



NORTHWEST TERRITORIES
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The Honourable Frederick Blake Jr, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

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YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**Wednesday, October 21, 2020****Members Present**

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

The House met at 1:32 p.m.

Prayer

---Prayer

SPEAKER (Hon. Frederick Blake Jr.): Thank you. Item 2, Ministers' statements. Minister of Health and Social Services.

Ministers' Statements

**MINISTER'S STATEMENT 69-19(2):
UPDATE ON COVID-19 CASES**

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to inform the Members that the Chief Public Health Officer has released two public health advisories today. The first indicates the two positive COVID-19 tests in Yellowknife, first announced as presumptive cases on Friday, have been confirmed. The individuals continue to safely isolate. We appreciate their cooperation with the investigation into contacts, and we wish them well. A thorough contact investigation continues; initial signs are good.

This morning, we received notice of another presumptive case at Gahcho Kue diamond mine. All contacts onsite have been safely isolated. The individual is a resident of Yellowknife, and contact tracing has been initiated. A number of steps have already been taken by public health staff to minimize any potential risk to communities. Immediate household members of the individual and identified contacts were quickly informed and directed to isolate and given appropriate public health advice. Public health has arranged for immediate testing of these contacts. The contact investigation is ongoing and further updates to Members and to the public will be provided once more information is available.

There are two crucial things each of us must do to help in this situation. The first is that we need to be kind and respectful to one another. Stigmatizing behaviours hurt us all because it places the focus on individuals instead of focusing on doing our part to manage the virus appropriately. It has the potential to discourage people from accessing

healthcare and being honest with health professionals.

Second, we need to remember that we all have control in this situation. No matter the situation in the community, you are empowered to practice routine public health precautions which keep you and others safer:

- Prioritize physical distance of at least six feet or two metres;
- Wear a non-medical mask when keeping distance is difficult;
- Keep crowds small and spaces large to reduce the risk of transmission;
- Frequently wash your hands with soap and water or hand sanitizer;
- Maintain self-isolation if you are required to do so;
- Stay home if you are feeling sick, even if your symptoms are mild; and
- If you develop any symptoms, contact your local healthcare centre to be assessed for COVID-19.

As I receive more details from the Chief Public Health Officer, I will provide additional information to this House and to the public. I encourage everyone to be kind and stay safe. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Ministers' statements. Minister of Infrastructure.

**MINISTER'S STATEMENT 70-19(2):
SUPPORTING COMMUNITY EMPLOYMENT AND
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN SMALL
COMMUNITIES**

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Mr. Speaker, increasing employment in small communities is one of the priorities outlined in the priorities for the 19th Assembly. Now, more than ever, as we begin to plan for social and economic recovery from COVID-19, we need to ensure that there are opportunities for meaningful employment and economic development for our people to keep our

communities and territory strong. I grew up in a small community, Aklavik, where I learned the importance of having a strong community. While our large strategic infrastructure projects are often in the spotlight, we need to give credit to our regional operations and smaller-scale projects for making an impact on the lives of Northerners with the opportunities they present.

Part of the Department of Infrastructure's core business is the delivery of programs, services, and projects by our staff in all regions of the territory. Almost two-thirds of Infrastructure staff work outside of headquarters in regional offices, with 329 employees based in regional centres and 46 located in smaller communities. Infrastructure's regional operations work hard to keep our 863 GNWT-owned buildings running smoothly. They also oversee the construction, operations, and maintenance of the highway system, including over 2,400 kilometres of all-weather roads, 1,400 kilometres of winter roads, and four ferries.

Mr. Speaker, that is a lot of work, and we cannot do it alone. Many projects and operations are contracted to local communities and/or businesses, which allows the government to operate efficiently, while creating employment at the local level. Some of these contracts include our ferries, where three of the four ferries are operated by local contractors. We also have contracts in place with 14 businesses for highway maintenance, some of which are with Indigenous and community governments. Out of 27 airports in the territory, eight are operated and maintained by Infrastructure staff, and operations at the 19 smaller airports are contracted to local businesses. Motor vehicle issuing services are also provided at the regional level through a mix of GNWT staff and contractors.

