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**LEGISLATIVE  
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**HANSARD**

**Tuesday, October 20, 2020**

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**The Honourable Frederick Blake Jr, Speaker**

# Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

## Members of the Legislative Assembly

### Speaker

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

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**Hon. Diane Archie**

(Inuvik Boot Lake)  
*Deputy Premier*  
*Minister of Infrastructure*  
*Minister responsible for NWT Power Corporation*

**Mr. Ronald Bonnetrouge**

(Deh Cho)

**Ms. Caitlin Cleveland**

(Kam Lake)

**Hon. Paulie Chinna**

(Sahtu)  
*Minister responsible for NWT Housing Corporation*  
*Minister responsible for Homelessness*  
*Minister responsible for Youth*  
*Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs*  
*Minister responsible for Youth*

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*Minister of Executive and Indigenous Affairs*  
*Minister responsible for the Covid-19 Secretariat*

**Hon. Julie Green**

(Yellowknife Centre)  
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(Nunakput)

**Mr. Rylund Johnson**

(Yellowknife North)

**Mr. Jackson Lafferty**

(Monfwi)

**Ms. Frieda Martselos**

(Thebacha)

**Ms. Katrina Nokleby**

(Great Slave)

**Mr. Steve Norn**

(Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh)

**Mr. Kevin O'Reilly**

(Frame Lake)

**Ms. Lesa Semmler**

(Inuvik Twin Lakes)

**Hon. R.J. Simpson**

(Hay River North)  
*Government House Leader*  
*Minister of Education, Culture & Employment*  
*Minister of Justice*  
*Minister responsible for the Public Utilities Board*

**Mr. Rocky Simpson**

(Hay River South)

**Hon. Shane Thompson**

(Nahendeh)  
*Minister of Environment and Natural Resources*  
*Minister of Lands*  
*Minister responsible for the Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission*

**Hon. Caroline Wawzonek**

(Yellowknife South)  
*Minister of Finance*  
*Minister responsible for the Status of Women*  
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**YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES****Tuesday, October 20, 2020****Members Present**

Hon. Diane Archie, Hon. Frederick Blake Jr, Mr. Bonnetrouge, Hon. Paulie Chinna, Ms. Cleveland, Hon. Caroline Cochrane, Hon. Julie Green, Mr. Jacobson, 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

**Prayer**

---Prayer

**SPEAKER (Hon. Frederick Blake Jr):** Colleagues, before we begin, I just want to say a few words. Today is a difficult day in Fort McPherson. We have a funeral there for Deborah Kendi Blake. Thoughts and prayers are with the community. During these times, our communities, especially here in the North really pull together to help one another. Our thoughts and prayers are with them, and I'm sorry I couldn't be there today as I usually am when I can be. Just know that we're thinking of you all, especially through the days ahead. Keep them in prayers. Mahsi.

Item 2, Ministers' statements. Minister of Environment and Natural Resources.

**Ministers' Statements**

**MINISTER'S STATEMENT 67-19(2):  
WATER MONITORING**

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Department of Environment and Natural Resources is responsible for the implementation of the NWT Water Stewardship Strategy, including transboundary water management agreements and water monitoring throughout the Northwest Territories. Together with our partners, we track long-term trends and monitor changes in water quality, quantity, and biology.

In March of this year, the Government of Canada shut down its labs and suspended long-term water quality monitoring across Canada due to concerns related to COVID-19. The Alberta government also suspended monitoring water quality at that time throughout the province. This included some key monitoring sites that are part of our transboundary agreement with Alberta. These sites are part of an early warning system which lets us know about changes to the water before the Northwest Territories border.

Mr. Speaker, as soon as we heard about this decision, I along with Environment and Natural

Resources officials reached out to the governments of Alberta and Canada, to explain the importance of reinstating this very important monitoring. We also worked closely with the Government of Canada to resume water monitoring at key federal long-term monitoring sites.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to report that the monitoring that makes up our early warning system is now back up and running. The Alberta government resumed its monitoring in June, and oil sands monitoring has been in place since August. Environment and Natural Resources quickly adapted its fieldwork procedures so it could continue to monitor water in the Northwest Territories safely during the pandemic with only slight delays, and for this, the department should be commended. Our transboundary agreements are the most comprehensive of their kind. In addition to the commitments on water quality and quantity, these agreements also recognize the importance of biological indicators and traditional knowledge. Triggers set under the agreements, which are reported on in annual reports, help ensure that any issues that could put Northwest Territories waters at risk can be addressed early on.

Mr. Speaker, water levels this year across parts of the Mackenzie River Basin have been very high. Water levels on Great Slave Lake were higher than we had seen. This has caused changes in the water. More dirt or sediment is being washed into the lakes and rivers, and there was a larger plume of sediment in Great Slave Lake lasting later in the season. Higher sediment has also resulted in higher concentrations of metals, in some cases the highest levels ever recorded in the Slave and Hay Rivers. Although total metal concentrations are higher than usual, they are not in a form that is readily available to be taken up by aquatic species. The work to analyze water samples gathered this summer is ongoing, and we plan to release the results as they are available. Environment and Natural Resources is working with our neighbours in Alberta and British Columbia to better understand the contributions from upstream watersheds to water levels in Great Slave Lake, including the role of the Bennett Dam in British Columbia.

Many Northerners are wondering what will happen to water levels this winter. We already know the

high-water levels are mostly due to more rain and snow across Alberta and the southern Northwest Territories; some areas received up to twice as much rain this year. Environment and Natural Resources is taking a closer look at the factors affecting water levels and will release the results of this work once complete.

Mr. Speaker, the health of our water is of critical importance to the residents of the Northwest Territories. Environment and Natural Resources will continue to collaborate with our transboundary partners to manage water resources in a sustainable manner to maintain the ecological integrity of the Mackenzie River Basin, for present and future generations.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister. Ministers' statements. Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs.

#### MINISTER'S STATEMENT 68-19(2): SUPPORTING MUNICIPALITIES

**HON. PAULIE CHINNA:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to update the Members on the progress we have made with our mandate commitment to reduce the municipal funding gap by \$5 million in the lifetime of this government. We recognize the important role that the community governments play in our economy and the provision of core programs and services. Community governments are essential partners in delivering programs and services to meet the needs of NWT residents, and they require adequate resources for this important work. I am pleased to confirm that we are making progress on this mandate commitment. In the fiscal year, we added \$2.6 million to community funding, and we will continue to seek additional increases in future budgets.

Mr. Speaker, this additional community government funding is welcoming news to our community governments. Since its beginning, MACA has worked with the Northwest Territories Association of Communities and its members on the funding strategy. As part of the ongoing engagement, we are determining how best to allocate the \$2.6 million. The Government of the Northwest Territories is matched by the federal investment in safe restart funding for municipalities. This winter, we will be rolling out approximately \$4.7 million to help our communities put in place appropriate precautions to manage public spaces and critical services and safely restart operations. Reducing the municipal funding gap is not only just about adding funding. It is also about supporting communities to provide new opportunities to raise additional revenues and to reduce or stabilize the cost of delivering core services.

Mr. Speaker, three key initiatives the department is advancing to support community governments in these areas are:

1. MACA is working with other Government of the Northwest Territories departments on processing guides on how to transfer land within municipal boundaries. I expect to share the draft this winter. This guide will set the path for providing community governments to acquire ownership and manage land currently held by the GNWT within their boundaries. Community governments will have the ability to take over management functions and enforcement and, if it desires, sell land, which offers an opportunity for own-source revenue.
2. The department is supporting communities to find efficiencies in their program delivery. Assisting communities to put in place response plans through the asset management system will improve maintenance and lower the costs of equipment failures and emergency repairs. This will allow community leaders to have access to improved information when making investment decisions and be able to maximize their available resources.
3. The Northwest Territories waste water resource management strategy has a strong focus for community governments. MACA will be working with communities to eliminate hazardous waste stockpiles within their solid-waste sites. Resources and supports that have for community governments in solid waste management are being adapted. Through better management, better operations of their solid-waste sites will not only improve environment stewardship but can significantly increase the lifespan of community sites and defer the needs for costly investment.

Mr. Speaker, some community governments face significant pressures to deliver quality programs and services. We see that. We get it. Through our increased investment and support for land management and facility management, we are working hard to help communities manage these challenges. 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 BEAR ATTACK IN HAY RIVER

**MR. ROCKY SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Most of us in the NWT understand that we co-exist with the wildlife that surrounds us. At times, the two

worlds collide, which can result with the injury or worse, a fatality.

Mr. Speaker, last Friday, we all received notice that, in the early hours of the morning, a young lady in Hay River was mauled by a bear in a residential area. What transpired is nothing short of heroism. Shelley Wood, a female occupant of the residence who just received her knitting supplies earlier that day, decided to stay up late and start the process of making use of those supplies. Whether or not it was fate that she stayed up, it was fortunate that she did. It was around 2:30 am in the morning that she heard a commotion outside.

Mr. Speaker, upon looking through a window onto the deck, she witnessed a person being viciously attacked by a bear. At that point, she picked up some boots, went outside, and threw them at the bear. Realizing the bear was not backing down, she ran back in, yelling for help from her spouse, Roy Helmer. Roy, unaware of what was really happening, awoke from a deep sleep and sprang into action. Without hesitation, he ran outside and saw that the bear was dragging the girl down the stairs. He grabbed another boot and threw it at the bear. The bear would not back away from the young lady. Roy grabbed a heavy cement statue and went after the bear. He threw the statue at the bear, hitting it, causing the bear to release the young lady and momentarily retreat. This provided Roy the time he needed to pull the young lady to the safety of his home.

Mr. Speaker, the combined actions of Roy Helmer and Shelley Wood saved this young lady's life. The young lady was fortunate to have survived such a vicious bear attack. She has since been transported to Edmonton for medical treatment. I would like her and her family to know that they are in our thoughts and prayers.

Mr. Speaker, without thought for their own safety, Roy Helmer and Shelley Wood rushed to the aid of the young lady in distress. If ever there was an event that shows heroism, this is such an event. I would like to recognize and have this House show our appreciation to both Roy Helmer and Shelley Wood for unselfishly placing themselves in harm's way to save the life of this young lady. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

---Applause

**MR. SPEAKER:** Members' statements. Member for Deh Cho.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON  
AUDIT REPORT ON EDUCATION, CULTURE  
AND EMPLOYMENT

**MR. BONNETROUGE:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. The Department of Education, Culture and Employment is responsible for the Northwest Territories education system from junior kindergarten to grade 12, which includes all of the small communities. I realize the department does not deliver the education services directly to the students. As they have stated on many occasions, that is the responsibility of the regional education boards. This is like passing the buck so they would not have to take responsibility even for oversight.

Mr. Speaker, the Education Act states that students must have access to the highest possible standards of education programs. The department is responsible to ensure that all students have equal access to education programs and services. High-quality education delivered by well-trained and knowledgeable educators prepares students for success throughout their schooling. The Auditor General's report on education noted that the department did not determine what needed to be done to ensure that students in small communities had equitable access to education and programs and services compared with larger regional centres. The Auditor General's report also states: "the department did not take sufficient steps to collect and use data to understand how it might make changes to address persistent gaps in student outcomes." The report goes on to state that the findings matter because high-quality education programs can have a significant impact on children's developmental, educational, cultural, emotional, and social outcomes. The report also states that planning and supporting the delivery of education are important to help students succeed.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Deh Cho. Members' statements. Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON  
HEALTH CARE STAFFING

**MS. SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today, I would like to talk about another one of our priorities, increasing the number of resident healthcare professionals by at least 20 percent. Mr. Speaker, the GNWT funds Aurora College. GNWT funds students through student financial assistance to attend not just Aurora College but other post-secondary institutions. Aurora College has been providing the nursing program, successfully having graduates for over 20 years, and they have run the practical nurse program sporadically over the years, as well as the personal support program.

Mr. Speaker, NWT continues to struggle to hire permanent healthcare staff throughout the territory.

We all know this. We fly in short-term contract nurses to staff vacancies, some as short as two weeks, especially during peak holiday season. They are flown in to the NWT from all over the country into our health centres, who already distrust our healthcare system. This is unfair, not only for our residents but the nurses in the community, for such short periods where they are never there long enough to build any relationship with the community.

Mr. Speaker, we have a disconnected system. We pay to provide programs and to train healthcare staff, and yet we do not have a way to bridge them into our healthcare jobs that we are struggling to staff. We have Indigenous residents who have been funded to attend our Aurora College and been screened out of jobs. This should not happen. We should have human resources, department of health, and Aurora College working together, not working in silos. We should be recruiting them right out of school.

Another area we are not doing so well in is actively looking at our new nursing graduates and permanent staff we now have, finding out if there are any of these nurses who want extra training so they are able to meet the criteria needed for health centres. How will they ever get the training and be able to meet this if it is not provided to them through mentorships or internships focused on giving them exactly what they need to be successful in these areas that we are filling right now without a territory staffing?

