



NORTHWEST TERRITORIES
**LEGISLATIVE
ASSEMBLY**

2nd Session

Day 38

19th Assembly

HANSARD

Friday, October 16, 2020

Pages 1277 - 1298

The Honourable Frederick Blake Jr, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

Members of the Legislative Assembly

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YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**Friday, October 16, 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 10:00 a.m.

Prayer

---Prayer

SPEAKER (Hon. Frederick Blake Jr): Thank you. Good morning, everyone. We'll start with item 2, Ministers' statements. Minister of Finance.

Ministers' Statements

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 63-19(2):
FISCAL UPDATE

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to provide a fiscal update, and in doing so, I want also to speak about one of the most valuable economic resources that exists across the whole of the Northwest Territories: resiliency.

The world remains in the grip of a pandemic the likes of which few people alive in the world today have any reference point to. Canada is currently experiencing a second wave. In the Northwest Territories, we are fortunate that, since the start of the pandemic, we have been able to limit the cases of COVID-19 that have entered our borders, but that comes with a cost; travel within the territory remains tightly restricted, and as a result, many sectors of our economy continue to be seriously impacted. This follows on several months of lockdown or near lockdown earlier in the spring.

I would venture that no household in the Northwest Territories is untouched by the COVID-19 pandemic. Similarly, there is likely no business or industry that has not faced, or does not continue to face, financial or human resource challenges. Many households, businesses, employers, and employees are stressed, scared, or both. That is the reality of the times we are in.

Mr. Speaker, the Northwest Territories has a strong history of resiliency. The climate is harsh, but people have thrived here since time immemorial. Costs of living are high, but people come and grow their families here. The cost of doing business is high, and yet we do continue to attract investment.

A lot has changed since the budget speech in February. Budget 2020 spoke to the importance of working within our means by finding internal efficiencies and using creativity and innovation to deliver our mandate priorities, even in a time of slow economic growth. The need for innovation and creativity is more pressing than ever, but in the current context, we must start from a place of resiliency to put innovation and creativity to the test.

Despite all of the pandemic-related upheaval, the core values we are using to deliver fiscal responsibility to the Northwest Territories have not changed. We will still work within our means to deliver not only on the priorities of the 19th Legislative Assembly, but also to ensure that people and communities across the territory are healthy and safe. We continue to seek creative solutions to these wholly unexpected challenges. We strive to strike a balance between all of the many diverse needs that exist.

Fortunately, we will start with some good news: signs of an economic recovery are appearing. Our job market has recouped many of the resident jobs that were lost, the labour participation rate has climbed back to its March level, and the employment rate has partially recovered. Retail sales are rebounding, with the Northwest Territories outperforming the provinces so far this year, and this consumer spending is supported by stable and high average weekly earnings. We are painfully aware of sectors in the economy that are still in serious hardship, but we are cautiously optimistic that we will have 90-percent job recovery to pre-pandemic levels by the end of calendar year.

Our own revenues will drop this year. We are forecasting significant corporate income tax and resource revenue declines, as the events of 2020 will likely continue to some degree through 2021 and work their way through the economy. It is simply not possible to give direct financial support to every person or business in need, all at the same time; but from the earliest days of the pandemic, we made efforts to immediately support Northwest Territories people, businesses, and communities by waiving a number of revenues, including airport fees, bridge tolls, and leases, which will result in a decrease in our projected revenues.

Despite these revenue losses, our fiscal situation remains stable thanks in large part to two facts: we have received \$92 million in immediate and very welcomed support from the Government of Canada to address the expenditure challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic; and in addition, Territorial Formula Financing provides a mainstay of fiscal support that will respond to current own-source revenue losses in future years. As a result of the new federal support, we are currently projecting this year's fiscal revenues to be \$2.2 billion. That is \$38 million more than what was estimated in the 2020-2021 budget.

That said, the pandemic has driven expenditures significantly higher as we implement measures to protect Northwest Territories residents and provide economic support. In total, we estimate \$170 million in new expenditures for emergency measures, including additional health care costs, income assistance, and other various forms of economic relief and supports for people, businesses, and communities. To better sustain our delivery of the crucial programs and services we have implemented to protect the territory from COVID-19, we are proposing this sitting to bring these existing functions together under a COVID-19 Coordinating Secretariat that will help us better meet demand, ensure more efficient use of the GNWT's fiscal resources, and provide a clearer point of accountability for the ongoing implementation of the public health orders. With respect to COVID-19 costs, the Department of Finance will publish cost information on its website to maximize transparency.

Regardless of how we deliver the pandemic-driven activities, all these expenditures will have a material impact on our fiscal bottom line. We are planning for the worst while hoping for the best, and we are including the projected costs of \$175 million by the end of this fiscal year in our updated forecast for this year. Even within this, we have tried to find efficiencies and innovative delivery methods, and to strike a balance between all of the many needs created or contributed to by the realities of the pandemic. This response includes \$31.7 million, that would otherwise be spent across departments, coming into the COVID-19 secretariat as, again, a single point of accountability and administration; \$72 million for other related healthcare costs, such as testing and supporting healthcare system capacity; and \$72 million for economic supports, including the foregone revenues. Taking the \$92 million in direct federal support into account, the projected net effect of the COVID-related expenses and costs is expected to be \$83 million.

Although these high costs are not good news, the GNWT has a track record of fiscal responsibility, as demonstrated again this summer when Moody's Investors Service confirmed our Aa1 credit rating

for the 14th consecutive year. Past financial responsibility will help us weather the pandemic's revenue and expenditure shocks in our medium-term fiscal outlook. We are committed to continuing on this track.

This commitment will require work. Our latest medium-term outlook projects a course which, if not adjusted, results in both an operating deficit in three years and exceeding the new borrowing limit. Despite a \$1.8-billion borrowing limit, our current path will start the next Legislative Assembly in violation of that limit. Resilience is not an accident; it must be consciously sought and developed through diligent effort.

We are paying for our COVID-19 pandemic response by shrinking our operating surplus, not by increasing debt and not by increasing taxes. The 2020-2021 operating surplus is projected to narrow a full \$143 million from the February 2020-2021 budget to \$60 million. This reduced position could impact our longer-term fiscal sustainability. But it is a response that should allow for short-term cushioning and, as a result, hopefully, more long-term resilience within our private sector.

The lower operating surplus will also increase our total debt to a projected \$1.262 billion by the end of this fiscal year. Had we not successfully negotiated a \$500-million increase to the federally imposed borrowing limit, this level would have been unacceptably close to the previous limit. Although the new \$1.8-billion limit will provide \$538 million in borrowing capacity at year-end, we need to be conscious of the risks of carrying too much debt. COVID-19 is not an excuse; we must focus on the difficult choices we need to make to live within our means, while providing the programs and services that Northwest Territories residents need, especially within the context of COVID-19.

During the budget dialogues that I held over the summer, we heard loud and clear that spending reductions are preferred over tax increases. By themselves, increasing revenues will not be sufficient and is frankly unlikely to be fruitful in the short term as the pandemic continues to impact markets across Canada and the world. Continued borrowing will be fiscally unsustainable, and letting capital assets deteriorate by starving our capital budget is unacceptable. The reality is that expenditure management will need to be the main pillar in moving the GNWT onto a sustainable fiscal path, but I want to be very clear: expenditure management is not the same as expenditure reduction. The budget dialogues participants gave considered suggestions for better expenditure management to improve our efficiency and find more value for our dollar. Now is the time to be creative and innovative. There is a path forward that will allow us to budget in a way that reflects the

values and priorities of the people of the NWT. That will have to be our fiscal path.

Last, Mr. Speaker, during the budget dialogues, I also heard many thoughtful comments from people making connections between health and productivity, between education and labour market participation, and between economic growth and government-revenue growth. I believe underlying much of what we heard is evidence that we are truly pulling together as a territory. This energizes me with optimism that we show resiliency, we will rebuild and provide a legacy for the future to realize the great potential that this territory offers. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Members' Statements

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON ADDICTIONS

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Addictions have a devastating impact, not only on individuals but on families and the community, as well. It is a difficult and sensitive issue, one that is hidden in the background, quietly discussed, provided some support, but never appears front and centre.

In the past several months, Hay River has had to deal with several events that included the tragic loss of local residents. The community has seen the hospitalization of others due to overdose and vehicle accidents brought on by alcohol or drugs. When events such as these happen, we immediately look to lay blame in order to deflect responsibility from ourselves. We try to remove it from what we consider mainstream society, when in actuality it is interwoven in the very fabric of society, and we tend to normalize it.

Mr. Speaker, I recognize and admit that I have limited knowledge in the area of addictions. However, I do understand that drug addiction, no matter what walk of life you are from, does not care who it harms or what agony and grief it causes individuals and families.

I have met with people who have drug addictions, those who experience mental health issues due to drug use, those families personally impacted, and medical staff dealing with persons detoxing. I strongly believe addictions needs to be brought to the forefront and provided resources to seriously address it.

