed to construction. In the meantime, the Government of the Northwest Territories will be working with its Indigenous partners to undertake studies, complete planning and regulatory work, and hold public community engagement sessions to ensure that residents and businesses can receive maximum benefit from this project. Quana, Mr. Speaker.

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

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer): Mr. Speaker, I have a return to written question 16-19(2), asked by the Member for Nunakput on June 11, 2020, to the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, regarding income assistance regulations.

The question was in three parts. The first part of the question asked whether "money, or the value of goods, in excess of \$500.00 per year, received by a person under a self-government agreement, a land claim agreement or an impact benefit agreement" was always considered unearned income for the purpose of determining an applicant's net monthly

income, or was this provision included in the regulations at some point subsequent to their coming into force.

The Income Assistance program has several exemptions that can be applied to unearned and earned income. These exemptions allow applicants to benefit from these types of income while still contributing to their household.

Up until August 2007, monies received through the Inuvialuit Final Agreement or other land claims were considered unearned income and were not included in the calculation of net monthly income. Effective September 1, 2007, these monies remained unearned income but were included in the calculation of net monthly income.

As of December 1, 2012, monies received through the Inuvialuit Final Agreement or other land claims were exempted up to \$500 per person per year. Further, in August 2016, any land claim payments for children were fully exempted.

The second question inquired about the rationale for including land claims beneficiary income in the calculation of unearned income, when Residential School Settlement payments are not included in the calculation.

Section 20(5)(m) of the Income Assistance Regulations states that monies paid in response to pain and suffering, such as Residential School Settlement Agreement payments, are exempted from the calculation of Income Assistance. Land claim payments are not considered payments as a result of pain and suffering.

The third question asked, if the Government of the Northwest Territories were to exempt land claims beneficiary income from being considered unearned income when determining an applicant's net monthly income, how much extra would it cost the Government of the Northwest Territories in Income Assistance for the current fiscal year.

At this time, the department is not able to provide financial information for the current 2020-2021 fiscal year since it is still in progress. However, during the past three fiscal years, \$1.78 million in land claim or treaty payments was declared, of which \$1.28 million was automatically exempted. During the 2019-2020 fiscal year, 1,032 applicants declared \$691,000 in land claim or treaty payments, of which \$491,000 was exempted.

If the Income Assistance program were to exempt 100 percent of the Inuvialuit Final Agreement or other land claims payments, it could potentially increase expenditures by approximately \$200,000 per fiscal year, which would be dependent on the amounts paid out by Indigenous governments. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. Returns on written questions. Item 10, replies to Commissioner's address. Item 11, petitions. Item 12, reports of committees on the review of bills. Member for Deh Cho.

Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills

BILL 3:

AN ACT TO AMEND THE PUBLIC HIGHWAYS ACT

MR. BONNETROUGE: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. The committee would like to report on its consideration of Bill 3, An Act to Amend the Public Highways Act. Bill 3 received second reading in the Legislative Assembly on March 13, 2020, and was referred to the Standing Committee on Economic Development and Environment for review.

On October 14, 2020, the standing committee held a public hearing with the Minister of Infrastructure on this bill. The committee is awaiting some information committed to by the Minister during this hearing. The committee thanks the Minister for her commitment to provide additional information and is looking forward to concluding their review in the near future.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, in accordance with Rule 74(1)(c) of the Rules of the Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Frame Lake, that the review period for Bill 3, An Act to Amend the Public Highways Act, be extended for 120 days. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Deh Cho. The motion is in order. To the motion. All those in favour? All those opposed?

---Carried

The motion is carried. The Standing Committee on Economic Development and Environment's review of Bill 3, An Act to Amend the Public Highways Act, is extended for 120 days. Thank you. Reports of committees on the review of bills. Item 13, reports of standing and special committees. Member for Frame Lake.

Reports of Standing and Special Committees

STANDING COMMITTEE ON RULES AND PROCEDURES:
MATTER OF PRIVILEGE REFERRED BY MOTION 5-19(2)

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. Your committee would like to report on its consideration of the matter of privilege referred by Motion 5-19(2) on March 11, 2020. To date, the committee has held numerous meetings to discuss this important and complex issue. A public hearing previously scheduled for October has been postponed to November 17, 2020, to allow the committee to further promote public engagement on the use of official languages in this Legislative Assembly.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Hay River North, that the review period for this matter of privilege be extended for 120 days. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. The motion is in order. To the motion. All those in favour? All those opposed?

---Carried

The motion is carried. The Standing Committee on Rules and Procedures' review of the matter of privilege referred by Motion 5-19(2) is extended for 120 days. Thank you. Item 14, tabling of documents. Honourable Premier.

Tabling of Documents

TABLED DOCUMENT 165-19(2):
GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHWEST
TERRITORIES RESPONSE TO COMMITTEE
REPORT 1-19(2): REPORT ON LONG-TERM
POST-PANDEMIC RECOVERY -
RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE GNWT

TABLED DOCUMENT 166-19(2):
GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHWEST
TERRITORIES RESPONSE TO COMMITTEE
REPORT 2-19(2): REPORT ON LONG-TERM
POST-PANDEMIC RECOVERY -
RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE GNWT

TABLED DOCUMENT 167-19(2):
GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHWEST
TERRITORIES RESPONSE TO COMMITTEE
REPORT 3-19(2): REPORT ON LONG-TERM
POST-PANDEMIC RECOVERY -
RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE GNWT

TABLED DOCUMENT 168-19(2):
FOLLOW-UP LETTER FOR ORAL QUESTION
340-19(2): DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following four documents: "Government of the Northwest Territories Response to Committee Report 1-19(2): Report on Long-Term Post-Pandemic Recovery - Recommendations to the GNWT;" "Government of the Northwest

Territories Response to Committee Report 2-19(2): Report on Long-Term Post-Pandemic Recovery - Recommendations to the GNWT;" "Government of the Northwest Territories Response to Committee Report 3-19(2): Report on Long-Term Post-Pandemic Recovery - Recommendations to the GNWT;" and "Follow-up Letter for Oral Question 340-19(2): Domestic Violence." Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Honourable Premier. Tabling of documents. Minister responsible for Finance and ITI.