Mr. Speaker, with more local residents working in our healthcare system, we will be able to provide culturally sensitive care for our residents of the NWT. I will have questions for the Minister of Finance over the human resources. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes. Members' statements. Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON  
MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORTS DURING COVID-  
19 PANDEMIC

**MR. NORN:** Marsi cho, Mr. Speaker. Look at that. After one year, I'm having trouble with my first button. Is that a good sign or not? I'm not sure.

---Laughter

Today, I would like to talk about mental health supports in the NWT, particularly in relation to the ongoing pandemic. In my opinion, we are in a mental health crisis in the North that needs immediate attention from this government.

Mr. Speaker, the issue of mental health has become front and centre amid the COVID-19 pandemic for a few reasons. The main reason, as we have come to know, is just the sheer amount of time that people have had to remain indoors during their self-isolation. This pandemic has caused many disruptions to everyday life, so it's no real surprise that people's mental health has been suffering throughout the course of this pandemic. I have heard some of my colleagues mention suicide and relationships in the home. All of those have been weighing on the minds of a lot of Northerners.

However, even before this pandemic began, mental health had been a long-standing issue for people in the NWT, so COVID-19 has only amplified this issue further. To give an example, in early September, I drove down to Alberta to grab my daughters. I took them back in time for school. I'm glad I did because they would probably want to still be staying down there. When I came back, I did my 14 days here at the Chateau Nova, and I have to say I keep pretty active. I keep pretty busy mentally and physically, but it was a real challenge. By day seven, I was getting pretty stir crazy, and I guess for lack of a better word, I started to feel cabin fever after a while. I could only imagine what that burden is like on people who have to make repeated medical visits down south. They have to come back and do their 14 days every time.

On that note, Mr. Speaker, there is another, darker aspect to these self-isolation centres that we never really considered. I was approached by some elders and got some reports that, during this self-isolation, they went in, they were herded in, for lack of a better word, and they were given meals, specific diets, and some of these people said that it felt like residential school all over again, re-traumatizing for our people.

I'm not saying this in a disparaging way towards our staff, because, by all accounts, they are doing a good job. Mr. Speaker, I request unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

---Unanimous consent granted

**MR. NORN:** Thank you, colleagues. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll be brief. Going back to what I was saying, by all accounts, the staff here at the self-isolation centres are doing a great job, given our circumstances, but there is definitely a need there for mental health supports. I think that we can improve this quality of service for our people, but there are all kinds of adversities we have to face and we can do more to help with them, with health supports for Northerners. I will have questions for the Premier. Marsi cho.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON  
CAMERON HILLS LIABILITIES

**MR. O'REILLY:** Merci, Monsieur le President. I made my last statement on the Cameron Hills sour gas field in this House on February 26, 2020. GNWT accepted this property under devolution even though there was no approved closure plan and financial security of only \$2.9 million. Furthermore, GNWT never requested a revision in financial security or used other tools at its disposal to prevent this disaster. When I raised these matters with the current Minister of Lands, he could not provide any reason as to why GNWT accepted this site under the devolution agreement or why GNWT did not exercise all of its authority to prevent this site from becoming a public liability.

The Office of the Regulator of Oil and Gas Operations was apparently payable under some sort of a commercial general liability insurance policy for up to \$5 million by the former owner, Strategic Oil and Gas Limited, but that policy may have expired in January 2019. OROGO may also hold an irrevocable letter of credit of an unknown amount. There may also be a letter of credit to the National Energy Board for \$245,000 for the pipeline that carried Cameron Hills gas into Alberta.

What is clear is that the remediation of this site is going to cost taxpayers a lot of money. How much? There is still no approved closure plan or reclamation estimate for this very complex property that consists of 50 wells, winter roads, summer all-terrain vehicle trails, a gas and oil gathering system, a central battery, temporary and permanent camps, air strips, borrow pits, bridges, and pipelines. It appears that the three worst wells were partially closed and abandoned this last winter. That is good news, but it's not clear how much that cost, what funds remain available to GNWT, how much more it will cost taxpayers to clean up this mess, and where those funds will actually come from.

I will again have questions for the Minister of Lands on how we got ourselves into this mess, whereby NWT taxpayers are on the hook for what is likely tens of millions of dollars of environmental liabilities, and I would also like to know what is being done about it. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON  
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES NOMINEE  
PROGRAM

**MS. CLEVELAND:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This past June, the Departments of Education, Culture and Employment and Industry, Tourism and Investment teamed up to announce a new website for the NWT Nominee Program. The goal of this resource is to help attract, settle, and retain foreign nationals to the NWT.

Mr. Speaker, I see great value in attracting newcomers to the Northwest Territories; increasing our population base is the easiest way for the NWT to increase the federal transfer payment, which is how the government generates most of its spending money. Immigration also increases diversity and reunites families, both of which enrich the lives of all Northerners. Immigration is good news for the NWT. There are two streams within the Nominee Program: the employer-driven stream, which allows employers who want to hire and nominate foreign nationals when there are no Canadians or Canadian permanent residents available to do the job; and the business stream, which encourages immigration by foreign nationals with the resources to start or purchase an NWT business.

While this economic development is good news for the NWT, my concern today is for the ability of the GNWT to protect resident northern business owners and to support and assist potential business owners to immigrate to the NWT. Until June of this year, the GNWT required a \$75,000 good-faith deposit from foreign business owners wanting to set up shop in the Northwest Territories. This encouraged foreign entrepreneurs to meet their program commitments, but what happened to the deposit when all did not go according to plan? Did the GNWT simply refund the good-faith deposit, or did it stay in the GNWT and fall into general revenue? What are the criteria for determining when this deposit is repayable, and what would become of the debts to northern businesses incurred by foreign entrepreneurs? Ultimately, why did the GNWT opt to do away with the good-faith deposit, Mr. Speaker?

Immigration is great news. Economic development is great news, but not to the detriment of northern business owners. I look forward to working with the Minister toward a solution which benefits and protects both northern business owners and the Nominee Program. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON  
PASSING OF CONSTITUENTS

**MR. JACOBSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's been a tough few months since our last sitting, in our communities, with all the deaths we've been having. It's been really tough with COVID-19

restrictions for the funerals. I had a few people pass away in my riding, Mr. Speaker.

George Pokiak passed away in Tuktoyaktuk. Thoughts and prayers are with his family.

My good friend Jesse Ranger, Jesse Panaktalok. Thoughts and prayers for Liz and family. You will be missed in our patrol, but never forgotten.

Ernest "Ernie" Raymond. To his family, Ernie was a very good friend growing up; he grew up across the street and we checked a lot of fishnets together, so a lot of good times. He won't be forgotten, to his sisters.

Lucy Cockney. To Noe and family for the loss of their mother. She was an awesome lady who did so much for our community of Tuktoyaktuk and had so many roles in leadership and teaching our youth at the school.

"Butch" Willie Jacobson, my brother. I lost my brother this summer, and I am still dealing with it. My thoughts and prayers are with my sister-in-law, Bessie, and all my family back home. We are going to get through this together.

Randal Pokiak, one of our elders in the IFA, who did so much for our people in the Tuktoyaktuk Community Corporation and the IRC in the early days for negotiations and stuff, thoughts and prayers are with Deva, Lucky, and Enoc and all his brothers and sisters and their families. Thoughts and prayers.

Auntie Alvira Klengenberg. To Rex and the boys, thoughts and prayers are with you.

Walter Olifie. We call him "Olifie" and always had good visits with him in Ulukhaktok. He was one of our respected elders over there, and we lost him this past September. Thoughts and prayers are with him and his family.

Elizebeth Kuptana of Paulatuk passed away this past summer. Thoughts and prayers are with them and their family and the community of Paulatuk.

All my communities across the territory, whoever lost a loved one, our thoughts and prayers are with you, and God bless you all. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Nunakput. Our thoughts and prayers are with all the families, as well. Mahsi. Members' statements. Member for Yellowknife North.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON  
MUNICIPAL FUNDING GAP

**MR. JOHNSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The GNWT's economic recovery must be built on strong foundations, and in our case, those foundations are our communities and our municipal governments, Mr. Speaker. Before we want to grow and expand our mandate, we must make sure that our municipalities are taken care of. However, in this case, that foundation is crumbling, quite literally. Our municipal roads, sewers, and basic infrastructure are degrading from the lack of maintenance and unstable footings.

Mr. Speaker, we de-fund our municipalities \$9.6 million in operations and maintenance, \$6.5 million in environmental, \$24.3 million in capital, for a total of \$40.4 million every single year. I am happy to hear the Minister's statement today about an additional \$2.6 million as well as the \$4.7 million to address the significant lost revenues and work they took on during COVID. However, Mr. Speaker, this is not a long-term solution. We agreed to a municipal funding formula, and then, in typical GNWT fashion, we failed to implement it or provide the money.

If we do not agree with the funding formula, then we must go back to the table and renegotiate it. The problem is we designed this formula, and we have not followed up with the money in hand, Mr. Speaker. I am appreciative of the mandate commitment to reduce the funding gap by \$5 million, and perhaps there is some work, as the Minister spoke about today, in regard to land transfer, working with revenues to reduce another \$5 million. However, we are still a long way off from reducing that gap. As we barrel into our debt wall and are about to approve one of the largest capital budgets in NWT history, largely due to carry-overs because we cannot get the money out the door, it's insulting to our communities, Mr. Speaker. They can get their money out the door, and far better than us, they will make sure it is spent in our communities and employs local Northerners.

Mr. Speaker, we in this House do not deserve to build multi-billion-dollar infrastructure projects when our communities cannot make sure their roads and sewers are funded. I will have questions for the Minister of MACA on whether MACA will bring forward legislation to give municipalities some certainty and a real path forward to close this gap. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON  
RESIDENTIAL ADDICTIONS TREATMENT

**MR. LAFFERTY:** Masi, Mr. Speaker. [English translation not available].

Mr. Speaker, last week, I asked the Minister of Health and Social Services for a status report on progress relating to a promise made in this House on May 29, 2020, when the former Minister was in charge. The problem was that the department was studying the idea of providing residential addiction treatment here in the Northwest Territories as opposed to sending Northerners to southern institutions. The response last week was that a promise had not been followed up on. In fact, the Minister at that time denied any knowledge of it.

To refresh the Minister's memory, Mr. Speaker, I quote her deputy minister speaking before the House: "[...] what we could be doing here in the North [...] and might [...] be [better] opportunities to look at [...] treatment centre[s]? It is certainly something that's not off the table. It is something we are going to be looking at as a range of options to incorporate lessons learned out of COVID." If there is any possible doubt, Mr. Speaker, the quote continues: "[...] we are, absolutely, open to the idea of looking at [...] treatment centre, and we'll be taking a look at this question, and different treatment models as part of our planning forward."

Mr. Speaker, it disappoints me that the Minister and her department would treat their commitments so lightly, especially on such an important matter for the Northwest Territories. With this in mind, Mr. Speaker, I will have questions for the Minister of health at a later time. Masi.

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

#### MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON EULOGY FOR HELEN (HARDISTY) EDJERICON

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Helen Margaret (Hardisty) Edjericon was born to Sarah and William Hardisty in Fort Simpson on February 24, 1956. She was the ninth child in a family of twelve, four older brothers, and her parents predeceased her. Helen spent her childhood in Jean Marie but often spent the summer months in Fort Simpson so that her father and older brothers could maintain wage employment. Although the family lived through lean times, Helen was raised in a strict but loving Christian home. She attended school in Jean Marie River until grade six, grades seven to nine in Fort Simpson, and she completed her schooling at Sir John Franklin High School in Yellowknife.

After graduation, she returned to Fort Simpson and lived there for a few years until moving to Norman Wells to live with her older sister Shirley and family in 1977. In 1979, she returned to Fort Simpson and moved to Hay River to live with her older brother Ron and his family where she worked for the GNWT. She later moved to Inuvik until

approximately 1981, when she moved to Yellowknife. It was while she was living in Yellowknife that she met her former husband, Richard Edjericon, and they married in July 1986. Their son, Dion, was born in 1984 and grandson, Deacon, was born in 2007. She started working for the Dene Nation in Yellowknife not long after moving there and worked there for more than 10 years.

Helen was known for her meticulous housekeeping and was also known for her cooking skills as well as her passion for bingo. She loved entertaining family and friends in her big house in Ndilo. Helen loved to talk, especially when she was younger, and her siblings used to tease her about it. She was friendly and outgoing. She had many friends in the places she lived in and was very athletic when she was young. During her years in Akaitcho Hall, she was part of the Akaitcho girls' basketball team and joined a women's basketball team in Inuvik when she moved there.