On top of our operational work in the regions, the Department of Infrastructure is also making strategic investments in our territory's future. In partnership with the federal government, we are advancing several significant infrastructure projects. The 2020-2021 Infrastructure Acquisition Plan will deliver 152 capital projects in 28 NWT communities. This includes schools, long-term care and healthcare facilities, and major transportation projects.

Mr. Speaker, to help our residents benefit from these projects, we must increase training and employment. Led by the Department of Infrastructure, the GNWT is working with its project partners to incorporate training opportunities that will lead to maximized benefits for residents. For example, the GNWT and the Pehdzeh Ki First Nation together established the Wrigley Mackenzie Valley Highway Training Committee to identify training opportunities for that project, to facilitate development and delivery of training programs for

the residents of Wrigley, and also to facilitate access to funding for these programs.

Similarly, we worked with North Star Infrastructure to include training requirements in the project agreement for the Tlicho all-season road project. As of late this summer, almost 9,000 hours of training have been provided to Tlicho citizens in different areas, such as heavy equipment operator, cook, crushing operation, and job readiness training. Now that the end of its construction is in sight, these individuals will be able to apply the skills they have developed onto other jobs.

Mr. Speaker, providing employment and economic development opportunities will help support our communities as we recover from the economic impacts caused by the pandemic, and beyond. Providing employment opportunities are important for the cultural preservation of our communities, so we can continue to engage in our traditional activities and pass on teachings to the next generation. The GNWT will continue to work and support our residents of our small communities. Quana, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Ministers' statements. Minister of Health and Social Services.

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 71-19(2): CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES UPDATE

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Taking action to improve services and supports to reduce the number of Indigenous children and youth in care is a priority for this government. The 2019-2020 Annual Report of the Director of Child and Family Services that I will be tabling later today, shows a continued trend of overrepresentation of Indigenous children and youth receiving protection and prevention services under our legislation. This is a national issue, Mr. Speaker, and was raised in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Calls to Action, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Children.

To advance the calls for action, the federal act respecting First Nations, Inuit, and Metis children, youth, and families came into force on January 1, 2020. The federal act recognizes the inherent rights of Indigenous communities to provide care for their children and youth. It aligns with work that the Government of the Northwest Territories has already been doing. This includes supporting Indigenous children and youth by helping them stay with their family and community, and reducing the number of children and youth separated from their families only because of financial, health or housing challenges.

Mr. Speaker, we fully support the federal act, and we are affirming our commitment to having an ongoing dialogue with Indigenous governments and communities to ensure that our system advances the best interests of children, youth, and families. We will continue to work collaboratively in supporting communities and families to preserve family and cultural continuity for our territory's children and youth.

Mr. Speaker, work is already underway in supporting the implementation of the federal act. The Department of Health and Social Services has added a new action into its quality improvement plan to enhance practice standards that align with the federal act's national principles. The quality improvement plan, which was released in August 2019, sets out actions that the department is taking to best meet the needs of NWT children, youth, and families. The measurement I am most proud of is that over 90 percent of children receiving support from Child and Family Services live with their family or in their home community.

Even amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, the department has made steady progress with the actions identified in the quality improvement plan. This is important to the GNWT so we have made additional investments to add 20 new positions that ensures we have the appropriate resources to help improve compliance and support for children, youth, families, and foster caregivers.

Mr. Speaker, the 2018-2019 audits for the Child and Family Services division were completed across the system in June. The audits identified pressure points within the regions that need to be resolved to ensure continued service improvements. The Northwest Territories Health and Social Services authorities submitted their action plans in response to the audits and are actively working on addressing key areas for service in each of the regions.

The department has provided funding to foster caregivers and foster care staff from across the NWT to participate in training on best practices on how to better support children and youth, particularly those with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder.