Mr. Speaker, this government is providing some financial resources to address addictions, but

knowing that this government has no issue identifying \$87 million to address COVID monitoring and enforcement when no one has died in the NWT but is slow to act when it comes to dealing with a disease that is hospitalizing, killing, or destroying our family members and friends on a regular basis, I find this to be a travesty. This disease does not work in a vacuum. To fuel itself, it takes advantage of peer pressure, lack of housing, unemployment, mental health issues, personal trauma, effects of residential schools, and other realities. Because of this, I expect and look to this government to take a cross-departmental approach to address it. We must look for and action real solutions that work for the people of the NWT.

Mr. Speaker, I do not want to see another mother or father having to experience the death of a child because we are not doing enough to support the treatment of addictions. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON LONG-TERM CARE IN SMALL COMMUNITIES

MR. BONNETROUGE: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. The Northwest Territories has a growing demographic of people whose voices are often not heard nor adhered to. This demographic is the elders or knowledge-keepers.

Mr. Speaker, in my Dene culture, we say to the young to respect the elders as the young do not know what the knowledge-keepers have experienced in their lifetime. Many have experienced hardships in their lives in providing for their families but have prevailed in some way, and they have always had comforting words to soothe away any pains others may be going through. There is a term coined that best describes what one does not know of them: do not criticize a knowledge-keeper unless you have walked a mile in their moccasins.

Mr. Speaker, one of the mandates that this Assembly has identified is to assist the elders to age in place, that is to stay in their own home and in their home community. Families do not want to see their knowledge-keepers leave the community to be placed into a home in another community, a place where they are in a totally strange environment, that they did not grow up in, most of all, away from their families, the very people they have nurtured all their lives. We must not forget the many grandchildren who are left behind. Far too often, the children and grandchildren do not get to spend time with the knowledge-keepers who, in time, will pass, and for all that we know, they may have been lonely for family and aching to be in the community they call home.

Mr. Speaker, I will have questions for the Minister of Health and Social Services at the appropriate time. Mahsi.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON HOUSING REQUIREMENTS IN THEBACHA

MS. MARTSELOS: Mr. Speaker, since getting elected last year, I have assisted my constituents with a wide range of different issues, spanning all of the major departments of the Government of the Northwest Territories. By far, though, the one department I have dealt with the most has been the NWT Housing Corporation. In fact, I would estimate that roughly 90 percent of all my constituent concerns involve housing.

Mr. Speaker, I have noticed a concerning trend regarding housing in the NWT, particularly public housing. I am seeing a trend of mistreatment to vulnerable people, specifically for seniors and low-income people. As an example, just in the last two weeks alone, I have dealt with three constituents who are facing potential eviction from their rental units, two of whom are seniors. At a time during a global pandemic and with winter upon us, these sorts of actions by the Housing Corporation are unacceptable and must stop immediately.

Furthermore, I have also tried to help several constituents find more suitable housing for their situations. However, I continually, always, get a response back stating that the client's income is over the core net income threshold as per NWT housing policy. Anyone with an income above the core need income threshold is considered to have sufficient income to address their own housing needs, thus is ineligible for any NWT housing programs. Again, Mr. Speaker, this type of policy is not acceptable in its current form because people are falling through the cracks and are being adversely affected as a result. This policy therefore must be re-examined and changed because it is causing more harm and more headaches for long-term residents of the NWT, especially my constituents of Thebacha.

Another major issue with this Minister and her department is the lack of communication from emails I have sent to her about my constituents, along with my concerns, as ordinary MLA, regarding awarding of contracts that were done by the RCMP contract homes. In the last budget, there were funds allocated for two public housing units to be built in Fort Smith, which were not awarded, and contracts did not go out. I asked the Minister about this verbally and through email and still have not received an answer. I am concerned because there are major housing needs in Fort Smith. What

happened to the allocations of these funds for these two units?

Mr. Speaker, in conclusion, there are major communication gaps within the NWT Housing Corporation, and things have got to change. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

MS. SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We continue to see violence against our Indigenous women and girls, not just here in the North, Mr. Speaker, but across Canada. We have all seen recently over this time, during this pandemic, the loss of a young Indigenous woman from Yellowknife as well as another young woman murdered in Hay River. Outside the NWT, an Indigenous woman and a mother of seven, Joyce Echaquan, who went to the hospital to seek medical treatment, instead died while being treated like no person should be treated in a facility like that.

Mr. Speaker, in June, we were informed that an action plan to deal with the calls for justice had been delayed by the federal government, and in fact, it is my opinion that no substantial work has been done to the national action plan to this date. We also heard that, due to COVID restrictions in place, domestic and sexual violence has surged during the pandemic. The NWT has even received increased federal funding for its shelters to assist with this recently. During our last session, I asked this government to take the lead and develop an action plan, not wait any longer to give action to the calls for justice outlined in the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls final report. We need to do this now and not wait any longer. We cannot have any more stolen sisters.

Today, Mr. Speaker, I will be asking the Minister responsible for the Status of Women questions on what progress has been made on developing our own NWT action plan. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON CONTAMINATED SITES AND ECONOMIC RECOVERY

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. On April 17, 2020, the federal government announced

\$1.72 billion in financial assistance for the remediation of orphan and inactive oil and gas wells in western Canada as part of Canada's Economic Response Plan for COVID-19. On May 28, I made a statement in this House about the potential for the NWT to access similar funding, working in partnership with Yukon and Nunavut. The Premier provided some assurances that "remediation from mine sites has always been a priority." The Premier also said that a joint letter was in preparation to federal Ministers from the three northern territories to advocate for such funding.

Mr. Speaker, I have seen that letter, and it is a request for support for the mining industry with mention of accelerated funding for northern contaminated sites buried on page 3. What I have learned since is that there does not appear to be a clear lead for our government on this file, no specific asks, and little coordination.

To repeat what I said in May, the Federal Contaminated Sites Inventory shows 1,647 sites in the NWT, with an estimated assessment of remediation cost at \$12.375 billion. The GNWT 2018-2019 public accounts show a total of 285 sites under our jurisdiction, with a cost of remediation estimated at \$70.6 million. Our Premier needs to make this work a priority as part of our efforts on economic recovery and part of the emerging remediation economy here in the Northwest Territories. There are obvious links to NWT Indigenous economic development, businesses, and the proposed polytechnic university. Billions of dollars will be spent on environmental remediation at Giant Mine, Norman Wells, and numerous other sites. In many ways, we are pioneering new technologies, approaches, and partnerships that should be the envy of the circumpolar world and form a central part of the polytechnic university. There will be jobs created in many of our smaller communities and regional centres.

Later today, I will have questions for the Premier on whether she will make it a priority to secure federal investment for accelerated remediation of contaminated sites as a part of our drive towards economic recovery and diversification. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON HOME CARE AND LANGUAGE BARRIER FOR COMMUNITY ELDERS

MR. NORN: Marsi cho, Mr. Speaker. I want to point out that, during my constituency visits, I noticed some common themes in terms of gaps in our healthcare system, in particular dealing with the

elders and mobility-restricted individuals who needed medical assistance. I am happy my colleague from Deh Cho mentioned helping our elders age in place with dignity, and it kind of follows with what I am about to say.

Mr. Speaker, I want to give this visual to you. If you could picture yourself as an elder in a small community, as an elderly individual who might not have English as a first language, and you have an immediate health issue, and you need to be assessed in your home. If you are in a small community, you will be told you will need a relative or an RCMP officer to get you to the local health centre. This is a problem. What happens if you are in this situation and are unable to call out to emergency services, i.e. an ambulance, or unable to get a hold of a relative to get you to a healthcare centre?

If I could just get you to turn on your headpieces, I want to say a few words in Chipewyan. If you're a nurse and I'm an elder, and I'm in trouble, I tell you, my nurse, "[English translation not available.]" How do you respond to that? It's something to think about. If there is a language barrier there, and that's my other point, that's where I'm going with this, Mr. Speaker, we need to fill some very glaring gaps in our small communities in terms of response for ambulatory services. Some of these issues, in my opinion, can be addressed by easily beefing up homecare and CHR staff.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I want to commend our new health Minister on addressing some of my immediate concerns that she and her staff have already addressed since taking on this new role. However, my constituents do have legitimate concerns that do need answers, and I will have some questions for the health Minister at the appropriate time. Mahsi cho, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh. Members' statements. Member for Great Slave.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON 911 UNDERFUNDING

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. NWT 911 has answered almost 14,000 emergency calls. These calls come from every one of our NWT communities, even the smallest and most remote, such as Jean Marie River, Whati, and Ulukhaktok. What is more, NWT 911 has dispatched emergency services not just to NWT communities, but also to other jurisdictions such as Vancouver and Edmonton, even as far away as the Baltic States.

Mr. Speaker, we have all heard about two babies in Yellowknife and the one baby in Inuvik who 911 personnel helped to deliver, but due to the various

privacy laws in the NWT, the public never really hears about the lives 911 helps to save, the real impact of emergency medical and fire services dispatched through 911.