After her marriage broke down, she lived with her friends and family and continued until her health started failing her. Although Helen experienced difficulties in her life, she never lost her faith in God and her firm belief in Him. She will be sadly missed by her family and friends. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Nahendeh. Our thoughts and prayers are with the family. Members' statement. Item 4, recognition of visitors in the gallery. Item 5, reports of committees on the review of bills. Item 6, reports of standing and special committees. Item 7, returns to oral questions. Item 8, acknowledgements. Item 9, oral questions. Member for Hay River South.

#### Oral Questions

##### QUESTION 373-19(2): DRUG OFFENCES IN THE LEGAL SYSTEM

**MR. ROCKY SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to return to questions I was asking the Minister of Justice yesterday. I'd ask the Minister if he can tell me: for every \$1 spent in dealing with addictions, how much is spent on drug and alcohol enforcement in the NWT? If he doesn't have the information, I'll give him time to get it at some point. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you. Minister of Justice.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't have the NWT-specific numbers, but I know that in Canada in 2014 is the most recent information I have. That's from a report prepared by the Canadian Institute for Substance Use Research and the Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction. For every \$32 million spent on

healthcare, there's about \$10 million for healthcare for substance abuse, there's a corresponding \$10 million spent on enforcement. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. ROCKY SIMPSON:** I'd ask the Minister: what is the average time for drug trafficking production, importing, exporting, to move through the justice system?

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** In adult criminal court according to Stats Canada, the average number of days it takes to get other drug offence is the technical term through the court system, and those would be things like drug trafficking, production, and importing and exporting, in the NWT in 2017-2018, it was 277 days, and the Canadian average -- sorry. That's the Canadian average, and in the NWT, it's 295 days. In 2018-2019, the Canadian average was 273 days, but in the NWT, the average was 413 days. That is because we are a small jurisdiction. If you have one large, complex case, that can skew the statistics, and there's ups and downs.

**MR. ROCKY SIMPSON:** The Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police proposed diverting people dealing with substance abuse or addiction issues away from the criminal justice system towards social services and healthcare. Can the Minister confirm that this is an approach the department agrees with, and if so, has it been put into practice?

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** It's an odd notion to treat addiction as a criminal matter, and so, I'm fully in support of diversion where we can and providing supports where we can. The GNWT has been providing alternatives to the traditional justice system for a number of years. Every year, we contribute \$1.8 million to community justice programming which includes formal diversions. We have an annual priority established through a contract with the RCMP to prioritize diversions. A number of the sanctions from the community justice committees include things like counselling, cultural connection, and treatment.

The RCMP, as well, and they're committed to diversion, as well, they are very supportive of their local community partners. Here, in Yellowknife, there's the Yellowknife sobering centre, and in Behchoko, there's the warming centre. In Yellowknife, through those kinds of partnerships, they've seen a 73 percent decrease in the number of prisoners in cells from 2014 to 2018. In 2014, it was 6,500 individuals in cells, and we're down to about 1,700 now. There is a diversion away from that criminal system.

We also have integrated case management within the GNWT. In the South Slave, SMCC is transitioning to a therapeutic community model. It's

still in the justice system, but it's trying to direct people out of it and then giving them the tools they need to overcome addictions and stay out of the system. We also have the Wellness Court, as well, which looks at the circumstances of the offender and tries to deal with those as opposed to looking at an offence and punishing someone for an offence.

We are trying different things. It's always tough. I understand now why my predecessor would always say this. We're dealing with people at the end of a lot of trauma and a lot of decisions that led them down this path. It's tough to change that course, but we are trying. We are committed to it.

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

**MR. ROCKY SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The RCMP and police, in general, have been receiving bad press lately. This is disturbing when we consider the good work they do which never gets reported. Mr. Speaker, not only are our RCMP officers paid less than provincial counterparts, a past Auditor General report confirms that RCMP are understaffed and, because of it, receive adequate training. Mr. Speaker, can the Minister confirm what the department is doing to ensure our complement of officers in the NWT meet our needs in the North and that they are adequately trained? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** I want to thank the Member for highlighting the positive contributions of the RCMP. I've stated before in the House that they don't do the kind of self-promotion that, perhaps, they could to get those accolades.

The NWT does have the highest concentration of RCMP officers in Canada. We have 416 per 100,000 people. The next highest is Nunavut with 354 per 100,000. We are staffed quite well with RCMP. In terms of the training, there's a significant amount of mandatory training that RCMP have, and in order to support that and support increased training because there's always new training every year, every time something happens, there's training in response to it, the department increased funding to the RCMP in 2019-2020 by \$200,000 annually just for training, and that's the 70 percent contribution that the GNWT makes. In total, there was almost a third of a million dollars increase in training budget a couple of years ago.

I want to say, the Member mentions, the RCMP have been getting some bad press, but in my five years in this Assembly, no one has ever said they want less RCMP. Every community, every Member says they want more RCMP in the community and that they appreciate their efforts. The Member made a statement earlier in regards to a bear attack

in Hay River, and it was the RCMP who responded to that and who dispatched the bear. They do a lot of good that isn't recognized, so I appreciate the Member's questions. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 374-19(2):  
AUDITOR GENERAL REPORT ON EDUCATION,  
CULTURE AND EMPLOYMENT

**MR. BONNETROUGE:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. My Member's statement alluded to the Auditor General's finding on education delivery by the department of education. Of interest, I noted the department piloted the junior kindergarten program across the territory during the 2017-2018 school year. The Auditor General's report stated the department's analysis of a small number of junior kindergarten students during the pilot program scored better on a number of indicators related to developmental readiness for learning. The report also goes on to state data from the JK program needed additional data to be collected over several more years to know whether the results were conclusive. Can the Minister provide information as to whether any data was collected in the years following the rollout of the junior kindergarten program? Mahsi.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Deh Cho. Minister of Education, Culture and Employment.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are significant benefits to early childhood education, and I think everyone would agree to that. The fact that we have junior kindergarten, anecdotally, means that there have been some benefits to children across the territory. To the specific question about the data that we've collected, the Department of Education, Culture and Employment has been collecting the early development instrument, the EDI tool, have been using data from that since 2013, and that includes the years since junior kindergarten has been in place from 2017. There needs to be a certain number of years of data collected so that you have a good baseline, and then, you can actually start drawing conclusions from that. We are at that point now where we can begin to look at how things change from year to year and draw conclusions on that so that we can measure the success of some of our programming. In terms of the data collection, yes, we're on that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. BONNETROUGE:** We look forward to the findings of that rollout, considering we do have language immersion programs included in the JK programs up to grade four. The Auditor General notes the department made commitments to ensure equitable access to quality education for all the

small communities but did not explicitly identify actions required to achieve this commitment. Can the Minister provide information as to why the commitments were not actioned to ensure quality outcomes or equitable access to education?

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Since the first report in 2010, the department has taken a number of steps to make good on the Education Act's requirement to provide equitable access. I just want to comment on something the Member said earlier, that the department is "passing the buck" to the education authorities in terms of the failure of small communities in terms of education. I've been here five years, and I've never heard any Minister pass the buck. The previous Minister before me, I heard her state that we are failing students in small communities. The day I became Minister, that became my failure, so I'm not passing the buck. The education authorities are our partners, and I'm not putting blame on them. We're all in this together.

To the Member's question, a number of the actions include things like junior kindergarten. That expanded early childhood education across the territory in a way that has never been done before. There is a realization that, in small communities, the teachers and the principals need special training, so we provided special training specific to small-community principals and small-community teachers. Northern Distance Learning is one of the greatest ways that we've been providing more equitable access, and currently that program offers academic courses in grades 10 to 12 to students in small communities who go to schools where the teachers aren't there to teach those programs or the numbers of students aren't there to teach those programs. It really gives students who want to go on to university but are living in a small community the opportunity to do that.

We have recently changed our school capital standards. These are the requirements for what we put in schools when we build them, and we changed those with a recognition that small-community schools need certain things that they weren't getting before, things like gyms, things like spaces for Northern Distance Learning. One of the most significant things that has happened in the past number of years is access to mental health and counselling through the child and youth care counsellor initiative that we are partnering on with Health.

I take the Member's point. We are failing students in small communities. There are no two ways about it. The numbers show it, but I'm owning it. We're doing everything we can to rectify that.

**MR. BONNETROUGE:** I thank the Minister for those explanations, especially the "passing the

buck" one that he kind of hooked on. The Auditor General's Report states that the department invested heavily in the Northern Distance Learning program, something he alluded to. Did the department evaluate the Northern Distance Learning program as it relates to meeting high-quality education outcomes?

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** We have done an evaluation on the program. It shows positive benefits, and those are reflected in the numbers. The students who are participating in these academic courses would otherwise have to take them through distance learning, traditional distance learning where you get, well, back in my day, you got a pack of CDs and some workbooks in the mail, and you had to fill those out. The success rates on those types of programs is very, very low; everywhere, not just in the territory. The credit acquisition rate in the territory for Northern Distance Learning has been significantly higher throughout the year. Going back over the years, it has been as high as almost 80 percent; it has been as low as 55 percent, in some years, but nonetheless, the students are getting these courses. They are making their way through the material, and they are passing these diploma exams that you have to pass if you're in Ulukhaktok or if you're in Edmonton. It is working, and we hope to expand it across the territory.

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

QUESTION 375-19(2):  
RESIDENTIAL ADDICTIONS TREATMENT

**MR. LAFFERTY:** Masi, Mr. Speaker. [Translation] I'd like to ask Health and Social Services a question. We don't have a treatment centre in the Northwest Territories, and I would like to ask the Minister of health some questions. [End of translation] It was under a different Minister that a promise was made, a promise to look into residential addiction treatment being provided here in the Northwest Territories, but the promise was also reiterated by the deputy minister who remains in the position today. To the Health and Social Services Minister: why has the department not followed up on its promises to look into a new residential addiction treatment centre here in the Northwest Territories? Masi.

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

**HON. JULIE GREEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am going to take that question on notice.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you. The Minister is taking that as notice. Oral questions. Member for Great Slave.

QUESTION 376-19(2):  
PROTOCOLS AROUND CONTACT TRACING

**MS. NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With respect to the current cases of suspected COVID in the Northwest Territories, I would not be doing my job if I did not revisit my question from yesterday. My questions for the Minister of health are not meant to raise panic; however, we are a small territory with an obligation to ensure that our residents are well-informed and that protocols have been followed. What I am asking for is a simple, straightforward response: can the Minister of health tell us that the department of health and the CPHO followed the protocols set in place with respect to the recent Yellowknife cases? Thank you.

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

**HON. JULIE GREEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A review has not been done, but I have no reason to think they haven't followed the protocols.

**MS. NOKLEBY:** Can the Minister tell me if there is anything in the Privacy Act that would prevent public health officials from accepting a list of contacts from a business showing who could possibly have had contact with a person who may be positive for COVID-19?

**HON. JULIE GREEN:** Contact tracing is the responsibility of public health and community health nurses. It is up to them to interview the patient who has become ill and to establish where that person has been and who they have been in contact with. This is not a function that can be carried out by a business.

**MS. NOKLEBY:** I thought that I was asking about whether the health department was part of that, not the business. Anyway, I understand that we are following the national strategy for dealing with this pandemic. Are there any areas that the Minister sees that we could be improving on this strategy, and what would they be?

**HON. JULIE GREEN:** It's difficult to answer that question because this pandemic is still under way. Certainly, having new cases after months without having cases has refreshed everybody's responses to dealing with the CPHO protocols. In terms of areas that we can improve on, I'm open to suggestions. I don't see any right at this point. If Members have complaints from their constituents about the way in which the pandemic is being handled, of course, we answer those questions every day, and we would welcome more.

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

**MS. NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes. Numerous complaints about how the pandemic is being handled. As was mentioned yesterday in the House, there are many moving pieces. Would the Minister commit to notifying a business if they are going to be part of a public health release sooner than at the time of the public notification, as happened in this case? Thank you.

**HON. JULIE GREEN:** The business in question here was notified before the public health advisory went out, and so were the RCMP. They, I know, responded in their own ways. I can't commit to any more than that. This is really a CPHO function. She decides when the release goes out, and she notifies people first. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 377-19(2):  
INTERNSHIPS IN HEALTH AND SOCIAL  
SERVICES

**MS. SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Minister of Finance. I understand that we have internship programs within human resources, as well as the Indigenous Career Gateway Program in place. I do understand there are only so many internships available per year. Can the Minister tell me what the funding is annually for the internships, if she has it? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes. Minister of Finance.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Department of Finance is able to support up to 40 internship placements every year. That works out to being roughly \$40,000 per year per placement. Thank you.

**MS. SEMMLER:** Can the Minister tell me how many interns there have been in this past year and how many were in health?