Last year, we saw a decrease in the vacancy rate for staff from 25 percent to 8.6 percent. The department and authorities also expanded staff engagement opportunities through all staff regular meetings, implementation of an anonymous feedback mechanism, and satisfaction surveys. This allows for opportunities to better support staff, which we hope will lead to better staff retention. Having a stable workforce in Child and Family Services is instrumental to overall improvement strategies.

Because of the resources required for the GNWT COVID-19 response, the Child and Family Services system experienced delays in the ongoing completion of some quality reviews. However, the pandemic also created opportunities for the department and authorities to work with partners on some new initiatives. We partnered with the Foster Family Coalition of the NWT to implement a respite program to support foster caregivers during the pandemic. The department also expanded support services for families by providing short-term financial support to purchase necessities such as diapers, food, and fuel to meet their basic unmet needs. The department also extended support services for youth in care and young adults who would have aged out of the Child and Family Services system in the midst of this global crisis.

We will monitor the effectiveness of these initiatives and how they might be added into the service delivery as part of its commitment towards continual quality improvement.

Mr. Speaker, each year the department presents an Annual Report of the Director of Child and Family Services. The report enables the department and the public to monitor trends to assess whether actions are making a difference for the well-being of NWT children, youth, and families. Findings from the report help to grow a more responsive system to the evolving needs of children, youth, and families.

In the 2019-2020 Annual Report, it shows some positive indications that we are on the right track. Over the past ten years, we have seen a decreasing trend in the number of children and youth under a permanent custody order. We are seeing a positive movement in the strength and resiliency of communities to support families and their children. Over 90 percent of children and youth who received prevention and protection services were living in their home or with a foster caregiver in their home community, a statistic that bears repeating. This change allows for continued connections with family and community while ensuring cultural continuity, which is so important in protecting the identity of the child.

Mr. Speaker, as a government, we have a legal and moral duty to protect the well-being and safety of children and youth, and ensuring their families receive the right kinds of support. To accomplish this, I will maintain an open dialogue with Members, Indigenous governments, and communities, as well as key stakeholders to explore opportunities to better support children, youth, and families.

Mr. Speaker, October is Foster Family Recognition month, and I would like to take this opportunity to extend my sincere gratitude and appreciation to all

foster caregivers across the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 72-19(2):
PIVOTING TO SUPPORT NWT BUSINESSES
THROUGH COVID

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Mr. Speaker, in addition to describing times as being unprecedented, the need to "pivot" business models and methods has become one of the buzz words during the course of the COVID-19 pandemic. Almost all businesses in the Northwest Territories have had to adjust the way they operate or do business. In turn, the Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment continues to respond to the changing needs of the NWT's business community. New COVID-focused Support for Entrepreneurs and Economic Development guidelines were introduced early on in the pandemic, favouring projects that would help businesses recover, and contribute to the recovery of others.

An additional new funding option was introduced for Northwest Territories artists and commercial film and media arts producers whose activities and revenues were restricted due to physical-distancing requirements. In June, as our government moved to Phase 2 of the Emerging Wisely Plan, the Support for Entrepreneurs and Economic Development program was adapted again, to specifically support businesses re-opening or pivoting to meet new operating requirements. In an already challenging year for mineral exploration, we were able to make changes to our Mining Incentive Program that helped companies navigate COVID, related costs, and by prioritizing Northwest Territories-based service providers. Through this program, we distributed \$1 million to seven companies and 13 prospectors.

Mr. Speaker, it is not only businesses who have had to change direction. With less than a year to go until the release of our 2021-2025 tourism strategy and with a sudden and necessary new focus on recovery, we went back to the drawing board this summer, re-engaging with the tourism industry on a new set of questions and seeking opportunities for both short- and long-term rebuilding through a COVID lens.

In order to help support this particularly hard-hit sector, ITI, in partnership with CanNor, created the Growth and Recovery by Investing in Tourism, or GRIT, as a new initiative that helps respond to the needs of Northwest Territories businesses. By moving budgets away from international marketing,

the \$1.5-million GRIT fund was introduced in August. By September, it was clear that the initiative was going to be over-subscribed, so we have since taken additional steps to meet this demand.