I can tell you one story of a community member who would have died slowly and alone without 911. One foggy day, the person had a serious car crash on a low-traffic road about 30 kilometres from the nearest community. The driver was so badly injured that they had to be medevac'd to Edmonton. The driver had happened to connect their cell phone to the car for hands-free calling and to listen to a favourite playlist. This action saved the driver's life, because automotive telematics do not call 111 or 2222, and cars are programmed to call 911 in the event of a bad crash. In this case, the car called 911. Let me say that again. The crash was so bad and the driver was in such poor condition that the car called 911. I can tell you that 911 was able to send help and talk with the driver, who was in a state of shock, for several minutes before the driver lost consciousness. The 911 dispatcher stayed on the call for 12 minutes longer before losing connection. Had 911 not been an option, that driver most certainly would have perished in that crash.

Mr. Speaker, imagine being a 911 dispatcher answering calls from people in distress, the worst calls possible, for 12-hour shifts. Most of the time, the dispatchers do not know what happens to the patient once the first responders arrive. The call is done, 911 hangs up, and the dispatcher goes on to the next emergency call. Imagine not knowing what happened to that stabbing victim you told how to stop the bleeding, that parent you taught how to administer life-saving drugs to their overdosing teen. Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to finish my statement.

---Unanimous consent granted

MS. NOKLEBY: That parent you taught how to administer life-saving drugs to their overdosing teen, or that caller you walked through providing CPR to their family member for 23 minutes straight when first responders were already on another call. Did those people survive?

Mr. Speaker, I am truly worried about 911 dispatcher burnout. Only five staff are funded, so there is only one 911 dispatcher on duty per 12-hour shift, answering over 60 calls a day. The Med Response program dispatchers who are to provide support to 911 often are too busy on their own calls or don't have dispatchers on shift. As a result, the 911 staff have to do a lot of extra shifts or double shifts. At times, 911 has been so short-staffed that the dispatcher on duty doesn't get meal or break times and has to run to the bathroom hoping a call does not come in.

The last government, desperate to get 911 costs below the \$1.70 per month subscriber fee, cut everything possible from the budget, even relief staff. The 911 program was directed to come back after the first six months of operation with a budget based on actuals, not projections. NWT 911 did return with a zero-based budget, asking only for two more staff, relief funding, and systems funding. The program would offer a total of seven full-time dispatchers. This right-sizing of the 911 budget was rejected by Finance, as 911 had not been operational for at least one year. As such, 911 continues with only five dispatchers, one dispatcher per shift. Besides answering 911 calls, 911 dispatchers dispatch Inuvik ambulance and Norman Wells fire; do officer safety with highway patrol; issue public safety alerts; monitor sea, land, and air emergency radio frequencies; and take 811 calls. That's right; when callers dial 811 and press number 5, they are connected to the 911 dispatcher providing an 811 scripted script.

Mr. Speaker, it's almost shameful. The COVID-19 secretariat 811 has nine operators, three nurses, four relief positions, and one manager position. They do not provide service 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, as 911 does. According to my constituents, callers can never get through to anyone, and I know that because I've called myself on somebody in my yard. Well, unless they press number 5 and get the 911 dispatcher. In fact, some community chiefs have called the 911 emergency line simply to get through to someone for answers, because they could not get through to anyone at 911.

Mr. Speaker, I will have questions for the Minister of MACA about why this government continues to undervalue and underfund the 911 service, a service that is clearly saving NWT residents' lives while free-flowing funding to COVID 811. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member. I know the importance of the topic, so I let you go on longer than usual, but in the future, a short supplementary extension there. Members' statements. Member for Kam Lake.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON COVID-19 SECRETARIAT

MS. CLEVELAND: Mr. Speaker, the majority of my constituents supported the swift responses of the Chief Public Health Officer that prioritized our safety in the face of a largely unknown virus. Today, we know more and know that our responses need to be sustainable, as COVID-19 has no end date. My constituents are becoming increasingly frustrated as COVID cases surge in the South and our COVID communications and policy implementation still struggle. The announcement of the COVID

secretariat wasn't well-received. We've been told there are 150 staff members, most of whom are GNWT employees on transfer assignments, of which 131 are front-line staff working with ProtectNWT, border enforcement, 811, and isolation centres. These positions have largely been filled since April and May, and the projected first-year cost is \$31.7 million, an additional cost of \$2.6 million compared to previous COVID response efforts.

Mr. Speaker, the safety of Northerners is paramount, and so far, we have been lucky. We have not lost Northerners to COVID, but this year we have lost Northerners to suicide, addictions, inter-partner violence, and illness, so I want to remain conscious that we not become tunnel-visioned by COVID while our demons demand more funding.

Today, COVID is still a global threat, but we remain accountable for a fiscally responsible government. I ask that COVID secretariat be both responsive to Northerners' needs and fiscally responsible and that we remember that this is an opportunity to build a sustainable model for any future state of emergency. In doing so, I expect that the COVID secretariat:

1. Be collaborative by working with local business owners, be fiscally responsible, and, moreover, empower business owners to act as COVID safety ambassadors;
2. Be consistent with fair and consistent policies to triage volume to ProtectNWT;
3. Be sustainable. Isolation centre policies must be reviewed to curb misuse, as they are our greatest cost; and
4. Communicate. I commend departmental communication staff, but clear, consistent, and proactive public communication needs to extend to all levels of government during a continued state of emergency.

Mr. Speaker, I don't have the difficult job of deciding appropriate risk for the NWT, where over a quarter of our population is considered high-risk, but I do know that my constituents want to be empowered and informed to support fair COVID rules and restrictions, and that our collective responsibility is to build a fiscally responsible and responsive, prepared government. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON COVID-19 SECRETARIAT

MR. LAFFERTY: Masi, Mr. Speaker. [Translation] We now have COVID-19, but since there will be a secretariat created with 150 employees at the cost of \$86 million, and I want to say a few things regarding that. [Translation ends].

The Premier's allowance of COVID secretariat with 150 new positions at a cost of approximately \$87 million to date to the people of the Northwest Territories. Contrary to a sphere of consensus government, the Premier has done so without consulting with Members on this side at the initial stage, Indigenous governments nor the general public, and also the business sector, as well.

Mr. Speaker, the secretariat that averts scarce resources from the 22 former priorities of the 19th Assembly, including such major directives such as universal childcare, increasing student educational outcomes, increasing affordable housing, expanding the economy, reducing the cost of living in the Northwest Territories, increasing economic diversification by supporting growth in non-extraction sectors, reducing the cost of power, and increasing the use of alternative or renewable resource energy.

Mr. Speaker, the NWT's initial pandemic response right from the get-go, which utilized existing GNWT personnel working within the home departments, has proven very effective. The government's new COVID secretariat abandons this proven cost-effective approach in favour of a new burdensome bureaucracy that promises no improvement, Mr. Speaker, at a vastly increased expense. Mr. Speaker, with that in mind, I will have questions for the Premier at a later time. Masi.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON INDIGENOUS PROCUREMENT POLICY

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If there's one constant in the modern economic history of the Northwest Territories, that is monopolies and foreign ownership, whether it be Northmart, Northview or Northwestel, or sometimes it's Chinese state-owned entities and American billionaires. However, Mr. Speaker, I believe that tide is starting to turn, and it is being led by our Indigenous-owned businesses.

It is often said that government should not be in the private sector and should not be in the business of business, and I believe that. However, there is an exception for our Indigenous governments. Built into many of their land claims are preferential contracting and procurement clauses. Our Indigenous development corporations, their private

arms, are some of the largest private employers in the Northwest Territories. Much of our GDP flows out of this territory, and we fail to capture the resources. The more we can do to support Indigenous businesses in capturing the GDP, that is a good thing, Mr. Speaker.

However, Mr. Speaker, we have failed to do that. We presently do not have an Indigenous procurement policy. We, as a government, have often failed to capture and uphold those land-claim clauses. Federal contracting allows non-competitive processes for Aboriginal businesses. However, we have failed to lobby the feds to make sure such contracting follows those guidelines. Our internal free trade agreements make exceptions for Aboriginal businesses, and the protectionist inclinations of many of us in this House are limited due to those free trade agreements, but not for Aboriginal-owned businesses, Mr. Speaker. There is much room to grow, and hopefully, those Indigenous-owned businesses can capture more of our GDP.

Mr. Speaker, the last census data showed that 50 percent of Indigenous residents had a job compared to 80 percent of non-Indigenous residents. Our Indigenous development corporations and businesses naturally prioritize hiring Indigenous people. Additionally, when they are successful, they don't pack up their headquarters and move south because they are inherently in it to support Northerners and support Indigenous people.

Mr. Speaker, I will have questions for the Minister of Finance about how we can implement a proper Indigenous procurement policy to capture more of our GDP and grow our Indigenous businesses to truly have a northern economy for Northerners. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Members' statements. Member for Nahendeh.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON EULOGY FOR SHARON PIERROT

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Sharon Grace Pierrot was born in Fort Good Hope on January 12, 1962, to Jean Baptiste Gully and Alice Masoonee. Sharon lived with her mother, Alice, until her brother got sick at the age of five. Then, she moved to live with her dad in Colville Lake. She lived with her dad until she reached the age of eight when her father moved Sharon and her sister back to Fort Good Hope to attend school. Each summer break, she would be taken out of the Fort Good Hope school and return home. She attended school in Fort Good Hope until June of 1997. Then, she went to school in Inuvik in 1979.