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** This year, there have been 24 interns in total. Of those, one went to the Department of Health and Social Services, in addition to which there were four who went to NTHSSA. They were scheduled to go there, but COVID-19 certainly has interrupted some of the processes that we would normally undertake to have interns recruited and placed.

**MS. SEMMLER:** As I mentioned in my Member's statement, there is a gap in bridging students to the workforce. Will the Minister have her department of human resources look at the way to build a bridging program from the college, or any healthcare program, into our healthcare system?

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Recruiting more healthcare professionals is a mandate item for this government. There is already a health recruitment unit well under way, which is a partnership between Health and Social Services and the Department of Finance. In short, yes, I certainly can commit on the part of Finance, on the part of human resources, to taking some steps, to developing some ideas, and to having them ready. Aside from that, this will be something that becomes a multi-departmental response. I am confident that, as I said, human resources will do its part, and I am confident that I will be able to work with my colleagues to see that those ideas from human resources can get looked at and considered by those who are on the front lines in the health department.

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

**MS. SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One of the things that I know is that there are some other programs that are for GNWT employees to access training dollars, but I don't know if this is widely known of the hiring managers and the staff. Will the Minister commit to looking into all the funding pots that we can so that we can train current staff, so that we can possibly train them, if they choose to, to go out to health centres, into specialty areas like obstetrics, emergency? These are the areas that we keep struggling with, and these are the ones that we keep bringing in people from outside the territory to fill. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Again, yes, I am happy to make the commitment on my part, certainly, that we will make sure and put that information together. I recognize that it's an acute problem, perhaps, for our colleagues in the Health and Social Services field, but even more broadly than that, making sure that, if there are programs being run by human resources, that they are known and accessible to those doing the hiring in communities and in regions, particularly in health. That is critical, otherwise all the great programs that we might have aren't adequately being accessed. That is actually a specific issue and question that human resources is looking at to ensure that we are doing our job and to ensure that the good work that we are doing in human resources gets translated, and so I certainly will commit to doing that and to continuing to do that. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 378-19(2):  
MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORTS DURING COVID-  
19 SELF-ISOLATION

**MR. NORN:** Marsi cho, Mr. Speaker. I'm just going back to my Member's statement on mental health in

self-isolation centres. For me, the way I look at it, if you are in a self-isolation centre, just a helpline alone is not enough. My first question is for Madam Premier: can the Premier confirm if there are mental health workers, i.e. counsellors, ready and available at our self-isolation centres?

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

**HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When COVID-19 first struck the Northwest Territories in April, when we started to put things together and brought in our isolation units, I can't say at that point that we actually had those processes in place. Since then, we have partnered with the Department of Health and Social Services for what is called a "navigator." That person is responsible for when people are identified that they need any help, whether it be mental health, addiction, or other supports. Those people actually will provide the services and try to navigate the people and help to refer them to appropriate services, including mental health support. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. NORN:** Thank you for that response. My next question has to do with the first point of contact. Can the Premier confirm if employees working at the self-isolation centres have been given any training, for example, mental health first aid or anything pertaining to mental health?

**HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE:** My assumption is: no, they haven't got the mental health first aid training or are specialized in mental health. It is a specialty field, in all honesty. It's my background, as well. However, what I can say is that the employees who are at the isolation centres do know that they have access to the navigator, and also the people who are staying there also are provided the information that they can access that service if they wish. It's a volunteer service.

**MR. NORN:** My third question is: can the Premier explain, if someone is having a mental health crisis while in self-isolation, where can they reach out for help aside from the navigators?

**HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE:** I do want to take a moment and say that, when the Member was doing his statement and he talked about how being in isolation can be really stressful on people, I hear you. I agree with you. I had two of my children who were in isolation when they came back from school, and I know it was tough on them, as well. Mental health is critical within that.

People, if they want, they can actually talk to any of the isolation staff who know how to access the navigator. In extreme cases, when disturbances have been found in the isolation centres and the

RCMP have been called, they also know how to reach the navigator. The navigators, again, will link them in with the services available, but they are volunteer. At this point, unless somebody is a danger to themselves or others, we can't force them into taking those services, but the services, again, there would be a risk assessment because of COVID-19, especially if there is a fear of people having COVID-19. There would be a risk assessment done, so depending on the risk assessment, services can either be in person or they can be telephone or virtual care. We've now got in virtual care, which has been a tremendous support for our health system.

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

QUESTION 379-19(2):  
CAMERON HILLS LIABILITIES

**MR. O'REILLY:** Merci, Monsieur le President. Earlier today, I recounted the ongoing saga of how our government allowed the Cameron Hills sour gas field to become a public liability. Can the Minister of Lands tell us what general work has been done to date at the site by our government and how much it has cost? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A receiver has been appointed by the court and is responsible for meeting Strategic Oil and Gas Limited's regulatory obligations at Cameron Hills. The government does not own the Cameron Hills site. The receiver conducted work at the site last winter to support the suspended three wells and bring them into compliance with an order issued on October 4, 2019. Also, in regard to the cost, the costs incurred by the NWT received to date have been around \$1.98 million. The Government of the Northwest Territories holds \$2.9 million in security for this site and the Regulator of Oil and Gas Operations hold an additional \$1 million. These funds are accessible as needed as set out in legislation. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. O'REILLY:** I want to thank the Minister for that information. It's good news that some work is finally done to close the Cameron Hills field, maybe by receiver, but ultimately, it's going to come back to us. There is no way the money that is set aside is going to be able to cover all this. Can the Minister tell us how much money we actually can access in the various forms of available security for the remediation of the property and how much is left before we have to ask taxpayers to cough up more?

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** The GNWT has \$2.9 million. As I said, the regulatory of oil and gas hold an additional \$1 million. Right now, we have \$3.9 million present.

**MR. O'REILLY:** I am trying to do a quick math on my feet here. It looks like we've got about \$1 million left to do a lot more work. GNWT accepted the Cameron Hills site without an approved closure plan and without full financial security being posted. That should never have happened. We didn't use all the tools available to us to stop it from becoming a public liability either. Having seen some of the inspections reports, there's still a lot more work to be done properly to close and remediate this property. Can the Minister tell us whether there is a plan yet for the closure and remediation of the site and how much that will cost or when a costed plan will be completed?

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** On September 17, 2020, the Mackenzie Valley Land and Water Board issued a one-year storage authorization for the land-use permit. The authorization is posted to the board's public registry, and the receiver indicated that this was being done as an interim measure until a land-use permit renewal is completed and approved. We don't know exactly how much it's going to cost completely to remediate this site.

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** Merci, Monsieur le President. I want to thank the Minister for that information. It's clear that the GNWT has not done enough to stop public environmental liabilities in a systematic way. We have no early warning system despite commitments to do so in the last Assembly. We have Ekati Mine teetering and nothing in the mandate letter for this Minister to finally put in place a preventative approach to public environmental liabilities. Can the Minister tell us exactly what he intends to accomplish in this Assembly to prevent further public environmental liabilities, like Strategic Oil and Gas? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** Prevention of the public liabilities require a collaborative effort from multiple departments, including Lands, ENR, Industry, ITI, and Finance. Current work on early warning includes monitoring the health of the financial institutions, tracking trends in industry, and the financial health of operators and monitoring the environment and regulatory compliance of the operators. I am committed to work with my Cabinet colleagues to continue to enhance this important work. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 380-19(2):  
MUNICIPAL FUNDING GAP

**MR. JOHNSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I said earlier in my statement, I am grateful for some of the work we have started on closing the municipal funding gap. However, we are a long way off. Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, I believe we need to increase the capital funding this year by \$5 million. In the grand scheme of things, this is approximately a quarter of a percent of our \$2 billion budget. Mr. Speaker, if we can't find a quarter of a percent in our \$2 billion budget, then we're truly not in charge of our budget as an Assembly. My question for the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs: can we increase the capital funding to our community governments by \$5 million? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**HON. PAULIE CHINNA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As previously, I did announce that we do have \$2.6 million that will be allocated to municipal communities and, also, that we will be meeting with the Northwest Territories Association of Communities to identify how we will be distributing that funding. Right now, that's the funding that is going to be available. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. JOHNSON:** I did not expect it to be that easy, but I will have a lot more questions for the Minister during our Capital Estimates tabled today. My concern right now is that the way we fund our municipalities lacked any certainty. We agreed to a formula, but we haven't given the money. I believe the right comparative here would be how we fund our education authorities. There're guidelines in the education, there're guidelines in regulations, and then finally, there're guidelines in policy. No one is in doubt that we are not within those parameters. There may be a debate about whether we should give more to our education authorities, but we're following a clear and predictable authority such that they can plan. We have not given that benefit to our municipality. My question for the Minister of MACA is: will she bring forward legislation that sets out how we fund municipalities in the life of this Assembly?

**HON. PAULIE CHINNA:** According to what we have put forward for Municipal and Community Affairs, this was not identified as one of the legislation policies that we would be looking at, but it doesn't stop me from working with my department to look at further solutions. I will return a response back to the Member.

**MR. JOHNSON:** I look forward to that response. One of my concerns is the Department of Municipal

and Community Affairs has a large legislative backlog, and they need the resources from the Cabinet to make sure they get ahead of that. One of the mandate commitments is that MACA will work with NWTAC to update funding policies and options. However, this mandate commitment is to be completed in 2023. Whenever I see a mandate commitment completed by 2023, alarm bells ring as these are the commitments that will be at the end of this Assembly. I'm not at all convinced that MACA will get this done, let alone review the policy and bring forward legislation to provide that predictability. Is the Minister willing to speed up the mandate commitment to review the funding policies before 2023?

**HON. PAULIE CHINNA:** My comment to the Member and to answer the question that we are working under unusual circumstances with COVID-19, and it has really burdened a lot of our processes that we are initiating right now. This will be something I will bring back to the department, and I will follow up with the Member.

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

**MR. JOHNSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My final concern is: the last Assembly made a concerted effort to close the gap, but it barely kept pace with the pace of inflation. Mr. Speaker, I do not believe that this formula needs to be at the will of subsequent Assemblies. I recognize the budget is always fundamental to our approval. However, there needs to be some more certainty. I believe legislation is the tool to do that. Can the Minister speak on her plan to make sure that the gap does not re-emerge for any progress this Assembly does make on it? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. PAULIE CHINNA:** Looking at making the commitment to work with this is quite complex, and it requires a lot of different initiatives. I will follow up with the Member, as well, because as I said that Municipal and Community Affairs has already identified their legislation. We have already put money towards the funding gap, and we are working within COVID-19. This will be a discussion that I will have with my department, and I will follow up with the Member. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 381-19(2):  
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES NOMINEE  
PROGRAM BUSINESS STREAM

**MS. CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My questions today are for the Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment. The NWT Nominee Program for the business stream used to

have a \$75,000 good-faith deposit. I am wondering if the Minister can explain what purpose the deposit did serve? Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Kam Lake. Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As you may be gathering from the past tense, this program requiring the \$75,000 deposit has now been discontinued. I understand that, in the past, this was one method by which the department was able to help ensure that applicants were, in fact, serious and had the capacity, the financial capacity, to see the process through. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MS. CLEVELAND:** I am wondering if the Minister can let us know how many times that good-faith deposit was kept by the Government of the Northwest Territories?

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** I believe this program has been in place since 2009, and to my knowledge, we have only kept three deposits.

**MS. CLEVELAND:** No. I appreciate knowing that that was kept three times. Can the Minister speak to what happens to this deposit, and was it ever used to support damages to local businesses that were incurred by local businesses in relation to this program?

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** If it's kept, it reverts to the government, but its purpose was never to shore up or provide any kind of background insurance to private industry or private businesses. If an individual is dealing with someone who happens to be in this program, the good-faith deposit would not be used, as I say, to engage in whatever the private business relationships would be.

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

**MS. CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am understanding that there was a good-faith deposit that was instituted by the Government of the Northwest Territories to ensure that applicants met their agreement with the Northwest Territories to come here, set up business, participate in northern economy, and to really form relationships with local businesses. I also understand that three times the GNWT kept deposits when that did not work and that not necessarily was that ever passed along to local businesses that may have incurred damage because of this program. What I am wondering, Mr. Speaker, is: through gaining almost a quarter of a million dollars from this program, what is the purpose of getting rid of the deposit? I have many questions. Maybe I am going to have to stand back

up again. How is the Government of the Northwest Territories going to ensure that participants in this program actually fulfill their end of the deal?

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** The point of the program is to encourage, well, to encourage a number of things. This is meant to be a program that brings folks into the community who can fulfill our labour shortage needs, who can bring direct investment into the economy, who can come and help add dimension to the local business community. However, if, in fact, there have only been three occasions in the last 10 or so years where it got to the point where they were unable to meet that commitment by way of having their deposit forfeited, Mr. Speaker, really that is a pretty good track record, overall. Really, the reason it's being eliminated is: that brings us in line, at long last, with every other jurisdiction in Canada so that, if we are going to be competing for people to come and to invest and to become residents and to contribute to local economy, it makes sense that we not be out of step with what is happening elsewhere in Canada.