Mr. Speaker, back in July, the BuyNorth Campaign was also introduced, in partnership with Northern News Services Limited Media, to support and promote businesses as they pivot, re-open, and start to recover from the impacts of COVID. This, too, was a new approach to business support. ITI sponsorship allows all Northwest Territories businesses to have a presence on the BuyNorth web page for free and provides an umbrella for other initiatives, like the Northwest Territories Chamber's #shopNWT campaign to heighten the importance and appreciation for shopping local. In April and May, at the height of the pandemic and with strict economic lockdown measures in place, Northwest Territories businesses saw revenues decline by an average of 63 percent, and almost 70 percent were in the challenging position of being closed or partially closed. Yet, 93 percent of businesses surveyed from the Northwest Territories at the time still felt they would be able to survive.

Mr. Speaker, I have described a few ways businesses have pivoted and ways that ITI has helped support some of those efforts. The government, too, will continue to adapt its response and supports to changing needs. 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
SUPPORTS FOR SMALL AND MEDIUM
BUSINESSES

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to recognize that the COVID-19 pandemic has caused financial losses to our small, medium, and large NWT businesses. As our priority has been the health of NWT residents since the outset of the pandemic, businesses have also been provided some support to assist them in weathering the storm that this pandemic has created. However, we have seen some businesses close their doors for good while we know others to be holding their own and some appearing to be prospering. We have seen many jobs disappear, including those from all levels of business. I am looking for this to be a wake-up call to this government.

Mr. Speaker, we all know what it costs to live in the NWT, but it is our choice to live here. Our residents need more than government support. They need

employment to meet basic expenses such as housing, utilities, and food. To obtain this employment, our businesses need work, as well. At this point, the only real game for work in the North is government. Therefore, it is important that this government does everything it can do to put government contracts out in a timely manner and that those contracts go to northern businesses.

Mr. Speaker, although it is great to put contracts out, if these contracts are going out to southern firms, then we are not doing our job to protect our businesses. This government needs to strengthen our legislation and policies around procurement to the benefit of our northern businesses, but needs to ensure that northern businesses are the beneficiary of those contracts. It is northern businesses that employ Northerners. Too often, we see southern contractors show up, take the work, take the jobs, and take the cash and leave.

Mr. Speaker, it is Small Business Week in Canada. It is an opportune time to stand up for our northern businesses. Not only do they provide jobs, they are often the go-to people when community fundraising is required. Many business owners refuse to be recognized for those very contributions and supports. I have known business owners who have gone out and paid utility bills for those who were struggling, those who have provided free fuel just so somebody had heat during the winter, those who have taken food to a family in need. The list goes on. When we talk about supporting northern businesses, let us remember all that they do beyond the contracts they receive from this government. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Members' statements. Member for Frame Lake.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON NORTHWEST TERRITORIES MINING FISCAL REGIME

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. Yesterday, the Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment launched the long-awaited review of the royalty and taxation regime for the NWT mining industry. These are some of the first steps of our devolution "baby," to look at how much we get as a government from mining and whether it is a fair share. The Minister released a so-called benchmarking study. This is a theoretical review of royalties and taxation for an imaginary diamond and base-metal mine, assessed under 21 different regimes, including the NWT. The study concludes that the Northwest Territories is competitive against all these other regimes. Although no recommendations were supposed to be offered in this report, it also states that the best way to increase mining revenues is to promote more mining by public investment in big infrastructure to

subsidize the industry. This study is apparently going to serve as the foundation for the review of the royalty and taxation regime for Northwest Territories mining. Clearly, Cabinet appears to have little interest in changing the status quo.

There are many limitations and problems with this study. Factors such as political stability and regulatory certainty were not considered as part of competitiveness. Our fiscal arrangement with Ottawa was also not considered in terms of whether we actually get to keep a fair share of resource revenues. This study should not frame or limit the much-needed public debate around whether we are getting a fair share from mining.