Sharon and Ronald Pierrot married in September of 1986. They have five children: Darren, Lisa, Matthew, Kelsey, Terrence, and five grandchildren. Sharon did various jobs in the community to support her children, including teaching in the school and working with the Gashnu Nahanni band office. Sharon and Ronald fostered many children, and this helped Sharon decide that she wanted to make a difference. She moved to Fort Smith to take the social work program. With the diploma, she worked as a corrections officer, a probation officer, a native customs adoption officer for the Sahtu.

In 2009, Sharon was diagnosed with breast cancer and fought it to beat it. In 2010, she was victorious in this battle. After the battle, she decided to go to Colville Lake to be a haul truck driver. After a while she decided to pursue a career goal and become a child welfare officer in Fort Good Hope. In 2017, she took a job in Fort Simpson as a child wealth officer where she mentored a number of new graduates, ensuring she passed on the knowledge she had for the betterment of the children under her care.

Sharon embraced her culture. Sharon could sew, hunt, trap, and do whatever necessary to live on the land. She wanted to teach those around her the importance of keeping our culture alive. She loved being out on the land, and she said that is the place you heal and find yourself. She was no stranger to hard work. She empowered those around her, encouraged those to use their voice for change if they wanted it. Sharon was the person that encouraged people to be kind, good to one another, and be there for those that needed help. She stressed we do not know what a person is going through.

On May 9, 2019, cancer came back. Through this battle, she was fearless and courageous, and she stayed positive throughout, continued to be selfless, preparing those around her for what may come. Her body succumbed to the disease, but her spirit and mind did not. To the very end, she fought, but in Sharon's words, "I cannot wait to see what heaven looks like. It must be beautiful. I get to see my parents and those who left before us. I can celebrate with them." She will be sadly missed. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Oral Questions

QUESTION 353-19(2): HOUSING

MS. MARTSELOS: Mr. Speaker, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation issued a public announcement stating that all evictions from rental housing units will not be carried out unless there is a significant matter involving risk to other tenants or the NWT Housing Corporation's buildings. My question is: will the Minister consider amending this policy to mandate a freeze on all evictions in the NWT until this pandemic has ended? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the Member for bringing this forward. I take this very seriously when we're looking at the evictions for our residents of the territory, but dealing with COVID-19, we have to take precautions, as well, and looking at the safety for the residents of our people that are occupying our units. For the eviction notice, it does go through a lengthy process, but this is something that I will be bringing back to my department. We are currently working on how are we going to be working with our clients who are ready for eviction or who have been through the process for eviction because they are given last chance agreements, as well, but we will be reviewing them. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. MARTSELOS: My next question requires clarity on how responses are given to constituents. Will the Minister consider changing the policy for how her department deals with constituents who are receiving threatening letters of eviction, letters of last chance, and treating our seniors and low-income people disrespectfully and undignified?

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you, Member, for giving this forward. Client service is a priority of the Housing Corporation, and it is something that I have been working with very strongly. Acknowledging our client service at the LHO and at the district level, as well, we are looking at also providing training and client service training opportunities for our employees and also looking at the evictions and the process and also working with the elders, as well. However, safety is a priority, as well, for the Housing Corporation. We do deal with a lot of low-income families, and they do come with very unique situations that the Housing Corporation has got to work with. We take each file, consider it of all the situations that may come with those files.

MS. MARTSELOS: There seems to be a communication gap between the Minister's office

and the local housing authority regarding threatening letters of eviction and last-chance letters. Will the Minister ensure that the local housing authority follows the direction of the public announcement in Fort Smith?

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you to the Member for the question. I will be providing the Member with the process that we do follow, that lead up to eviction, just to provide clarity, as well. I will be working with my department, and I appreciate the comments coming forward.

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

MS. MARTSELOS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Can the Minister give me a timeline for when I can expect replies to my outstanding emails and enquiries, specifically the status of the RCMP housing contracts and the two public housing units that were supposed to be built in the 2020-2021 fiscal year? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you, Member. The RCMP housing units in Fort Smith, five out of the six are currently under construction by the local Fort Smith contractors, and it is to be completed in 2021. The six units will be tendered in February 2021 and should be completed in 2021, the fall of 2021. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 354-19(2): MISSING AND MURDERED INDIGENOUS WOMEN AND GIRLS NORTHWEST TERRITORIES ACTION PLAN

MS. SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister responsible for the Status of Women. Will the Minister update this House if there has been any progress made on the development of an NWT action plan? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, I am very happy to be able to report back to the House. The special advisor, Sabet Biscaye, who I want to acknowledge for all the work that she has done as a one-woman, -person, really running that office. She has gone out, and we have hired a local consultant, Mr. Speaker. That person has a deadline of October 16th, by which point we will have a work plan. It has been very clearly instructed on my behalf that the work plan is meant to be one that involves tremendous engagement at

the front lines across the Northwest Territories. Once I have that work plan ready, I will be sure to share it with the Members.

MS. SEMMLER: Mr. Speaker, I am really happy to hear that, that there is some progress being made. Can the Minister explain or give a little bit of a timeline that we should be seeing this work plan and possibly leading into an action plan?

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Mr. Speaker, obviously, when the work plan comes to me, and I expect it will be coming to me at some point later today, I do intend to get it turned around so the MLAs and all Members of the House will have an opportunity to see it and look at it. It's our expectation that, once the plan is approved -- which, again, does certainly involve some collaboration and communication with the Members here. Once it's approved, we are estimating four to six months in order to have a draft of the action plan. That timeframe and the reason for that extended time really is because, again, this has to be something that is driven by the communities, by the residents, by those who are involved on the front lines, and I want to ensure we have enough time to do that and to involve that engagement. Again, subject to exactly when the final work plan is approved, which is, again, due imminently, then in four to six months thereafter.

MS. SEMMLER: Thanks to the Minister for that. I am going to be looking forward to that in four to six months. My question to the Minister is: how is this going to be kind of infiltrated into the departments so that way we know, when we look at the calls for justice, that it kind of filters into all different areas of the GNWT, that the GNWT would be responsible for actioning? Can the Minister just say how this direction is being provided? Thank you.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Mr. Speaker, this is truly a whole-of-government opportunity, and there are a number of departments that are all engaged in terms of a GNWT working group. There has been much discussion amongst the departments, as well, around really re-examining how we deliver services that are aimed at vulnerable sectors and aimed at women specifically. I do think there will be some movement on that, also, over the next four to six months, where we can really see a concerted effort and a more organized effort. It has been part of what, as departments go through business planning and then prepare their main estimates and budgets for next year, that is exactly part of the conversation we are having, so I am hopeful that, as we move forward to our next rounds of budgets and main estimates, that the Member will see that there is a reflection there of this becoming a true whole-of-government opportunity.

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

MS. SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do not have any more questions, but I just want to say thank you to the Minister for taking this seriously, for taking the calls seriously, and listening to the families. I am looking forward and I am sure the families are looking forward to how this government is going to protect our women, girls, and our two-spirited, queer, lesbian, and QIA.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. I will take that as a comment. Oral questions. Member for Frame Lake.

QUESTION 355-19(2):
CONTAMINATED SITES

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. My questions are for the Premier, who is responsible for federal relations. In my statement earlier today, I noted the potential for literally billions of dollars of federal investment across the northern territories as part of an accelerated program on contaminated-site remediation and economic recovery. It's not clear that my call for action was taken seriously in May. Does the Premier see this as a major opportunity for federal funding transfers? If so, tell us who is actually in charge of this work and how it's going to be coordinated across several departments. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: [Microphone turned off] ...department, which would be the Minister of ITI. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Okay. Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is certainly a priority that has been made very clear to me. I am happy to give some further update as to what has happened in the intervening months. There was a conference with the energy and mining Ministers of Canada, at which some of the national-level work that is occurring was discussed and an awareness that, given the funding that is now on the table from the federal government, there may be some shift in those priorities or reorganizing of those priorities. What we are doing here is a response to that, and seeing that that was out there, I immediately sought to have a conversation with the three territorial Ministers and did so approximately two weeks ago.

I did so in preparation for a call that the three territorial Ministers were having with Minister O'Regan just yesterday, I think -- my time sense is getting a bit off, Mr. Speaker -- but this week. I had

that call with Minister O'Regan. The call with the three territorial Ministers spoke about this issue. It affects the Yukon and here, but the Nunavut Minister, as well, was engaged. In our call with Minister O'Regan, we raised this issue. I had also had my own call with Minister O'Regan where, again, I raised this issue. Mr. Speaker, I also sent a letter to Minister O'Regan just a couple days ago, on October 14th, focused entirely on exactly this issue, on how the Northwest Territories is going to have access to this stream of funding, how we are going to participate in this area of the stimulus.