That said, Mr. Speaker, the department takes it seriously that, first of all, there needs to be a visit that is done to the jurisdiction to ensure that anyone coming in knows where they are coming and is prepared to make that commitment and to move here. Then, secondly, once they are here, it's, I believe, roughly a two-year process before which they would actually be invited to participate or invited in to go through the rest of the immigration stream.

It's not an uncumbersome process for these businesspeople. It really gives them an opportunity to be supported through that process by the department, to get their legs under them as far as a business goes. At that point, hopefully they are, as most have been, able to successfully set up their businesses and go forward. That is not to say that there cannot always be tweaks and improvements to a program or a system, as with so many other things that are done. However, really, this is an opportunity to bring people in and to bring businesses in. We are now bringing ourselves to be competitive with the rest of Canada when we are doing that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 382-19(2):  
TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION  
RECOMMENDATIONS

**MR. LAFFERTY:** Masi, Mr. Speaker. [Translation] When we are MLA, we do ask questions. When we speak standing in the House here, it's on behalf of the people of the Northwest Territories. Today, I am

asking the Minister of Health and Social Services. There were recommendations made through the TRC. [Translation ends].

Focusing our attention on what is happening today, obviously, we are here to hold government to account. Obviously, we are asking questions on behalf of people of the Northwest Territories. It's not our words. It's their words, trying to get some answers out of the department. I have a different line of questions on TRC, Mr. Speaker. It has been more than five years since the Truth and Reconciliation Commission issued a call for new healing centres to deal with the emotional and spiritual change caused by residential schools. The TRC specifically singled out the Northwest Territories. Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt in anybody's mind that reconciliation includes healing from addictions. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, why does the Minister refuse to consider the idea of Northerners treating Northerners in northern facilities as the TRC seems to recommend through actions number 20 and 21? Masi, Mr. Speaker.

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

**HON. JULIE GREEN:** Mr. Speaker, it is my understanding that, when I take a question on notice, that is on notice for the day. This question is taken on notice. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you. The question is taken as notice. Oral questions. Member for Kam Lake.

QUESTION 383-19(2):  
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES NOMINEE  
PROGRAM BUSINESS STREAM

**MS. CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would just like to gain a little bit of extra clarity. In relation to the good-faith deposit, the GNWT has collected roughly \$225,000. I am wondering if there was an expense that the GNWT felt that they incurred by running the program that would justify keeping that? Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Kam Lake. Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are always some expenses that get incurred when programs are administered through the Government of the Northwest Territories. I am sure there is no exception to this one, but unless I look back over the last 10 years and am able to actually reconcile expenses versus program benefits, I am not going to be in a position. I certainly will do my best to go back to the department to see if we can provide that kind of reconciliation for the Member. Thank you.

**MS. CLEVELAND:** I would speculate that the expenses to the department would be in the form of salary dollars to people who would remain employed whether or not someone was participating in the program. I can say that there may be business owners in our communities who have been hurt, not directly by the program, I will say, but by people not fulfilling their obligation to the agreement that was in relation to the program. These people have not been compensated through the good-faith deposit. What I am wondering is if there is a mechanism for people, for business owners within our communities, to receive compensation from the good-faith deposits?

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** It's a deposit, and it is a deposit that is regulating a relationship and a program between the department and an individual who is potentially going to immigrate here. Unfortunately, it is not a compensation mechanism. The compensation mechanism when an agreement between private entities goes awry is typically through the Department of Justice and through the court system or some other form of mediation or arbitration. Again, the service and the process of the Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment with respect to this program is to try to provide supports to the businesses that are potentially moving here, try to encourage that investment, try to encourage that growth in the community in the business sector. However, again, if there is a problem that arises between the two private entities, that is something that is not connected to this deposit. It unfortunately has to go through the same system as every other private dispute between parties.

**MS. CLEVELAND:** I agree that immigration is a great thing, and I agree that the local business community is very excited to work with people who are coming to enrich the lives of Northerners and to add to our economy. I do not agree, though, that the sole focus or the only focus in this case of ITI is to support people who are involved in the program. ITI's job is to support also northern entrepreneurs and Northerners who are trying to make it as business owners, so what I am wondering is: what does the Minister of ITI suggest as far as how local business owners protect themselves in these business dealings with people who are participating in the program, potentially not fulfilling their obligations under the agreement, and then going home because international litigation is very costly and not affordable to local entrepreneurs to take part in? How does the Minister suggest that local entrepreneurs protect themselves in these business dealings?

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Mr. Speaker, I am glad to hear the comments around what makes it so positive to have a program like this. It is positive. There are labour shortages. There are gaps, and

our businesses and business community here benefit from the strength and the diversity that we have by drawing people to the North to contribute to our economy, so it is a good thing. Mr. Speaker, we are no longer accepting these deposits. We are getting in line with what's happening in the rest of Canada and making ourselves a more attractive jurisdiction.

When there is a business here from someone who is a new resident, really, Mr. Speaker, I am not sure it's my role to give business advice directly from the floor to the business community. We have a strong and a vibrant business community, and they know as well, and better than me, the steps that they can take to draft contracts, to do their own due diligence, to require deposits, to have prompt invoicing. There are a host of things that the business community can and needs to do, and it is no different whether they should be using that due diligence and that caution vis-à-vis a business or an individual who is through this program or any other business. It's unfortunate if there has been a bad experience for someone with someone who may have been in the program. That is certainly not a story I want to hear of.

Mr. Speaker, this program is overall a success. It is going to be hopefully even more successful by being more competitive, without a deposit. The Department of ITI provides a number of business supports, as do so many of our business institutions, so it's my sincere hope that, as we go forward, our small-business community will be benefitted by this program in its new form.

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

**MS. CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the Minister's words, and I appreciate the fact that she does come from a very distinct legal background. I would like to suggest that, given that the North is definitely always looking for ways to build capacity and always looking for ways to empower local business owners, that potentially the Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment can put some weight behind helping build that strength within the northern business community to make sure that everybody has tools at their disposal to set themselves up for success. Thank you.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Mr. Speaker, I hope we are ending on a good note because I absolutely agree with that suggestion. I will definitely go back to the department and ensure that we are making available through our channels and through partners in the community, such as the chambers, information about how to run a business, how to do the due diligence, and how to ensure that, when they enter into contracts with a new

business, no matter where that business comes from, that they are doing so in a way that is going to be to the growth and the support of both of the businesses that are involved. Yes, I am more than happy to take that back. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 384-19(2):  
TRANSFER OF LANDS TO INDIGENOUS  
GOVERNMENTS

**MR. JOHNSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday, I asked a series of questions of the Minister of Lands, and he rightfully said some of them should go to EIA. I apologize for my often frustration with the Minister of Lands, but it is a mandate issue. They often do not have the tools they need to resolve issues. Mr. Speaker, one of the responses from the Department of Lands was that an Indigenous government can get land outside of a formal land claim process by a lease application. I think the idea of asking an Indigenous government to lease their own land from us is insulting. My question for the Premier is: can we develop a process to transfer land to Indigenous governments that is outside of the formal land claim process, a process I know we only plan on settling two agreements in in the life of this Assembly? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will start by saying that we did put in the mandate to settle two land claims in this government, but if we can get two, that is not where we are stopping. I just want to make sure they are clear with that. That is a goal. It does not mean the end. Yes, you can get land outside of the formal land claim process. Land is transferred from lease to fee simple sometimes. However, you need to be careful because there may be conflict in interests. Land withdrawals are there for a reason. They are there to make sure that the land is guaranteed so that, when Indigenous governments sign their land claims, they have that land there and it's not a whole bunch of cabins all over the areas, that it's already given out for fee simple. There is an application process that people can do, but it really indicates the need to bring forward these land-claim negotiations so that everybody knows where they stand. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. JOHNSON:** I imagine such a process requiring the consent of the Indigenous governments presently in negotiation. To me, that is how we would implement UNDRIP; that is how that would best work. However, this is an issue even in settled areas. There are Indigenous governments up in the

Gwich'in and Inuvialuit region where we have settled the claims, who want access to land and they cannot get it because we go, "No, no. We settled those claims." Going forward, the relationship with Indigenous governments should be the same as municipal governments: we will give them land when they access it, when they want it. What I am asking for the Minister of EIA is to develop a process guide of how we could do this, much the same to what we were doing for municipal affairs. Will the Minister or the Premier develop such a process?

**HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE:** Land withdrawals have a purpose, like I said. They are reviewed every time that they expire. The goal of the land withdrawals is to preserve the encumbered land for eventual identification and selection in the land use process. I am not going to commit to developing a strategy, Mr. Speaker, because there is kind of an unspoken strategy. There are three areas that are usually talked about with Indigenous governments and the Governments of Canada and the NWT, and it usually goes around royalties, land, and cash. Those are the three areas. That is the strategy, and Indigenous governments, as they move forward, they choose and pick what works best for their people. If you want that written out, I can write that out.

**MR. JOHNSON:** I believe we are in a massive trust deficit with our Indigenous governments, and as we in Canada negotiate how much land, how much royalties, how much cash they get, this process drags on for decades. Then, little issues such as small parcels come up, and we have no method for resolving those and building the trust, such that we will never settle the claim. We are just stuck in this cycle where we can not build the trust. Mr. Speaker, I think this is also reiterated in the lease-only policy. We administer leases; they are very costly, but we do not reach out to Indigenous governments and say, "We want to get rid of this land. We will give you the money for it if you want it. We will completely accept your consent." Is the Minister willing to look at the lease-only policy?

**HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE:** I know that the Minister of Lands is looking at the lease-to-own policies within his department. However, I do want to say that, in regard to land leases, we have to recognize that the priority is on resolving the outstanding negotiation. That is the priority and has to be the priority, but I am willing to listen to the Member more if the Member wants to come and meet with me at any time to hear what his issues or his concerns or his recommendations are. However, again, my priority is on the land claims and the rights of Indigenous governments.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Honourable Premier. Oral questions. Member for Great Slave.

QUESTION 385-19(2):  
PROTOCOLS AROUND CONTACT TRACING

**MS. NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Minister of Health and Social Services. Do you think that it is acceptable to notify a business moments before that they are part of a public health notification? Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Great Slave. Minister of Health and Social Services.

**HON. JULIE GREEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do not have an opinion on that. There is protocol that is followed. Thank you.

**MS. NOKLEBY:** Since we are not actually able to question the CPHO in this House and you are the department that is responsible for that, perhaps you could inform us of a way that we could go about getting answers to our questions? As well, I would also like to know how you interact with the CPHO to keep yourself informed.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Great Slave. Please direct your questions through me in the future. Minister of Health and Social Services.

**HON. JULIE GREEN:** Thank you. Myself, the Premier, and the Finance Minister meet with the CPHO weekly, and her staff, and we bring forward our questions, she brings forward hers. The CPHO historically, before your time, was invited by AOC to brief the committee on questions related to COVID, so maybe you want to speak to your committee about inviting her again.

**MS. NOKLEBY:** I will. Could I ask if the Minister spent the weekend being informed and briefed by the CPHO?

**HON. JULIE GREEN:** I am not sure of the relevance of that question. The answer is no, I didn't spend the weekend being briefed by the CPHO. That doesn't mean I wasn't briefed by other people, but I don't feel like that is something that I need to discuss in detail here.

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

**MS. NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll clarify. I was asking because the Minister was unaware of the protocols that have been followed. As the previous Minister, that would have been the first questions I asked. Thank you.

**HON. JULIE GREEN:** Just to reiterate, the protocols were followed to the best of my knowledge. The CPHO has a standard practice with public advisories, contact tracing, testing, and so on. To the best of my knowledge, the acting deputy

CPHO was taking care of business with respect to the presumptive cases. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister. Colleagues, the time for oral questions has expired. Item 10, written questions. Item 11, returns to written questions. Item 12, replies to Commissioner's address. Member for Monfwi.

### Replies to Commissioner's Address

#### MR. LAFFERTY'S REPLY

**MR. LAFFERTY:** Masi, Mr. Speaker. [Translation] I will speak in my language. As MLAs, we have a lot of responsibility in this House. We are here to represent the 40,000 people in the Northwest Territories, and there are only 19 MLAs here. Some days, it's a very difficult job for myself. I've been here for almost 16 years. I really wanted to represent my people, so that is the reason why I am here. I know the operation of the government, and we want the best for our people. That is the reason why we ask questions. Some days, it doesn't seem like we're getting the answers. Although we ask the right questions, we don't get the right reply that we want. The government here, how they reply to the MLAs is not accurate, sometimes. We ask questions to each other, and they reply to our questions. Also, we, in turn, return those answers to our people, and we tell our people that this is how we operate here and this is the answer we get.