The biggest problem, Mr. Speaker, with carrying out this review of mining royalties and taxation is secrecy. How can we have a meaningful and informed discussion of public revenues from mining when our legislation and regulations prevent this information from being made public? This isn't just a thin veil of secrecy, Mr. Speaker. It's a brick wall. This government refused to fix this secrecy during the development of the Mineral Resources Act in the last Assembly and in the time this Cabinet has been in power. Without analysis of the actual taxes and royalties paid by the mining industry, how can we possibly know whether we have achieved a fair balance between industry profit and competitiveness versus a fair return for this one-time natural wealth? Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

---Unanimous consent granted

MR. O'REILLY: I will not have any questions later today for the Minister. The Minister knows well what needs to be done to fix this fatally flawed review process of the NWT mining fiscal regime: fully disclose the actual revenues from mining to our government as best business practices require and an increasing number of countries around the world do as part of internationally accepted standards; take the review out of the department that is responsible for both promoting and regulating mining and ensure that the process is truly public, independent, fair, and evidence-based. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION

MR. BONNETROUGE: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. When we talk about economic recovery and diversification, I like to think that we will have meaningful dialogue between the Regular Members on this side of the House and the Cabinet Members. The residents of the Northwest

Territories are counting on us to ensure a future that will provide stability in the workforce and economic prosperity for all of the communities of the Northwest Territories. The youth of our territory are counting on us to set a future that will provide them with opportunities for training and with jobs that will provide valuable work experiences.

Mr. Speaker, now is the time to work together as a consensus government to deal with an economy that is declining should we ever want to continue to see the light at the end of the tunnel. The diamond mines are nearing the end of their economic value. We have already seen what has happened to the Ekati Diamond Mine and its effects on the employees and the lost revenue to the government. This will mostly likely be the same fate the other two mines, Diavik and Gahcho Kue. These diamond mines have brought economic life to our territory when it was needed most as we saw the closure of one of the largest mines in the NWT, Giant Mine. We are coming upon critical times in the history of the Northwest Territories related to the economic climate. There must be a willingness to adapt to our changing economic reality.

Let's say the head of the household loses their job and with it his wages that was able to buy the much-needed fuel for heat. Now they are left with no other option but to heat their home with wood and adapt to make this work. We need to work together with a common vision for the future. The future that relies on prudent spending and ways to save the millions of dollars squandered on diesel products and look at using our natural resources. This, in turn, will stimulate local economies in all of our communities. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON TALTSON HYDROELECTRIC EXPANSION PROJECT

MS. MARTSELOS: Mr. Speaker, for my Member's statement today, I am going to talk about the Taltson hydro expansion and its significance for creating long-term economic development for the NWT. I've now spoken several times in this House about the importance this project brings to the North, and that is the very reason I keep speaking about this topic.

Mr. Speaker, because of the great potential that I am confident this project will bring in terms of cheaper, cleaner energy for the residents and businesses of the Northwest Territories. Another pressing reason for why this project matters more than ever is because of the economic fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic. The effects of this pandemic have been severe and will most likely be

felt for many years to come. Even our Finance Minister, in her fiscal update earlier this week, said that only about 90 percent of the NWT jobs are expected to return to their pre-pandemic numbers by the end of 2020.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I implore this government to continue to advance this project as a top priority item working alongside the federal government and all Indigenous governments residing nearest to this project. It is extremely important that all levels of government work together on this project to ensure that all of the people of the NWT benefit from the construction of this expansion.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, if the Government of the Northwest Territories truly aspires to grow and diversify our economy for a brighter future, then they must stay the course and complete this expansion. As the saying goes, if you build it, they will come. I will have questions for the Minister of Infrastructure later today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON MINING AS THE ECONOMIC FOUNDATION OF THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There was a lot of discussion early on in this Assembly on how we were going to diversify the economy of the Northwest Territories, so much so that the 19th Assembly made it one of our priorities. As the first year of our term progressed, we were hit by COVID-19 and all semblance of a normal economy, a normal Northwest Territories, went out the window. As I survey the economic landscape now with an additional year of knowledge under my belt, I am looking to the future at how we rebuild our economy into a thriving, healthy one that benefits all of our residents.