MR. O'REILLY: I want to thank the Minister for that update. In the joint letter that I saw on a pan-territorial approach, the issue of an accelerated contaminated sites program was buried on page 3, and it was really dressed up as support for the mining industry. I am worried that GNWT will simply see this federal support as a way to lessen the public liability we failed to prevent from a bankruptcy of Strategic Oil and Gas, Cameron Hills, and similar boondoggles. What assurance can the Premier give me that there is a real vision and concrete proposal for an accelerated northern contaminated sites remediation program with federal investment?

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: There certainly is a vision for this project. We do recognize, most certainly, that typical well abandonment in the southern provinces costs far less than what well abandonment and reclamation will cost here in the Northwest Territories or in the North more generally. Whether that is particularly because of access and the need to transport supplies, there is also significant environmental risk here, again, with climate change being on the front lines of the Northwest Territories. There is real, clear awareness that this is an area where we need to pay significant attention. In addition to that, we are also certainly well aware that there are a lot of coming opportunities for remediation economics here in the Northwest Territories, and if we can have access to the stimulus funding now, that will help ensure that people are being trained and given experience with more experienced reclamation companies so that they are ready to take on those opportunities as they go forward.

MR. O'REILLY: I want to thank the Minister for that. It leads very nicely into my next question. In my statement, I referenced that literally billions of dollars are going to be spent on remediation at sites like Giant Mine, Norman Wells, and across the Northwest Territories, and I think that there are some enormous opportunities here to build a remediation economy that includes training, apprenticeships, research, and more. All of that, of course, should be linked to the polytechnic university. Can the Premier tell us whether our government has made that link between federal

investment in an accelerated contaminated sites program and the polytechnic university?

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: I am happy to say that, yes, we have made that link. I think the Premier was prepared to take the question, Mr. Speaker, but it's because there is an overarching direction that is going on with this. I've had the opportunity to speak very briefly with my colleague Minister Simpson from ECE, and I believe it's out in the public and well-known already that our resources and environmental management is one of the pillars of the polytechnic going forward. Certainly, the fact that there is that link that has been made between ITI, where we can provide those opportunities in the industry; ECE, where they can provide opportunities in training; and, of course, then with federal engagement, if we can have access to this opportunity. All of those links are now, I believe, quite actively being made.

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. I, too, provided my own links and comments back to the Minister in terms of those areas of specialization for the polytechnic university. I guess what I want to speak about now is really that we still have a long way to go as a government to prevent further public environmental liabilities. We, of course, want to make sure that the polluter-pays principle is honoured and that current users do not use an accelerated contaminated sites program to subsidize or replace their own obligations. Can the Premier provide any assurance that our government will finally take action to prevent further public environmental liabilities and fully implement the polluter-pays principle for federal investment in an accelerated contaminated sites program? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Again, this is an opportunity to demonstrate the whole-of-government approach. The polluter-pays principle is certainly a foundation of the modern environmental assessment and regulatory regime that we have here in the Northwest Territories, and that is something that ITI, in terms of our involvement within our resource sector, is aware of and something in which the department of Finance is also involved, in terms of constantly monitoring those who are providing securities. Of course, it is the Departments of Environment and Natural Resources and Lands who work closely to determine an accurate amount of liability to ensure that, in fact, the GNWT would be protected against the need for remediation liabilities, should that fact arise, and that the companies that are performing their work here are adhering to all of those requirements, again, with that foundation simply

being that the polluter would pay. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 356-19(2):
911 ACTUAL OPERATION COSTS

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have questions for the Minister of MACA about the lack of transparency by this government related to the actual operation costs of the 911 program. The 18th Assembly placed a fee cap of \$1.70 per user per month for three years, regardless of the program costs. Will the Minister be open and transparent and provide the 2020 actual costs to the Members? Thank you.

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

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The annual report for the operations of the NWT 911 Program will be tabled during this session. This includes the operation costs for NWT 911 during the first six months of operation. The delay in tabling the report is targeted toward public safety being solely focused on COVID-19.

MS. NOKLEBY: One of the 19th Assembly's priorities is to reduce the cost of living for the residents of the Northwest Territories. Will the Minister guarantee that the GNWT will subsidize the zero-based budget of NWT 911, keeping the call-answer levy at no more than \$1.70 for the life of this Assembly?

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: The Northwest Territories 911 Act includes provisions to cap the call-answer levy at \$1.70 for the first three years of operation of the system. We are just entering into the second year of operation, so no change to this fee will be made prior to 2022-2023.

MS. NOKLEBY: Will the Minister agree to properly fund the NWT 911 before funding the COVID 811 service? When will 911 be funded correctly so that the staff are not burned out, doing double shifts, missing meals and breaks, and potentially compromising the residents need in case of emergency?

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: The NWT 911 service and the COVID 811 service are operated in two different departments for two totally different purposes, and accordingly, the budgets of these programs are developed independently. These are both important services to residents who need appropriate resources. The 811 service and the COVID agency is under the authority of the Premier. I will not

comment on the funding for the program beyond saying that it is important and I do support it.

The department is adding additional terms and relief staff to the dispatch centre to support existing staff. I also wanted to include that stress management training is also offered, and quiet rooms and fitness machines to alleviate stress. Online and phone therapies are available, as well as peer-to-peer support through Alberta critical incident network, and one-on-one counseling following critical calls and support from the medical professionals to intervene on particular trauma calls.

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

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Will the Minister commit to advocating with the Premier so that the funding for 911 that is not being provided properly is not spent on COVID 811 or ProtectNWT? Thank you.

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: I will have a conversation with the Premier in regard to COVID-19 and the 811, and I will follow up with the Member. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 357-19(2):
ADDICTIONS SUPPORT

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Recently, I talked to the sister of a young lady who was murdered in Hay River a few weeks ago. The sister I talked to is also married to my nephew. This shows you how we can all be impacted by events. She understands that her sister is gone and is looking for answers to ensure that something positive comes from her sister's death. She requested that I ask the Minister of health: what supports are available for young adults between the age of 18 to 30 who may be fighting addictions or drug use as there appears to be a support gap in that age range? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Hay River South. Minister of Health and Social Services.

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for the question. I realize that it's very difficult for families to come to terms with deaths due to addictions, especially in young people, and it happens much too often. For the 18-to-30 group, they would have access to all the same resources that adults have. Those include things such as counselling, the opportunity to go to facility-based addictions, the opportunity to come back and use on-the-land services, and other kinds of peer

supports. There is a full range of services outlined in the Mental Wellness and Addictions Recovery Action Plan, that was tabled in 2019, that are applicable to all residents of the NWT. Thank you.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: I had the opportunity to go through some of the government websites, and I noticed that there are quite a few toll-free numbers you can access to get support. I would ask the Minister: can she confirm how many calls are received on support lines, and how many of these calls are from Indigenous peoples? How many are from others? How many by community, and how is it determined if services provided by these toll-free numbers are actually working?

HON. JULIE GREEN: I appreciate that the Member was able to give me this question in advance because there is quite a detailed answer to provide. The Department of Health and Social Services operates the NWT helpline. It's available 24/7, and that could be for counseling. It could be for referral. There are a number of different functions. The helpline calls are anonymous, so people choose how much information to disclose, such as their ethnicity, their age, the community of origin and so on.

However, I can tell you that, in 2019, there were 697 calls to the helpline; 46 percent identified as female; 52 percent identified as male; approximately 55 percent of callers disclosed their ethnicity, and of that number, 19 percent identified as Indigenous. As I mentioned, people do not have to disclose where they are calling from, but the data says that 50 percent of callers identify as being from a rural community, which I would say in our context is a remote community, and 30 percent from an urban area. Because the calls are anonymous and the service is immediate, there is not a program of follow-up with callers to see whether they have additional questions. It would be on the caller to call the line and ask for additional help.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For the people in the NWT, and I guess maybe I am thinking about myself, as well, the more personal face-to-face meetings are usually preferred over telephone or videoconferencing, and I guess a lot of people are just used to that. Can the Minister confirm that the department has statistics on the preference clients have on how the services are provided and what are the most successful methods?

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you to the Member for Hay River South. Every two years, the department conducts a satisfaction survey related to the

Community Counselling Program, and it looks at a lot of different things: cultural safety, respect, access, how effective the services were. We have discovered, as you said, that people do like face-to-face services, but what we really had as an overarching message from the last survey is that there is no "one size fits all." Some younger people prefer the phone apps; others prefer face-to-face encounters; and others are content to be on the telephone. What I want you to know is that this is something that we track regularly, and the outcome is customer satisfaction. That is to say the people who phoned or who have reached out for help feel that they have received effective help. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 358-19(2):
LONG-TERM CARE FACILITY

MR. BONNETROUGE: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. My Member's statement spoke at length of our knowledge-keepers and the life they have lived in their communities while passing on their knowledge of the land to the next generation of their families. This Assembly recognizes the need to keep the knowledge-keepers to age in their communities and at the same time to keep their dignity as human beings.

Mr. Speaker, my community of Fort Providence currently has an abandoned former health centre building that would make an ideal long-term care facility for our elders. We can also make space for people with severe disabilities and offer other programs, such as the "A New Day" program, which targets male offenders of a partnership. Just a note, there are two separate entrances, so there are two separate areas of the health centre, and also a basement unit. My question to the health Minister is: will she make a commitment to turning this building into a long-term care centre for our community? Mahsi.