In the Northwest Territories, the people, the membership, are waiting for our answers, so we always try to ask the questions, and we expect a reply. Sometimes, getting that answer is very difficult from the Ministers. If the Ministers don't reply to our questions, it's really hard to go forward and to give that information to our people who are asking these questions. We do have a new government in place, and at that time, we all agreed that we would work well together. How is that coming along today?

Mr. Speaker, it's been one whole year now. There are a lot of things that have happened since then, and now, we are dealing with COVID-19. Back in March, there were five cases in the NWT. Ever since then, there were no cases since then, and this past Friday, there might be potential cases in the NWT. There are a lot of things that are happening around us with economic development, and the businesses are asking questions. They are begging the government, and they are asking us as MLAs. They are asking us these questions. They want changes. They want changes in their communities and in the NWT, and the governments are not listening to us.

Ever since we've had COVID, there are a lot of questions out there. When we look at all this, we

take our people's questions and forward them to the government. They, the people, are the ones who voted us all in here. It's not because we want to be here; it's because people asked me to be here, and they nominated me to be here. Whatever they want, whatever their concerns are, I bring it to this table and ask these questions. They write to us, they email us, they phone us with all their questions so that we can forward them to the Minister. That is our job standing here, to question the government.

When we ask the government questions, they are supposed to give us an answer. Some days, it seems like they just cut us off with no answer. That is not supposed to be the case, here. I wonder what my elders are thinking, Mr. Speaker. We need to have respect here, and I don't see the respect here. For myself, when I asked a question today, it's the elders who were asking me this question. They asked me to ask the Minister, and we are trying to help the people who have gone off the path. That's what I was trying to ask, and they are not giving me an answer. What am I going to say to my elders? I have no answer for them.

Some days, it's very difficult to stand here to ask questions, but it is our job to ask these questions. When I look at the situation, we need to go forward together. Some days, we're not working together at all. It seems like our government is falling apart, but the 19 of us, we need to fix this. We need to bring forward all the issues that are not working for us. Sometimes, 19 of us cannot fix everything; it's the people who support us, behind us, who are standing behind us and trying to push us forward. That is how we're supposed to work. This is not happening at all.

With my Commissioner's address, I wanted to speak. You can say whatever you want on Commissioner's address. We need to hear from our people. I asked that same question last week. Let's listen to our people and forward their questions because they're the ones who put us here, and it doesn't look like we're doing our job because the questions are not being answered. All the MLAs, we need to have that respect among each other, and also the elders, the babies, the children, and all the people in the community. There are approximately over 40,000 people. We need to listen to these people and try to go forward. It seems like we don't seem to remember them, some days. Every time I stand here, I speak on behalf of the people all the time, for my membership, for my Tlicho region.

Not only that, but today, the question I forwarded today was for everybody in the NWT. It is our job to talk, some days, for the NWT. The government I want them to understand what I'm trying to say. Maybe they're not remembering what I'm saying. I was a Minister for eight years, I understand the

difficulty of a Minister's position, I was there. We cannot always follow the rules and regulations of the government. We need to put our people first, what they want. When I look at this, that's the situation we are dealing with today. I know because I experience it.

Mr. Speaker, I also sat in that chair. I know the whole process in here and with that experience I am saying this. We always have to represent our people. Our people are number one because they are the ones that put us here. When it comes to questioning, we should always have an answer for someone. As MLA, one of our jobs is to relay the answers that we get from the Ministers and bring it to the community, as well, whether it's going to be the chief and council, the leadership, elders right to babies. We are supposed to have an answer for all of them, but it's not the situation today.

I wanted to speak on this issue because I believe the process is not working for our people. It's not only going to happen today. I might have to bring this up again later on, but right now, that's all I want to say because it's the people that voted us in here today. They are the ones that forwarding these questions to you. It's not my words; it's my peoples' words. I thank you for giving me this opportunity, and I want to be able to work all together. Masi cho. [Translation ends]

**MR. SPEAKER:** Replies to Commissioner's address. Item 13, petitions. Item 14, tabling of documents. Minister of Environment and Natural Resources.

### Tabling of Documents

TABLED DOCUMENT 189-19(2):  
INUVIALUIT WATER BOARD ANNUAL REPORT,  
APRIL 1, 2019 TO MARCH 31, 2020 AND  
FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

TABLED DOCUMENT 190-19(2):  
THE NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION  
TRUST FUND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR  
THE YEAR ENDED MARCH 31, 2020

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** Sorry, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following two documents: "Inuvialuit Water Board Annual Report, April 1, 2019, to March 31, 2020;" and the "The Natural Resources Conservation Trust Fund Financial Statements for the Year Ended March 31, 2020." Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister. Tabling of documents. Member for Frame Lake.

TABLED DOCUMENT 191-19(2):  
NWT RESOURCE PRODUCTION 1999 TO 2019

**MR. O'REILLY:** Merci, Monsieur le President. I wish to table the following document: "NWT Resource Production 1999 to 2019." Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. Tabling of documents. Item 15, notices of motion. Member for Tu Nedhe-Willideh.

### Notices of Motion

MOTION 17-19(2):  
APPOINTMENT TO THE BOARD OF  
MANAGEMENT AND APPOINTMENT OF  
DEPUTY CHAIR TO THE COMMITTEE OF THE  
WHOLE

**MR. NORN:** Marsi cho, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that, on Thursday, October 22, 2020, I will move the following motion: now therefore I move, seconded by the Honourable Member for Hay River North, that the following Member be appointed to the Board of Management of this Assembly: The Honourable Shane Thompson, Member for Nahendeh; and further, the following Member be removed from the Board of Management as an alternate Member: Ms. Katrina Nokleby, Member for Great Slave; and that furthermore, the honourable Member for Deh Cho, Mr. Ronald Bonnetrouge, be appointed as Deputy Chair of Committee of the Whole. Mahsi cho, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Tu Nedhe-Willideh. Notices of motion. Member for Tu Nedhe-Willideh.

MOTION 18-19(2):  
APPOINTMENT TO THE STANDING COMMITTEE  
ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND  
ENVIRONMENT, GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS  
AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

**MR. NORN:** Marsi cho, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that, on Thursday, October 22, 2020, I will move the following motion as well: now therefore I move, seconded by the Honourable Member for Hay River North, that the following Member be appointed to the Standing Committee on Economic Development and Environment: Ms. Katrina Nokleby, Member for Great Slave; and further, that the following to the Standing Committee on Economic on Government Operations: Mr. Ronald Bonnetrouge, the Member for Deh Cho; and further, that the following Member be appointed for the Standing Committee on Social Development: Ms. Katrina Nokleby, Member for Great Slave. Mahsi cho, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Tu Nedhe-Willideh. Notices of motion. Item 16, motions. Member for Frame Lake.

### Motions

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; 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,  
CARRIED

**MR. O'REILLY:** Merci, Monsieur le President. WHEREAS 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; 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 TD 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 have been tabled in this House;

AND WHEREAS these responses required detailed consideration;

NOW THEREFORE I MOVE, seconded by the Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes that 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; 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 the Committee of the Whole for consideration. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you. The motion is in order and nondebatable. All those in favour? All those opposed? Any abstentions? The motion is carried.

---Carried

**MR. SPEAKER:** Motions. Item 17, notices of motion for the first reading of bills. Item 18, first reading of bills. Item 19, second reading of bills. Member for Yellowknife North.

### Second Reading of Bills

#### BILL 11: LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OFFICERS STANDARDIZATION ACT.

**MR. JOHNSON:** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Member for Hay River North, that Bill 11, Legislative Assembly Officers Standardization Act, be read for the second time. Mr. Speaker, this bill amends eight statutes, the standardized provisions related to officers of the Legislative Assembly. The amendments include: standardizing the terms of reference of statutory officers, such that appointments are each for a four-year term; the process for resignation, suspension, removal, and appointment of statutory officers and acting statutory officers; and provisions governing terms of employments of statutory officers. This bill also addresses other matters of a minor and uncomplicated nature in these statutes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you. To the principle of the bill.

**SOM HON. MEMBERS:** Question.

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

---Carried

**MR. JOHNSON:** Mr. Speaker, I am now seeking unanimous consent to waive rule 73(2) and have Bill 11: Legislative Assembly Officers Standardization Act moved into Committee of the Whole for consideration later today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you. The Member is seeking unanimous consent to move Bill 11: Legislative Assembly Officers Standardization Act moved into Committee of the Whole for consideration later today. Are there any nays? There are no nays.

---Unanimous consent granted

Bill 11 will be moved into Committee of the Whole. Thank you. Second reading of bills. Item 20, consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters: Tabled Document 181-19(2): Capital Estimates 2020-2022, Tabled Document 165-19(2), Tabled Document 166-19(2), and Tabled

Document 167-19(2) in Committee of the Whole, with the Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes in the chair.

### Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters

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

**MR. NORN:** Marsi cho, Madam Chair. Committee wishes to deal with the following document: Tabled Document 181-19(2), Capital Estimates 2021-2022, for general comments and to deal with the following departments: Legislative Assembly; Justice; and Lands. Marsi cho, Madam Chair.

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

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

---SHORT RECESS

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Committee, we have agreed to consider Tabled Document 181-19(2), Capital Estimates 2021-2022. Does the Minister of Finance have any opening remarks?

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I am here to present the Government of the Northwest Territories' Capital Estimates 2021-2022.

These capital estimates total \$451.2 million to support and continue infrastructure investment in our communities. Major highlights of the plan include:

- \$188.6 million for highways, winter roads, bridges, and culverts. This includes funding of \$61.3 million to continue the Tlicho All-Season Road project, \$23.5 million for Great Bear River Bridge, and a total of \$18.5 million to advance the environmental and planning work for the Mackenzie Valley and Slave Geologic Province all-season roads;
- \$61.1 million for long-term care facilities, improvements to health information systems, and biomedical equipment, including \$5.4 million for a vulnerable persons' shelter;
- \$41.8 million for various energy projects under the Investing in Canada infrastructure plan, including \$5 million to continue the planning work on the Taltson Hydroelectric Expansion Project;

- \$29 million for the replacement and renovations to existing schools, including \$16.4 million for the Ecole J.H. Sissons school replacement project and \$8.1 million to complete the work on the Mangilaluk school in Tuktoyaktuk;
- \$29 million in continued funding to support community governments with their infrastructure needs.

The overall capital spend is offset by \$166 million in support from the federal government through various infrastructure programs, including \$80.7 million from the Investing in Canada infrastructure plan, \$39 million from the National Trade Corridors Fund, and \$18 million from the Building Canada Fund.

That concludes my opening comments. I am happy to answer any questions that the Members might have. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Minister of Finance. We have agreed to begin with general comments to the capital estimates. I will now open the floor for general comments. Member for Kam Lake.

**MS. CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Just some general comments on the capital plan or the capital acquisition plan as a whole. The plan that is before us is the largest capital acquisition plan that this Assembly has seen to date and represents quite a substantial amount of money. I think what the red flag for me here is: who did not go through the difficult process of making difficult decisions to decide what this government could handle as far as commitments that were to be made and projects that needed to go forward? Because I think for me what the question there is: can the NWT handle this much work to be done, and can the GNWT handle this much work on the books?

I think that brings me to my next point, which is that a substantial amount of this acquisition fund, over half of this acquisition fund, is actually carry-overs from the previous year. I think this brings forward for me quite a bit of questions, one of which I put forward in a written question to the Minister. I know that the Minister might not have that information right away or at her fingertips. It makes me question: where are we lacking in capacity, or why is the government not able to get the money out the door? I think it's really important that we are able to spend money that we are holding aside for an acquisition because that is a substantial amount of money that is tied up in the capital acquisition plan that is not being able to be spent within the Northwest Territories.

Then I think of different places, like my colleague MLA from Yellowknife North was speaking about today, which is: our municipalities are screaming for money right now, and a lot of that is tied up in this acquisition fund. I think my colleague, again, from Yellowknife North mentioned that, if the GNWT all of a sudden decided not to fulfill its obligations as far as its education funding formula, what if, looking at it another way, the federal government all of a sudden decided not to fulfill its obligations to the GNWT with its territorial financing formula? I feel like what is happening with municipalities is really quite similar to that. We have laid out a formula of funding that is supposed to go to municipalities, and the GNWT is not able to fulfill that obligation. That is another concern of mine.

My third concern, Madam Chair, is the ability of the GNWT to get this money out the door. However, getting money out the door is not just about checking boxes. Getting money out the door is about making sure that we are building a strong and vibrant northern economy. It's really important that, when money is going out the door, it is benefitting northern business, it's benefitting northern residents, and that it is money that is growing our local economy, our local GDP, and, in turn, it creates people who pay for sports teams, it creates people who volunteer for the SPCA, and really ends up increasing the quality of life for all Northerners. I think that not only is my concern that this is such a huge plan but also that this money is spent locally, here in the Northwest Territories. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Member for Kam Lake. Did the Minister want to respond?