TABLED DOCUMENT 169-19(2):
FOLLOW-UP LETTER FOR ORAL QUESTION
153-19(2): GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHWEST
TERRITORIES PUBLIC SERVICE SUCCESSION
PLANNING

TABLED DOCUMENT 170-19(2):
FOLLOW-UP LETTER FOR ORAL QUESTION
313-19(2): PROVIDING GNWT STAFF WHO
LEAVE THE TERRITORY WITH TWO WEEKS
SPECIAL LEAVE

TABLED DOCUMENT 171-19(2):
FOLLOW-UP LETTER FOR ORAL QUESTION
197-19(2): BUSINESS INCENTIVE PROGRAM

TABLED DOCUMENT 172-19(2):
FOLLOW-UP LETTER FOR ORAL QUESTION
224-19(2): DEHK'E FRANK CHANNEL BRIDGE

TABLED DOCUMENT 173-19(2):
FOLLOW-UP LETTER FOR ORAL QUESTION
268-19(2): SUPPORT FOR ENTREPRENEURS
AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT POLICY
FUNDING DELAYS

TABLED DOCUMENT 174-19(2):
FOLLOW-UP LETTER FOR ORAL QUESTION
333-19(2): BUSINESS ADVISORY COUNCIL

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table the following six documents: "Follow-up Letter for Oral Question 153-19(2): Government of the Northwest Territories Public Service Succession Planning;" "Follow-up Letter for Oral Question 313-19(2): Providing GNWT Staff Who Leave the Territory with Two Weeks Special Leave;" "Follow-up Letter for Oral Question 197-19(2): Business Incentive Program;" "Follow-up Letter for Oral Question 224-19(2): Dehk'e Frank Channel Bridge;" "Follow-up Letter for Oral Question 268-19(2): Support for Entrepreneurs and Economic Development Policy Funding Delays;" and "Follow-up Letter for Oral Question 333-19(2): Business Advisory Council." Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

TABLED DOCUMENT 175-19(2):
TALTSON HYDRO EXPANSION PROJECT
CONTRACT LIST - SEPTEMBER 1, 2015 -
SEPTEMBER 1, 2020

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Mr. Speaker, further to my return to written questions, 14-19(2), I wish to table the following document: "Taltson Hydro Expansion Project Contract List - September 1, 2015 - September 1, 2020." Thank you.

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

TABLED DOCUMENT 176-19(2):
FOLLOW-UP LETTER FOR ORAL QUESTION
259-19(2): RESPONSIBILITY AND
PRESERVATION OF THE GOVERNMENT ART

TABLED DOCUMENT 177-19(2):
FOLLOW-UP LETTER FOR ORAL QUESTION
317-19(2): COVID-19 PANDEMIC RELIEF FUNDS
FOR EDUCATION

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following two documents: "Follow-up Letter for Oral Question 259-19(2): Responsibility and Preservation of the Government Art" and "Follow-up Letter for Oral Question 317-19(2): COVID-19 Pandemic Relief Funds for Education." Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

TABLED DOCUMENT 178-19(2):
SPEAKING UP FOR FAIRNESS - 2019/2020
ANNUAL REPORT OF THE NORTHWEST
TERRITORIES OMBUD

MR. SPEAKER: Colleagues, pursuant to Section 43 of the Ombud Act, I hereby table the 2019/2020 Annual Report for the Northwest Territories Ombud. Thank you.

Tabling of documents. Member for Frame Lake.

TABLED DOCUMENT 179-19(2):
E-MAIL DATED SEPTEMBER 30, 2020 FROM
OUR TIME YELLOWKNIFE TO THE MEMBERS
OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY REGARDING
JUST RECOVERY FOR THE NWT

TABLED DOCUMENT 180-19(2):
EXCERPT FROM THE HILL TIMES, JUNE 10,
2020 - COVID-19 HAS MADE THE NORTH'S
QUEST FOR EQUALITY A STEEPER CLIMB

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, monsieur le President. I wish to table the following two documents: the first is an email from Our Time Yellowknife about Just Recovery for the Northwest Territories. The second document, Mr. Speaker, is an opinion piece in The Hill Times dated June 20, 2020, by Premier Cochrane, entitled, "COVID-19 has made the North's quest for equality a steeper climb." Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. Tabling of documents. Item 15, notices of motion. Item 16, motions. Item 17, notices of motion for the first reading of bills. Member for Yellowknife North.

Notices of Motion for the First Reading of Bills

BILL 11-19(2):
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OFFICERS
STANDARDIZATION ACT

MR. JOHNSON: Mr. Speaker, I give notice that on Monday, October 19, 2020, I will move that Bill 11: Legislative Assembly Officers Standardization Act, be read for the first time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. 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): Orders of the day for Thursday, October 16, 2020, at 10:00 a.m.:

1. Prayer
2. Ministers' Statements
3. Members' Statements
4. Returns to Oral Questions
5. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery
6. Acknowledgements
7. Oral Questions
8. Written Questions
9. Returns to Written Questions
10. Replies to Commissioner's Address
11. Petitions

12. Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills
13. Reports of Standing and Special Committees
14. Tabling of Documents
15. Notices of Motion
16. Motions
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 Friday, October 17, 2020, at 10:00 a.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 3:30 p.m.