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

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am going to take that question on notice as I do not have any specific information about the condition of the Fort Providence health centre. Thank you.

MR. BONNETROUGE: It seems that only the larger centres get all the services and buildings, including victims' shelters, family violence centres, sobering centres, homeless shelters, and the list goes on. Can the health Minister make a commitment to look at instituting a small-sized, long-term care centre in Fort Providence?

HON. JULIE GREEN: Long-term care facilities are for people who need complex medical care from nurses 24 hours a day. They are people who have needs that are beyond families to provide. As a result of the level of care required, these facilities are located in regional centres, and that is a place where there is a broader range of services available and also a greater number of staff who can work with the elders. I realize it's important to keep elders in their communities, but I also realize that, in order to provide them with the care they need for their own quality of life, it may not be possible to do that in the community until the ends of their lives.

MR. BONNETROUGE: Mahsi for that, Minister. It saddens me to know that this government can spend huge sums of money on large-ticket items that are not a priority for Members on this side of the House. Every time a small community wants to offer programs that the larger centres offer, we are shrugged off, making large excuses of "You need qualified people." Those qualified people can be relocated or new positions created in the small communities to accommodate so that we can have this program. No, we cannot have something that will stimulate our much-needed local economies, that will include creating much-needed jobs. Can this Minister of health begin the process of providing all the small communities with the much-needed programs offered by the large centres so that our residents do not have to flock to the regional centres?

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you for that question. It is a priority of this government to help elders to age in place, and there are many things that need to be lined up in order to make that mandate commitment a reality. One is housing, that people have housing that is suitable and affordable for them to live in. The second is that we have a robust home and community care program that can visit more able adults in their homes and provide them with personal support worker services. That could be things like driving the elder to an appointment. It could be cleaning their oven. It could be taking them grocery shopping. It's whatever the elder needs to be able to stay in place. There is a drive now to expand the homecare services to better define what is being offered and where it's being offered, but underpinning all this work is the commitment to have elders age in place. That's where we're at.

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

MR. BONNETROUGE: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. As I have been going on about our elders, our knowledge-keepers, to keep them in our communities, this is so that the children, their children and grandchildren, and other residents of the community can have direct access to them

within the community without having to drive out-of-town or to another centre. If they go to another centre, you've got to understand from their point of view, the elders, the ones that are displaced into another centre, that they don't have family around. They're in a totally strange environment. They've never ever left the community that's the Dene people. They know the people. They know the land. They have all their traditional foods available to them right in their community. It is something that I really encourage you to look at, instituting into the small communities to help more. I know you're saying we've got homecare services and everything. That's just not enough. It's to house them into some centres in the community where they can be looked after, and we can hire specialized people to do the care for them. I'd really encourage the Minister to start looking at institutions, have programs for all the small communities in the North. Mahsi.

HON. JULIE GREEN: I take that comment.

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

QUESTION 359-19(2):
HOME CARE

MR. NORN: Marsi cho, Mr. Speaker. I have some questions for the Minister of Health and Social Services. Just to get some context here, just listening to some of the comments and hearing my colleague from Deh Cho. There's a clear picture here. There are some gaps here in our care for our elders. I gave that visual earlier in my Member's statement. There're some gaps here, and I think that we need to really step back and start looking at some of these issues. We've got to find whatever ways we can. Let our elders live in their homes. A lot of our small communities, we look after elders. We have relatives that come and check in on our elders. Quite often, we're not. To get some of the specialized care, there's a gap there.

My first question to the Minister is: if an elder is ill in their homes, what is the policy for local nurses on home visits? Mahsi cho.

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

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The nurses in the health centres don't make house calls. Thank you.

MR. NORN: It is concerning. I know there are some safety in terms of protecting our healthcare providers, our doctors and nurses from doing home visits. My second question: a lot of our small communities, there are no ambulance services.

What does this department do to deal with patients who need emergent care?

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you for that question. It's not the role of Health and Social Services to provide ambulance services. That's under the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs. I am assuming that community members drive one another to the health centre. That's probably the most common practice, and I hope that that would still be the practice. In the event that somebody doesn't have a ride close to hand, that person should call 911 and ask them for help to get to the health centre.

MR. NORN: Again, this picture has started to get a little more clear for me now, and I think it's important that the Minister of Health and Social Services and MACA do work together on these type of issues. I think it's important. A lot of our small communities, a few are on the floor or someplace and in trouble. It's going to be tough. You'll probably have to get a relative or the RCMP to get the emergent care. That's something to think about. My next question for the Minister is: what proactive measures is this department taking to dealing with patients who need healthcare in their homes?

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you for the point that we should be working together. I completely agree. What we're doing about homecare is that in June of this year, the Minister of the time tabled the home and community care review, and it made 22 recommendations for improving home and community care in the Northwest Territories. A number of recommendations have been accepted and implementation work is under way. Some of the other recommendations are dependent on other program evaluation, like the paid caregiver program.

What we're doing here is trying to, I'm going to say, rationalize homecare so that there is a clear set of services that are provided, that these services are available more widely than they are now, and that the service is provided in more hours than it is now, so that it's not just a Monday to Friday 9:00 to 5:00 service, but that there's some flexibility to help people, for example, get to bed in the evening, which they probably don't want to do at five o'clock. We are attempting to make home and community care more effective for people to age in place. That's our ultimate goal.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Final supplementary. Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

MR. NORN: Marsi cho, Mr. Speaker. That's good to hear there are some measures being put in place. There are these gaps. We still need to keep talking about them. We are still hearing them. I know you are in a new role, and already, we've got you to rise

quite a few times already. It just goes to show that there are some really glaring areas of need, like yesterday.

My final question: I think from looking at things, I think homecare nurses might be a good starting point in small communities. I know in my home community of Deninu Kue, we do not have a homecare position per se. Would the Minister commit to creating a homecare nurse position in Deninu Kue? Marsi cho.

HON. JULIE GREEN: The situation in communities without homecare is that the community health nurse is the person who provides the homecare in default. The allocation of resources is really dependent on the number of clients and the types of needs they have, so the allocation of homecare services is something that the department is working on. Depending on the age profile and need profile of people in your community, it may be necessary to assign additional resources, but I can't make that commitment today. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 360-19(2):
INDIGENOUS PROCUREMENT PROCESS

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I spoke earlier today in my statement, the Government of Nunavut has an Indigenous procurement policy. The Government of Yukon is developing one. Alaska's business development corporation has done amazing work in this field, and for some reason, despite having constitutionally protected land claims with human clauses in them, we have not developed a comprehensive Indigenous procurement policy. My question for the Minister of Finance is: will we develop an Indigenous procurement policy? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I fully expected a question was going to come about this in the course of this session. Short answer, Mr. Speaker: yes, this is going to be part of the procurement review. Slightly longer answer, Mr. Speaker, is that I want to make sure that it's clear that we will be doing this in conjunction with the Indigenous governments who have those rights in their land claims agreement. Yes, it's coming, but it's going to be coming and it's going to be done the right way, which is in consultation with the Indigenous governments. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. JOHNSON: Yes, and I fully expect this work to be done in consultation with both Indigenous

governments, whether they have that clause, and Indigenous-owned businesses. I recognize this is a large piece of policy work, but can I get a sense of when we expect that work to be completed?

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: I have a stronger timeline with respect to the more general procurement review that is scheduled to take place. Right now, work is happening to finalize a discussion paper around procurement; not just procurement generally, but procurement, negotiated contracts, northern manufacturing policies, BIP, all of that is going to be subject to this discussion paper, which will be coming out this month or next month with a view to engaging in public consultation and engagement across the board with those participating in the business area, with Indigenous governments, with the public.

My expectation is that that will produce some recommendations by March, with a view to having some changes ready to go by June. Now, that does not necessarily mean that the Indigenous procurement policy will follow that exact timeline, but that will be part of what is happening there. I will be able to give a better update on where that's at, again, once we begin that engagement. Again, simply giving myself, quite frankly, the leeway to acknowledge that, when we are engaging with Indigenous governments, I am not necessarily going to set that timeline unilaterally. That timeline has to be set partly through that process of engagement, but we are well under way to taking those steps.

MR. JOHNSON: I look forward to that work, and I recognize the complexity. I hope we can get most of this done by June, because we're about to pass hundreds of millions of dollars of capital and, every year we wait and we have not refined our procurement process, more of that money will flow down South. One of my concerns with this is that a lot of our contracts are 75-cent dollars. They have federal conditions in them. Some of our bigger projects, such as Giant Mine, are purely federal contracting, and I don't think this government has worked to lobby the federal government to make sure we are capturing and putting proper northern benefits into the federal procurement process. Can I get a confirmation from the Minister that this work will include a strategy for capturing federal procurement, as well?