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I think, with respect to the carry-overs, this is a conversation that has begun and has already been had. I think on that one, Madam Chair, I do want to wait and make sure I have all of the necessary information that is still coming to me, as the Member notes that there is a written question right now that is seeking quite a lot of detail about the state of our carry-overs and where we are at. I do think there is more to come on that, and I think it is still an important conversation to have. I am sorry that I am putting it off, but I do think it's important to actually have the full information in front of us in terms of numbers before we have it.

I was making a number of notes because there were quite a number of comments. The money that we are putting into the capital acquisition plan does not necessarily mean that it's money that does not go to something else. Quite a lot of the time, especially on the larger projects, those projects have to get approved year over year by this

Assembly. The money is tied up in the large projects, but it's tied up in large projects that are already underway. It's just that the way our Assembly functions is that we must approve it year over year for those projects to continue. Just keep that in mind, as well, as some of those larger projects go forward and, not even just large projects, even some of the medium-sized projects, as well.

Then, if you have a carry-over, can you just take the money and essentially pick it up and drop it somewhere else? Madam Chair, we can't because, again, we're approving it year over year here, because it's being approved by the Assembly. Once it's approved by the Assembly, it's not for an individual department to pick up and say, "We're not sure we can deliver on X, Y or Z, so we're going to pick it up and put it somewhere else." Once it's approved here, it stays associated to the project where it's approved until it comes back here.

In the last comment with respect to being spent locally, Madam Chair, the question around procurement and procurement in all its forms: procurement when something's gone out to tender, but also negotiated contracts, sole source contracts, manufacturing policy, BIP. All of those things are part of the procurement review that's already under way and getting ready to get really started this fall. I couldn't agree more that we want to make sure we're spending locally, but it's an opportunity to actually point out that on these larger scale programs and projects and needs really is what it is, needs of the Northwest Territories, we are going to have to find the balance between how to maximize benefits for the northern businesses while still delivering on infrastructure where we are so far behind. I think that's a great place to end, and I'll end, as well. Thanks, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Minister of Finance. I will go to Member for Frame Lake.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Madam Chair. I have a number of comments that are similar to what my colleague before just mentioned. This is the largest ever capital project at \$451 million. I don't think it's quite correct to say that, anyway, there is a relationship between what we spend in O and M and what we spend on capital. It's something called the Fiscal Responsibility Policy that requires an operating surplus on our O and M side. Programs and services, we have to have money left over from that to allow us to spend up to 50 percent of that on capital projects, so there is a relationship. Quite frankly, I think it's out of whack right now. We're spending too much on capital. Some of my reasons are the large carryovers that have increased significantly over time, and as I understand it, about 50 percent of this capital budget is carryovers. That

means we can't spend the money. Something is happening that is preventing us from spending that money.

In the fiscal update that was delivered by the Finance Minister on Friday, the operating surplus, which is what we can spend on capital, saw, and the Minister said, a catastrophic decline because of COVID from \$203 million to \$60 million. That means \$30 million is supposed to go for capital spending. Yes, I guess we have some matching federal dollars in here somehow, but how do we make up the \$140 million drop in the operating surplus, and still have a \$451 million capital estimates before us? I just don't get it. How do we make up that loss? We're going to have to go into debt. I just don't understand it.

What we have seen in the five years that I have been here is an increase in our debt as a government. We see an increase in our borrowing limit with the federal government. The Minister said on Friday that the borrowing limit, even though we just got it increased to \$1.8 billion, there's only \$538 million left in the borrowing limit. How could we ever possibly hope to do the large infrastructure projects, whether it's the Mackenzie Valley Highway, the Slave Geological Province, the Taltson expansion, when all we have left is \$538 million? I just don't get it.

My colleague mentioned the growing carryovers. I asked in the last Assembly for that to be tracked carefully so that we actually understand the reasons for that. I'm not sure that a system is yet in place to do that. Is it because we've maxed out our contractor capacity; the ability for our economy to do the work that the government intends to do? Is it cash flow issues? Problems with our capacity to actually get out the door? We have no reason, no understanding of that. If you don't track it and understand the reason, we can't work on how to fix it.

The other thing that is starting to happen is that these federal infrastructure programs are starting to drive what we're doing with our capital budget. It's not just driven by our needs anymore. It's driven by federal dollars being dangled in front of us that are being used, in many cases, for large infrastructure projects.

I think all of this really points to me to overspending on our capital budget, particularly on the large capital projects. My colleague also mentioned our inability to actually show that there's real benefits to some of the large infrastructure projects in my view. You don't have to look any further than the five years' worth of contracts that I asked the infrastructure Minister to put together. Those have now been tabled in the House. Slave Geological Province work over the last five years and Taltson

hydro expansion. Less than 10 percent of that money actually stayed in the North. Why are we doing these projects if only 10 percent of the money is staying in the North? I just don't get it. Even if we want to continue to spend, the large amount of money in the capital estimates, how do we make sure the money actually stays in the North? While a procurement review is going on, we have contracts; the work on these two big projects shows that the money is not sticking here, and all of this during a pandemic? How can we actually get the money out the door and spend the money? I just don't get it. It just doesn't seem to make any sense to me.

This overspending on capital, it does come at a cost. There is a relationship. I talked about it at the beginning, how we have to run a surplus in O and M. In programs and services, we have to keep that under control to spend money on capital. While we're now overspending on capital, that means we're not spending money on programs and services. The kinds of programs and services I want to see our money spent on are things like childcare, education, addictions, income assistance, getting our people out of poverty. That's the kind of spending that our government can and should be doing, not overspending on capital projects. Cutting back on spending in those key areas so we can spend more money on projects that don't actually benefit the North. There's something wrong with this picture.

There are a couple of things, specific things that I want to say. Look, there is good spending in here, but there's not enough in some areas. The one area, in particular, that I don't believe that there's enough spending on is housing. We have a \$60 million co-investment fund that our government could access, but we expect NGOs to go out and have bake sales and raise money to match that money or for the housing corporation to make internal cuts to its programs and services and scrimp and save to come up with money to help fund our access, that co-investment fund? That's wrong. We approve money at the drop of a hat for the big infrastructure projects for the 75 percent matching dollars. No questions asked. Where is the Housing Corporation trying to get money to match the money that's in the co-investment fund? It's not in here.

The other area that I think needs to be a big infrastructure project, if we are to pursue one, is making sure that we have affordable and accessible Internet and telecommunications for all of our residents. That's not found in the budget. There is some money, perhaps, for extending the Mackenzie Valley fibre line to Tuktoyaktuk. That's great, but at the end of the day, there's no distribution system in Tuktoyaktuk. People can't take advantage of it. We already have a \$90 million Mackenzie Valley fibre link that does not allow for

high speed access in all the communities that it passes by. We need a lot of work done on that, and we've seen the results of that with the pandemic and trying to do distance education. That project can and should be in here, but it's not.

All of that to say, Madam Chair, that I have a lot of difficulty supporting these capital estimates. If there's not more money put in here for housing, I will be voting against it. Thanks, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. Minister of Finance, would you like to respond?

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I am not going to try and go through it line by line. There is obviously quite a lot in the Member's comments, but just to touch on a couple of items if I might, Madam Chair. Importantly, with respect to housing, the housing infrastructure budget isn't in this budget at all. The housing infrastructure budget is in the operations and maintenance budget in the form of a transfer that they get through the Department of Finance, so this just simply is not the occasion when anyone is going to be able to review the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation's operations or their capital budget. I can't put more housing infrastructure money in here because it's a different budget, which I recognize is a bit difficult, maybe, to then sort of scope out as we do this, but this is currently the way our system has been designed and structured.

With respect to Internet, Madam Chair, similarly, there is money in here for some of the infrastructure projects surrounding broadband and broadband expansion. There is more money that, again, comes in through operations and maintenance, but to ask for the Government of the Northwest Territories to become an Internet service provider is quite a different thing altogether. That, again, is not necessarily something that is going to be contemplated in an infrastructure budget, right now or on the fly.

Then, with respect, Madam Chair, to just why we're doing some of the big projects and the balance that is there and to what extent it is federally driven, we are so far behind. We are, if I recall correctly, the farthest behind out of every jurisdiction in terms of both the amount of infrastructure we have and in terms of the age of the infrastructure that we have, and that applies to the schools and to the health centres. It applies to our housing. It applies to our roads. Yes, these are large projects, and yes, some of that is federally driven, but I don't think it's for lack of need. Obviously, each department will have to go through what their contribution is to making up that need, but I wouldn't want to let it be any mistake. Every single project in here, there is some

departmental need that is being met, and very often with federal dollars. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**MR. NORN:** Thank you, Madam Chair. When I reviewed this earlier, it made me really think about history, our history in North America, and how everything always comes full circle. You look at the 1920s where there was a big boom, and all of a sudden, the 1930s, there is the Great Depression. You look at how the Canadian and US governments dealt with that. What they did to get through that depression was: they put lots of money into their infrastructure. That's what they did. They kept their people working. That's what I really feel is going on right now; everything comes full circle.

I agree with my colleague from Frame Lake on a lot of his comments, but I think a lot of it, right now, I think we're going to have to go in that direction, to start moving in that direction for infrastructure and start catching up where we can, not to sit here and complain. When I talk about these things, I will try to find some solutions, and for me, I really think that we really need to get our northern businesses involved more. Ten percent, that means 90 percent of our monies are going south. That's insane. I really believe that we have lots of talent in the North, and we really need to capture that and do whatever we can. I've been saying it. I've been saying it like a mantra: keep the money in the North.

It is going to require some policy reform, I believe, in terms of BIP and that sort of thing, and the way I look at it is that it may seem like a big mountain right now. The way I look at it is: how do you eat a bull moose? One small bite at a time. That's how we have to look at things like the business centre policy. We have to look at this and do what we can because, right now, we are not, and we are not treating it with the urgency that it deserves. This is something that I think we can get ahead of in the life of this Assembly.

Working with our Indigenous partners, their business arms, for me, I think there should be a pecking order that we should look at. I think that we should be having our contracts, having our Aboriginal business, then northern business, then Canadian business, and then other, but it should be really pushing for keeping the money in the North. That's our first and foremost thought when I look at how we are investing in our infrastructure.

Going back to that, I looked at some of the items here. I looked at funding some of the schools and stuff. I don't want to sound like I'm anti-Yellowknife because I'm not. My girls go to school here. In the

riding I serve, Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh, that covers Ndilo, Detah, Lutselk'e, and Fort Resolution, and I'm happy that some of the schools, some work is going to be done in the schools. I think that there are some retrofits that need to be done in Ndilo. They don't even have a proper gym, there. I'm going to be pushing for that, because the community of Ndilo have really been pushing for that. The other schools in the Yellowknife area get to look at their nice, big gyms with their banners up on the wall and the various sports that their kids can celebrate, but they can't do that. It's just down the road, here, and that kind of bothers me. Our school in Deninu K'ue, it's been a while since there has been any sort of maintenance. It's a very old building. That got me thinking.

With that, I think I'm not satisfied with what I'm seeing right now, and I am with my colleague from Frame Lake. I'm not going to be voting on it the way it is right now, unless there are some significant changes. Again, we're going to be discussing it in the next little while, but we will get to that when the time comes. With that, marsi cho, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh. Minister of Finance, would you like to respond?

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Madam Chair, the \$451-million proposed capital budget brings with it 990 estimated full-time equivalent jobs, so there is quite a lot of potential here to really have a significant impact at a time when, as the Member has just pointed out, there has been a lot of concern around economic downturn. This plan does have a lot of possibility in it. We've broken it down in different ways between different communities. The goal isn't to spread the dollars in some sort of fashion where we parse it out by community but to ensure that every community's needs are being met.

With respect to schools, for example, using a framework of understanding where those needs are and trying to address the most critical ones first. There are always needs. There are so many needs. As I said in my last response, we are so far behind in our infrastructure that every community is going to have needs, and we are doing our best to catch up. Obviously, the point of having it on the floor is for us to have that debate and have that balance and make sure we try to not overlook a need and try to hit as many needs as quickly as possible. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Minister. Are there any further general comments? Member for Yellowknife North.

**MR. JOHNSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I echo many of the comments made by my colleagues,

and when I look at what we're planning to spend on infrastructure, we're spending \$450 million this year. Then, it's going to decline to \$364, \$282, \$275. It's clear we're planning to decline our infrastructure investment because, as the Minister points out, our operating surplus is declining. We are marching toward our debt wall, and we are expected to hit the second debt ceiling we asked for in this Assembly.