I keep coming back to what has been the building blocks of our economy before now. Until we save and recover them adding in new streams to our Territory will be a challenge. How do we increase our tourism with no roads for them to drive on? How do we have a healthy small-business sector, including flower shops, hair stylists, and restaurants, if we don't have a major economic driver to employ people so they can spend money in them? This all tells me that in order for the Northwest Territories to recover from our current situation we need to return to our roots, our history.

We need to return to mining. Mining accounts for 30 to 44 percent of our GDP depending on the metrics being used. That doesn't even account for the indirect dollars that our resource extraction sector brings to our small business sector or the benefits

to mental health and our society that good paying jobs people have pride in and learn from brings. Additionally, our mines are good corporate citizens, often making financial donations and gifts of material goods to northern NGOs and charities.

We constantly hear the future is green. The NWT is abundant in the minerals and metals required to build Canada's green economy. This is the Northwest Territory's future, our role on the national stage. This is where your children will be employed, where Indigenous organizations will thrive in business, and what our polytechnics should be centred on. I am all for seeing us expand and diversify. I love to travel. I love our arts. However, if we have no foundation, no resource sector, no amount of visitors to our territory will save us. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON INTRODUCTORY TRADES PROGRAMS

MS. SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Friday, the 2021-2022 Capital Budget estimates were tabled in this House. This is the first capital budget of this Assembly. It is the largest capital estimates ever tabled. Many of these large infrastructure projects are carryover from the past years. There are many reasons that this happened. One thing I do know is that many times when we have these large infrastructure projects, there are very low percentage of NWT residents working on these projects or are the main contractors of these projects. What concerns me is the fact that, over the years, schools have had to make tough decisions on what programs their students have with the budgets that they're provided. The teacher's salaries go up and the programs seem to be lost. There is just not enough money there.

I've seen most of the CTS courses in my community be cut, which would include the carpentry or shop classes I remember, welding, auto mechanics. In a place like Inuvik these classes may only happen if we get a teacher who can teach them while also teaching some of the core classes like math, science, English. In the small communities, you're lucky to have any of those programs at all.

Mr. Speaker, we also don't have any regular scheduled introduction courses into the trades in my community through the college. How do we ever expect to increase the amount of qualified tradespeople when they're not given the opportunity to experience these areas during school or enter into any intro programs as they have in the past years? With the deficit that we've heard in

infrastructure in the Northwest Territories and lack of qualified tradespeople we will continue to bring out-of-territory businesses and tradespeople so the money will continue to leave our territory. This is unacceptable and does not benefit our economy for years to come. I will have questions for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON IMMIGRATION TO THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

MS. CLEVELAND: Mr. Speaker, the Northwest Territories is an incredible place to visit, but it is an even better place to live. Our 33 communities are spread out over vast and gorgeous territory that extends the salt plains to the Arctic Ocean. Between, you cruise past dense bush, Canadian Shield, the Rockies to the left, the Delta, the Pingos, and straight into the Arctic Ocean. Along your journey, you'll run into a bison, a muskox, caribou, wolverine, wolves, otters, beavers, a black grizzly, or polar bear, and if you're lucky, maybe even a beluga or two.

The adventures the North has to offer are plentiful, just like the wild cranberries in fall, the birch bark syrup in spring, or fish any time of year. Each season eases you from skis to paddle boards and then back again. True, you can experience all of this as a visitor, along with the northern lights, gorgeous sunsets, or a midnight sun depending on the month, but what you can't get as a visitor is how it feels to be northern.

While most of the people in this room are born and raised Northerners who have consciously made the North home for the next generation, some come from the South to start an adventure or plant roots. The NWT is a transient and welcoming place. Some come for a year and stay for a decade while others come for five and stay for a lifetime. The lure of career opportunities, lifestyle, the six-minute commute, wins over many northern newcomers, while the supports for new entrepreneurs or budding professionals, opportunities for student financial assistance, connections to the land and culture and that same lifestyle, and its people make it harder to ever leave; but why would you, Mr. Speaker? The NWT has arguably some of the most generous supports for seniors in all of Canada. I am thankful for a childhood North of 60 and am honoured to raise my own children in the Northwest Territories.