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: I don't want to get captured with semantics. Being conscious of the fact that we have to be engaged with the federal government when we put forward any kind of procurement policy, and particularly an Indigenous procurement policy, the answer to that is yes. Whether it's going to be a specific federal strategy, I'm a little more hesitant to say, but I believe the Premier has already spoken at other occasions

about the fact that we are all tasked with being responsible to go to our federal partners and counterparts to discuss all of these kinds of issues. What I will say is that I will perhaps commit to providing a better update on exactly where we're at and engaging with the federal government on procurement. It is happening; I'm just hesitant to call it a strategy, but we could be more concerted in our efforts and more clear about those plans.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government in its mandate has a number of very large capital projects: the Slave Geological, Taltson, Mackenzie Valley. We saw a P3, which had a good start to Aboriginal business in its contracting. My concern here is also Giant Mine, which is largely federal-run. Can I get the Minister to provide an update on whether perhaps there is a way to speed up this work and put a little bit more of a focus on Indigenous procurement and northern benefits for our major infrastructure projects? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: I have actually asked that exact question about what can be done to speed the work up. What I can say is that, right now, as well as producing the discussion paper, we are also producing the work plan of how this will roll out cross-departmentally, with all of the different departments that are involved. One of the steps that I have asked that we take is to, in that work plan, make the process one where we will be in control of the timeline and able to pull those levers to ensure that the timeline at the very least stays on track, but ideally can move forward quickly. I do have some areas where I am hopeful that, before the end of this calendar year, we will see a few changes to procurement that we can enact even before this takes place, at least on an interim basis. So yes, we are doing everything we can to advance this and accelerate it. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 361-19(2):
COVID SECRETARIAT

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions today are for the Premier in regard to the COVID secretariat. The isolation centres in the Northwest Territories take up 54 percent of the total budget of the COVID secretariat, and so what I'm wondering is: given that the isolation centres are by far the highest cost, what is being done to mitigate this? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. Minister responsible for the COVID-19 Coordinating Secretariat.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are a variety of things that we're looking to do with this. We are, of course, making sure that we're working closely with the Chief Public Health Officer regarding corridors. Where she goes with that will impact on our isolation units, but there are things we're doing. We're looking at perhaps whether we can contract out the services and if that has the potential for better service and for cost savings. Sometimes, that happens. We do have, not a lot, Mr. Speaker, but I want to clarify, a few people who use our isolation centres fairly regularly. We're looking at how we can decide what we should be paying for, what things are mandatory, for example, medical travel, and what aren't mandatory, and how we will address those. Those are discussions we're just beginning, and we will provide to standing committee when we have concluded our results. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. CLEVELAND: I am happy to hear that because, although, yes, things like medical travel are absolutely a requirement for the government to help out with, there is some misuse of the isolation centres happening and it is an expense that is just really unaffordable for the people of the Northwest Territories. I did hear the Minister responsible for the COVID secretariat speak a little on contracting out services, and I'd like to find out more information about what the COVID secretariat is looking at contracting out to local businesses around the Northwest Territories. This not only increases the GDP in the Northwest Territories, but it also creates safety ambassadors across the Northwest Territories when we are educating, informing, and empowering people to help us do the work of safety in the Northwest Territories.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: The COVID secretariat actually houses a number of functions. It houses our border controls, it houses our enforcement for COVID-19, for the CPHO orders. It houses 811 and ProtectNWT, our isolation units, and our PPE for anyone who is non-health: our schools, our NGOs, our municipal and Indigenous governments. We are looking to see if we can contract some of those pieces. We have recently identified a local warehouse provider that has the potential to hold our PPE inventory, so that is one area we're looking at. I know that we've gotten questions on the floor about the border down south, in the Smith/Hay River area, Providence, so we're looking at how we can actually perhaps contract out some of those services.

There are areas, though, where we have to be very careful in contracting out; for example, our enforcement. Enforcement usually comes with a set of qualifications and skills. It's a very technical piece. You don't want just anyone showing up at people's doors; that's not a very good idea. We did hear about safety before, already, so that is some

of the concerns. At this point, we're not looking at contracting out our enforcement services.

MS. CLEVELAND: I was happy to hear from the Minister responsible for the COVID secretariat that there is an effort being made to contract services and supplies from northern businesses. What I would like to just stress to the Minister responsible is perhaps also finding ways to use our businesses involved in manufacturing in the Northwest Territories and making sure that they have the opportunity to bid on any form of a contract that comes through.

My next question is in regard to policies. I hear frequently from constituents, and probably the thing that they are most frustrated about is inconsistencies or inequities between policies, and a feeling of unfairness between who policies apply to and who they don't apply to. I hear frequently from businesses and also constituents that they are frustrated by the disjointed communication between the health and safety, the rules, and the government operations around COVID. Can the Premier speak to how the COVID secretariat is going to address these and is going to make changes to better serve the people of the Northwest Territories?

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Again, one of the major issues that we had and why we wanted to bring it under one agency, the secretariat, was because the components were all in different departments and sometimes the right hand was not keeping the left hand aware of what was going on. Under the secretariat, it does bring it into one area so that we are on track and we all know what's going on, working together. Communications within the secretariat, we have three positions, I believe, that were in that because, before, communications were spread between every department and, again, it was an issue.

With the secretariat, you will see that we will have better communications getting out there to the public. We will be emphasizing the services, reinforcing the orders, reinforcing the requirements, the safeties, et cetera. However, Mr. Speaker, there always will be some exceptions, and there will always be some things that people will say, "It's not fair." For example, compassionate exemptions, a lot of communities will call and say, "Why is this person self-isolating in my community?" and not realize -- and I will not get into some of the compassionate. However, there are real concerns that sometimes people have to be, for example, end of life, with their family members, so there are exemptions that are made. That will still happen in my expectation.

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

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This year, I am sure we will see differences in the actuals of departments versus what they had originally budgeted for, especially, for example, in the area of or the line item of travel. Public servants are not travelling as much as they probably anticipated that they would. Conversely, other departments are going to have much higher line items. For example, Health and Social Services is a great example of that. They are doing a lot more rapid testing and investing in areas that they did not anticipate having to invest in. What I am wondering is: what direction has the Premier provided to GNWT departments to protect against end-of-the-year spending and to address ongoing budget concerns of "if you don't spend it, you lose it," in order to be able to redirect these funds to COVID-19? Thank you.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: The end-of-the-year funding is not an issue new to this government. It's an issue that I think people have known about for years and complained about. When I was in the NGO world, before I came here, actually, I noticed that we always got contracts at the end of the fiscal year and did not have enough time to fulfill those contracts. It was always an issue. Therefore, I brought that up in the 18th Assembly when I was a Minister at that time, and I was assured by the Finance Minister in the last Assembly that they were on it and that they were watching it. I challenged them all the time, and I do take heart that that was done. In this government, as well, this has been monitored. Right now, currently, Finance is in the process of doing a detailed review of each department's second quarterly variants, after which a formal direction may be given by the Minister of Finance about unnecessary expenditures. We are watching. We are reviewing it. This is not something that we just started this government. It was started at least in the last government. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 362-19(2):
COVID-19 SECRETARIAT

MR. LAFFERTY: Masi, Mr. Speaker. [Translation] The COVID secretariat, I have questions. I had made a previous statement. There is a lot of information that the Northwest Territories do not know about. It is indicated that they will hire 150 new positions and \$86 million towards it. [Translation ends]. Mr. Speaker, I wish to question the Premier regarding the new COVID-19 Coordinating Secretariat that will cost us approximately \$87 million total today, today's cost. Mr. Speaker, the COVID secretariat is the government's original cost-effective COVID

response in favour of burdensome bureaucracy that promises no improvement at vastly increased expense. Mr. Speaker, would the Premier please list other options that she considered before deciding on the costly expansion of our government to form another bureaucracy in the Northwest Territories? Masi, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Absolutely. The COVID secretariat was not something that just came up and we said we are going to have a new agency because we had nothing better to do. It came out of trying to do the best we could. Again, when COVID-19 struck, every single department -- and again, I give nothing but credit to those employees who stood up and said, "I will help to try to save our residents of the Northwest Territories." They were doing it off the sides of their desks, some of them doing that full-time and trying to do their normal jobs off the side of the desk. It was unsustainable. Again, I know that I heard that we did not talk about MLAs, we did not talk to the Indigenous governments.

As soon as COVID-19 hit, Mr. Speaker, we met regularly. EIA met regularly, every single week, with the Indigenous governments. We had weekly meetings every Friday, and I know that the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs met regularly with the municipal governments, as well, because I went to some of those meetings, as well, Mr. Speaker. Every meeting we went to, Mr. Speaker, they said, "Provide more. We are scared. Please help us. We want firmer, more border controls. We want more isolation. We do not want them in our communities. We need to have PPE. We are scared. Tell us what to do. Give us a connection." We tried to accommodate, Mr. Speaker, and so, yes, the money did rack up. However, Mr. Speaker, we are talking about safety.

Then again, Mr. Speaker, when I went to the airport -- I still owe an MLA some money for masks -- to pick up some masks, and I had the opportunity to talk to the border patrol at the airports, they were very humble, but they said to me, "Premier, we cannot keep it up. It's not sustainable. We are working seven days a week. Sometimes, we are working double shifts trying to do it." I heard that, Mr. Speaker. I think that the role of this government is really to make sure that the health and safety of people comes first, and I take that seriously, my role in that.