I guess what this reflects is a Cabinet presenting a budget where hard decisions have not been made. I recognize that this Cabinet inherited a capital budget with over half of it being carry-overs. That's not a great position to be in. I recognize we passed one budget, and the agreement was that it was largely a status quo budget. I struggle to pass this capital budget knowing that all of the other ones will be smaller, or should be smaller, going forward, and we know that we are probably not going to spend all of this money. We're going to tie it up, and it's going to get deferred.

Second, my other concern is: as I mentioned earlier today, we are consistently underfunding our municipalities. I have no doubt that our municipalities are one of our best economic returns on investments. I know they will spend that money in their communities. I don't have any concerns about them going down South. I don't have concerns about them not hiring local. It is a great return on investment. I believe we need to increase municipal funding by \$5 million. This is a \$450-million capital budget; I believe we can find that money. I am willing to take it out of our own department of infrastructure's \$292 million. Now, I also recognize in some sense this is robbing Peter to pay Paul. I know we have a massive infrastructure deficit. I know we have some of the oldest infrastructure, but we as the GNWT are much better suited to go to the federal government. We have the ability to take on debt. We have the ability to lobby, to get those 75 cent dollars. Most of our community governments are overworked, and they don't have the time to begin even writing a proposal to the federal government. I will not be voting in for this capital budget unless I can see an increase to municipal funding.

The second thing I want to see is an increase to housing. Housing is one of those rare pieces of capital we can build that I think will actually save us money. We know that housing people keeps them out of the justice system, it makes them healthier, and our health budget is ballooning, so if we can house some more people maybe our health outcomes could increase. Madam Chair, I don't believe the work has been done on this capital budget to assess how we are going to stop this trend of turnovers, how we are going to stop running into our debt wall before the life of this Assembly, and I don't believe the work has been to

connect our capital budget and our operating budget. To me, if we can house our people, we can save money in health. It's one of the few areas where the input can directly decrease the costs of another department.

Lastly, Madam Chair, I think there is a lot of work to be done in the overall assessment of how we are spending our capital. I know there is great work to be done on the Business Incentive Program. I know there is great work to be done on procurement. I have faith in this Minister to get this work done. My concern is that we're going to spend \$450 million, and that work won't be done. I don't see why we can't defer some of this capital, spend it in subsequent years when the Business Incentive Policy is revised, when our procurement is revised, we can level out our capital spending and make sure every single dollar going out has a proper economic analysis attached to it and is under our new procurement regime. I got a great commitment from the Minister to speed up our work on procurement, but right now, we are asking to spend the largest capital budget in GNWT history and possibly, according to this, the largest capital budget in the life of this Assembly, without having done our procurement review. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Madam Chair, at the risk of starting to repeat myself here, again, housing is going to be complicated. It's not that there can't be a way to have that conversation here, but the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation's budget doesn't flow into the capital plan the way that would make it easier, frankly, to have this conversation. I'm sure we can find solutions to that. Similarly, with respect to the funding and municipalities, there is O and M funding for municipalities, which is what has the largest sort of gap in terms of the study that was done to where it's at now and no doubt why this is, of course, part of the mandate of this Assembly is to make up that gap.

The infrastructure funding, it's not to say that that doesn't have its challenges, but that's only one part of that gap. Again, the entirety of the solution involves both budgets, not only this one. Again, on procurement, it's challenging in that that comes back to the operations of ITI and Finance in support, as opposed to necessarily the actual substance of what's in this infrastructure budget. I understand that that's the challenge of having two different budgets that operate is the needs of the one budget require the actions in the other. I'm listening, and I'm taking notes, Madam Chair. We'll see how far we can get. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Minister. Member for Yellowknife North, did you have any further comments? Member for Hay River South.

**MR. ROCKY SIMPSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm just going to make some comments, and I don't really need any response to save time. When I look at the budget, it kind of reminds me of when I go into a grocery store while hungry. I come back out, and I end up with a whole bunch of spoiled food. At the same time, I realize that we have to do something, and the reality of the North is that we do have limited resources here with respect to businesses and workers. We keep saying that we want Northern businesses to get all the work, we want all our people to be working. We do have enough, there is enough in here to keep us going probably for years. We have to also be real about the capacity of the North. I think that's important when we're looking at this budget, these capital projects. We have to make sure that what I'd like to see we focus on areas that we're deficient in. There are things in there already. We do know we need municipal infrastructure. It would be nice to see some tourism facilities like makerspaces. One important thing is long-term care facilities, very much needed, especially in Hay River. The other thing is treatment centres. We talk about it, but it's always better to put them down South. Those are some of the areas that we should be looking at, as well.

With respect to contracts, I'd like to see them broken down to where smaller businesses can actually have a piece of them. That's one complaint I get quite a bit is that they don't have that opportunity. The other thing to ensure is that when we're looking at these capital projects that we can consider the training component, as well. We always have that opportunity to ensure that some of them will go on, and in two, three, four years, we'll have tradespeople, which we drastically need here in the North. I know that personally, from being in business. We throw this out there. There is lots in there. We all want to see maybe funds put into different areas. We want to see different projects. We want projects for our communities, but at the same time, we have to make sure we're doing what our people need at this moment in time and concentrate on that. I just ask the Minister and Cabinet to look at that and consider where our needs really are with respect to this. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Member for Hay River South. Are there any further questions or general comments to the capital budget? Member for Great Slave.

**MS. NOKLEBY:** I'm just going to say I think we need more infrastructure, and I'd like to see the Dempster and ITH rehab in here, as well. Thanks.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Member for Great Slave. Minister of Finance, do you want to respond to that?

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** [Microphone turned off] ...down, Madam Chair.

---Laughter

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Are there are any further general comments to the capital budget estimates? All right. Seeing no further general comments, we will take a short five-minute break, if that's okay with you. Five minutes.

---SHORT RECESS

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** All right. We will now call this committee back to order. The committee has agreed to begin with the review of the Legislative Assembly. Mr. Speaker, do you wish to bring in any witnesses?

**MR. SPEAKER:** Yes, I do.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Sergeant-at-Arms, please escort the witnesses into the Chamber. Would the Speaker please introduce his witnesses?

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Madam Chair. My backup today here is Kim Wickens, deputy clerk, Members and Precinct Services, and also Brian Thagard, Sergeant-at-Arms.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. I will now open the floor to general comments on the Legislative Assembly. Seeing there are no further comments, does committee agree to proceed to the detail contained in the tabled document?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Committee, we will defer department totals and review the estimates by activity, beginning on page 8, Legislative Assembly, office of the clerk, infrastructure investments. Any comments? Member for Yellowknife North.

**MR. JOHNSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I have no issue with the \$110,000 allocated here and the replacement of a chiller. It appears to be necessary infrastructure. However, I have a question about what is not in here. Previously, there were plans for the Legislative Assembly to work with a number of other buildings -- I believe the City of Yellowknife, Joint Task Force North, the museum -- to create a district heating system. I recognize we just replaced the pipes to that area. Was any work done on that,

or are there any plans to advance that capital project? Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Member for Yellowknife North. Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I will just let our Sergeant-at-Arms update the Member. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Thagard.

**MR. THAGARD:** Thank you, Madam Chair. No work has been done with regard to the district heating system. We looked into the cost-benefit analysis of doing that work, and it did not seem feasible given the distance. There is talk about having a central heating system located closer to the city side, and the distance from there to here, the numbers just did not work out. We have a pellet boiler here that we are utilizing and saving costs and offsetting greenhouse gas emissions already, anyway.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Any further questions? Nothing for you? Okay. Any other questions or comments on the Legislative Assembly capital estimates? Seeing none, Legislative Assembly, office of the clerk, infrastructure investments, \$110,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Members. Please return now to the departmental summary found on page 7. Legislative Assembly, 2021-2022 Capital Estimates, \$110,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Does committee agree that the consideration of the Legislative Assembly is complete?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Sergeant-at-Arms, please escort the witnesses out of the Chamber. Committee, you have agreed to review the Department of Justice next. Does the Minister of Justice wish to bring witnesses into the Chamber?

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Yes. I do, Madam Chair.

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

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Today, with me, I have Mandi Bolstad, director of corporate services, and Charlene Doolittle, deputy minister.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. I will now open the floor to general comments on the Department of Justice. Member for Kam Lake.

**MS. CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I am just wondering if the GNWT, when requesting bids or tenders or contracts for vehicles, is specific to the make and model of the vehicle or if they leave it open so that different suppliers are able to bid on the contract and not just, for example, Ford or GM or Dodge, and so that it's a little bit more open and different businesses can bid on the contract? Thank you.

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

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. For that level of detail, I would like to ask Ms. Bolstad to respond.

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

**MS. BOLSTAD:** Thank you, Madam Chair. The department just identifies the detailed specs for the vehicle, not the make or model necessarily. It's just the security and requirements around the vehicle. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Ms. Bolstad. Member for Kam Lake, nothing? Are there any other general comments to the Department of Justice? If there are no further comments, does committee agree to proceed to the detail contained in the tabled document?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Committee, we will defer the department totals and review the estimates by activity summary, beginning at page 51. Corrections, with information items on page 52. General comments? Seeing none, Department of Justice, corrections, infrastructure investments, \$1,081,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Committee, please turn to page 53, court services, with information on page 54. Are there any comments? Seeing none, Department of Justice, court services, infrastructure investments, \$135,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Committee, please turn to page 56, services to the public, with information items on page 57. Any comments? Seeing none, Department of Justice, service to the public, infrastructure investments, \$325,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Committee, please return now to the department summary, found on page 50. Department of Justice, 2021-2022 Capital Estimates, \$1,541,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. Yes, Mr. Norn.

COMMITTEE MOTION 35-19(2):  
TABLED DOCUMENT 181-19(2): CAPITAL  
ESTIMATES 2021-2022 - JUSTICE - DEFERRAL  
OF DEPARTMENT (PAGE 50),  
CARRIED

**MR. NORN:** Madam Chair, I move that committee defer further consideration of the estimates for the Department of Justice at this time. Marsi cho, Madam Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. The motion is in order. To the motion.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Question.

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

---Carried

Consideration of the departmental summary has been deferred. Thank you, Minister. Sergeant-at-Arms, you can escort the witnesses from the chamber. Committee, you have agreed to review the Department of Lands next. Does the Minister of Lands wish to bring witnesses into the Chamber?

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** Yes, I do.

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

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Katherine Macdonald, director of finance of administration, and Blair Chapman, assistant deputy minister of operations. Thank you.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Minister. I will now open the floor to general comments on the Department of Lands. If there are

no comments, does committee agree to proceed to the detail contained in the tabled document?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Committee, we will defer the departmental totals and review the estimates by activity summary, beginning at page 59, operations, with information items on page 60. Questions or comments? Seeing none, Department of Lands, operations, infrastructure investments, \$234,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you, Members. Please return now to the department summary found on page 58. Department of Lands, 2021-2022 Capital Estimates, \$234,000. Does committee agree?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Agreed.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Mr. Norn.

COMMITTEE MOTION 36-19(2):  
TABLED DOCUMENT 181-19(2): CAPITAL  
ESTIMATES 2021-2022 - LANDS - DEFERRAL OF  
DEPARTMENT (PAGE 58),  
CARRIED

**MR. NORN:** Marsi cho, Madam Chair. I also move that this committee defer further consideration of the estimates for the Department of Lands.

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** Thank you. The motion is in order. To the motion.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Question.

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

---Carried

Consideration of the departmental summary has been deferred. Thank you, Minister. Sergeant-at-Arms, please escort the witnesses from the Chamber. Mr. Norn, what is the will of committee?

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

**CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler):** The motion is in order and non-debatable. All those in favour? Opposed? The motion is carried.

---Carried

I will now rise and report progress.

**MR. SPEAKER:** May I have the report of the Committee of the Whole? 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 with two motions carried. Mr. Speaker, I move that the report of the Committee of the Whole be concurred with. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you. Motion is in order. Do we have a seconder? Member for Inuvik Boot Lake. All those in favour? All those opposed? Motion is carried.

---Carried

Thank you. 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 Wednesday, October 21, 2020, at 1:30 p.m.:

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

- Bill 11, Legislative Assembly Officers Standardization Act
- Tabled Document 165-19(2), Government of the Northwest Territories Response to Committee Report 1-19(2): Report on Long-Term Post-Pandemic Recovery - Recommendations to the GNWT
- Tabled Document 166-19(2), Government of the Northwest Territories Response to Committee Report 2-19(2): Report on Long-Term Post-Pandemic Recovery - Recommendations to the GNWT
- Tabled Document 167-19(2), Government of the Northwest Territories Response to Committee Report 3-19(2): Report on Long-Term Post-Pandemic Recovery - Recommendations to the GNWT
- Tabled Document 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:** Thank you, Mr. Clerk. This House stands adjourned until Wednesday, October 21, 2020, at 1:30 p.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 4:56 p.m.