The secretariat is not something that came up because it was something to do. We have not even had time to think of things to do. We have just been go, go, go. The secretariat came up because the Indigenous governments and the people of the

Northwest Territories were asking for more supports, and the people who were providing those supports said they could not do it. At the same time, Mr. Speaker, businesses were saying "Open up the GNWT." We had pressure that was saying, "Use your resources. Keep the borders controlled. Keep the isolation," but, "Get back to business." We can't do both, so we make a choice. If the secretariat does not go through within this supplementary, we go back to making a choice, Mr. Speaker: do we have business as usual, continue with these mandates, or do we focus on the secretariat, on the isolation and the border patrols? Those are tough choices I have to make. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. LAFFERTY: This is an area that obviously a lot of concern at the community level and public. I did not hear any support from the general public or Aboriginal governments to create an \$87-million bureaucracy, \$87 million that could be better well spent in housing, lack of teachers, special needs, all those issues at the community level, a real issue, Mr. Speaker. It boggles me that we are creating this "Taj Mahal" bureaucracy. It's unthinkable. Mr. Speaker, this was not part of 22 mandates. Mr. Speaker, did we engage the public prior to the prospect of creating another form of bureaucracy for the COVID secretariat?

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: The Member is absolutely right: the secretariat was not in our priorities or mandate, and COVID-19 was not in our priorities or the mandate. I think, if it was, we might have changed our priorities and our mandates. However, we have what we have, so we go forward. Mr. Speaker, again I take ownership because some things we were trying to get off, we were trying to do, everybody was scrambling to make sure we had services in place, and we knew that some of the services on our side were breaking down. Things were coming really fast. The structures were not as good as we were used to. I made the wrong assumption and assumed on the other side that the structures were still the same, so we did offer to standing committee -- in fairness, it was buried between a letter that said, "This is what we're doing, if you'd like to see more about how we need to reorganize the structure." I take ownership for that; that's true, but we did offer one. It said, "We don't have a lot of stuff. We don't need this briefing." When it came back to me from my staff and they said, "We don't need the briefing," I said, "That doesn't make sense. How can they not need the briefing?"

Again, I would say it was buried in a letter, and I think it was misinformed. So we sent another offer to standing committee. At that time, standing committee accepted it and we presented. The normal process back in the day used to be that we would go to standing committee; we would provide the documents; they would give us feedback; we'd

take it back; we would work on it; we would go back to standing committee, give the details, give and take; and then we'd go public. We didn't have the benefit of that. The first instance of going to standing committee, it was live, so we didn't have a very good communications plan. We didn't go to the public yet out of respect, due process, is that we usually work with our MLAs first. Again, I take ownership on our side, but I also say that we tried.

MR. LAFFERTY: "Tried" is not good enough. The Minister of Finance made a statement earlier today talking about not directly benefiting all NWT businesses. We can have direct benefits to all NWT businesses if we are open-minded to boost our economy. I'll give you an example. There are 3,000 businesses throughout the Northwest Territories. Out of the \$87 million, \$87 million in my language is [English translation not available]. That is a lot of money. Seriously, just imagine granting \$29,000 to each business in the Northwest Territories. That will cover all Northwest Territories businesses to boost our economy. That's what we should be focusing on, not this secretariat. MACA has been doing well since March. Creating another 150 positions; the Premier is saying, "It's not new positions." Obviously, it's new positions, newly created bureaucracy. This, I don't think, came in August or September. I'm sure it's been talked about, but just the lack of engagement and consultation with the public just boggles my mind.

The next question I do have is: how does the Premier reconcile this massive expense with an urgent, unfulfilled needs of our business sector that I spoke to earlier, that can boost our economy, that can do a lot more than what we are proposing here as a government?

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: I said that you will see that the supps will be coming later, and if the Members don't decide to support it, then we have to go back to doing what we can. Yes, we could give \$29,000, I think the Member said, to every business and not have border controls, not have isolation units, not give out PPE to our students, to our kids at most highest risk. We can do all that, but does it make sense? COVID-19 is raging in the South. They're in their second wave. The numbers every day are increasing. Should we not put our isolation units and our border controls and our enforcement and our PPE for people first? That's the question. If MLAs think that I should stop everything else that the secretariat is doing and give \$29,000 to each business, tell me that.

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

MR. LAFFERTY: Masi, Mr. Speaker. Obviously, I am not getting anywhere with this. The Premier and the government need to start listening to the people

of the Northwest Territories and the Members around the table, here. We are here to make a difference. We have identified 22 mandates. We are not here to dictate and say, "This is good for you." I, for one, feel that our Premier is doing that to our Northwest Territories, that this is good for you and we need to do this. I totally disagree with that process. Again, I'd like to refer back. This Assembly identified 22 priorities to be pursued over the next four-year term, priorities such as increasing graduation rates, which is badly needed. It's a huge challenge in our communities, small isolated communities especially. Increasing affordable housing is another one. I can go on and on with the list of the 22, but I do have a last question: what consideration has the Premier given to the effect of this \$87-million expenditure on the prospects of advancing those critical priorities? How will the Premier account for these massive expenditures if they set back those 22 priority areas? Masi, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: I hear the MLA. We do have priorities that we have to get on with. We have normal business that we have to get on with. When we first started with the COVID response, you're right, we did not go to the public when COVID-19 hit and the Chief Public Health Officer said we're shutting things down, we're tightening up. We didn't have time to do proper consultation with the public, to do proper consultation with Indigenous governments, municipal governments, all applicable stakeholders. We need to have those border controls now. I am all about stakeholder engagement. Ask any Minister here. I say it all the time, but in this case, we did not have time to do proper consultation. The best we could do was ask all the Indigenous and municipal governments to come together and work as governments together to define how we went forward.

Yes, there are other priorities. At this point, we have not said we're cutting any from the other priorities. That hasn't been a discussion that I've heard at our tables. We are still on track. We're still trying to do business as normal. Again, if that is the reason that they will say, "Take her out," then take me out because health and safety is priority. I have an obligation as the Premier of the Northwest Territories to make sure that the health and safety of our residents comes first, and I will hold that to my end. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Honourable Premier. The time has expired for oral questions. Item 8, written questions. Item 9, returns to written questions. Item 10, replies to Commissioner's address. Item 11, petitions. Item 12, reports of committees on the review of bills. Item 13, reports of standing and special committees. Item 14, tabling of documents. Minister of Finance.

Tabling of Documents

TABLED DOCUMENT 181-19(2):
CAPITAL ESTIMATES 2021-2022

TABLED DOCUMENT 182-19(2):
NWT LIQUOR LICENSING BOARD 66TH ANNUAL
REPORT 2019-2020

TABLED DOCUMENT 183-19(2):
66TH ANNUAL REPORT 2019-2020 NORTHWEST
TERRITORIES LIQUOR AND CANNABIS
COMMISSION

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following three documents: "Capital Estimates 2021-2022;" "NWT Liquor Licensing Board 66th Annual Report 2019-2020;" and "66th Annual Report 2019/20 Northwest Territories Liquor and Cannabis Commission." Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Tabling of documents. Minister of Environment and Natural Resources.

TABLED DOCUMENT 184-19(2):
2019-2020 NWT WATER STEWARDSHIP
STRATEGY PROGRESS REVIEW SUMMARY

TABLED DOCUMENT 185-19(2):
NWT CUMULATIVE IMPACT MONITORING
PROGRAM 2019-2020 ANNUAL REPORT

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table the following two documents: "2019-2020 NWT Water Stewardship Strategy Progress Review Summary;" and "NWT Cumulative Impact Monitoring Program 2019/20 Annual Report." Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Notices of Motion

MOTION 16-19(2):
 REFERRAL OF TABLED DOCUMENTS 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; AND
 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

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. I give notice that, on Tuesday, October 20, 2020, I will move the following motion: now therefore I move, seconded by the Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes, that 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; and 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 be referred to Committee of the Whole for consideration. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. Notices of motion. Item 16, motions. Item 17, notices of motion for first reading of bills. Item 18, first reading of bills. Item 19, second reading of bills. Item 20, consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters, Tabled Document 137-19(2), Capital Estimates 2021-2022, with Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes in the chair.

Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters

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

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

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): I will rise and report progress.

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

Report of Committee of the Whole

MS. SEMMLER: Mr. Speaker, your committee has been considering Tabled Document 181-19(2), Capital Estimates 2021-2022, and would like to report progress.

MR. SPEAKER: Report progress. The motion is in order. Do we have a seconder? Member for Yellowknife North. All those in favour? All those opposed? Motion is carried.

---Carried

Thank you. It's day one. 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 Monday, October 19, 2020, at 1:30 p.m.:

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

18. First Reading of Bills

- Bill 11, Legislative Assembly Officers Standardization Act

19. Second Reading of Bills

20. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters

- Tabled Document 181-19(2), Capital Estimates 2021-2022

21. Report of Committee of the Whole

22. Third Reading of Bills

23. Orders of the Day

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Clerk, this House stands adjourned until Monday, October 19, 2020, at 1:30 p.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 12:00 p.m.