Mr. Speaker, I challenge anyone looking to build a career, find some balance, enrich their lives, or

discover friends who quickly become family, to join us. The North is incredible, and I want to share it. Today, I will have questions for the GNWT's Immigration strategy for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON COVID-19 AND ECONOMIC RECOVERY

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Firstly, I would like to begin by thanking our public health department and all the work the department of health has done to date in response to COVID. I believe in our contact tracers, and in large effect I am supportive of the measures to date. I think, at times, we spend too much time attacking these measures, as if they are hurting the economy, but in many ways, our protective measures are making sure we can have an economy. Our restricted border measures allow us to open up more. I believe we need to reframe some of these narratives. Wearing masks out in public, washing your hands, allows us to have more interaction, allows us to keep our businesses open. I believe we are spending too much time criticizing public health orders, as if they are shutting down the economy. In fact, the thing that will truly shut down the economy would be mass community spread of COVID-19, Mr. Speaker. There is nothing more that would shut down the economy than our residents getting sick and dying, so I would like to thank the Minister of health for her update and thank all of their team.

However, Mr. Speaker, there are many things we can do to support the economy beyond criticizing public health measures, and today, I would like to renew my commitment to the Vote Growth platform from the Yellowknife Chamber of Commerce. Many of the Yellowknife Members in this House supported that platform the election, and I believe we have to relook at those priorities and make sure we are making progress on them.

Mr. Speaker, COVID-19 let the cat out of the bag. The government can move quickly. We created 160 positions. We shut down our borders. We mobilized border enforcement. We created brand new units. We passed more regulations in a few weeks than I expected us to do all year. The rapid response of mobilizing 5,000 public servants showed how fast this government can work. I am proud of that response, but we must take that initiative to respond to the economic crisis we now find ourselves in and the recession we will inevitably be heading into.

I stand here and I renew my platform to the Vote Growth platform. I believe we need to create a more reasonable business environment for the sale of alcohol in Yellowknife. I believe we need fibre redundancy. I believe we need to fund our community governments more. I want us to lead the world in our post-secondary transformation and truly build a world-class university. Lastly, I believe we need to transfer the land to the City of Yellowknife. These are the issues I campaigned for under the Vote Growth platform, and I am committed to continuing them. I will have questions for the Minister of Finance. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON ABORIGINAL AND NORTHERN PROCUREMENT IN THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

MR. NORN: Marsi cho, Mr. Speaker. I want to speak about the businesses in the NWT and the state of the economy. I want to echo some of the comments that my colleagues had on both sides of the floor. I think it's really encouraging for our business community to hear that they are being looked after. More specifically, I wanted to talk about Aboriginal and northern procurement in the NWT. I would like to delve into this a little more and hopefully get a good sense of how this government is going to address this issue.

In my reply to the budget address earlier this year, I mentioned that businesses will be key to getting us through this financial and economic stagnation and decline we are going through right now. I've been seeing some of the employment numbers lately, and the news scares me, quite frankly. I am worried about how our constituents are going to keep roofs over their heads and food on their tables.

With that, in my research, Mr. Speaker, I noticed that we are one of the few jurisdictions here in the NWT that do not have an Aboriginal procurement policy. A good example of this for best practices is in the US. The US Small Business Administration, through the 8(a) Business Development program, supports disadvantaged businesses.

There are quite a few items to go through, but I'll try to keep this brief. Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, the Americans, our neighbours to the South, have set guidelines, and one did stand out, that businesses must be at least 51-percent owned and controlled by their citizens who are economically and socially disadvantaged. To me, that means that our American partners are taking steps to help their minority populations and their businesses.

How does this apply to the NWT, Mr. Speaker? It begs a few questions: where is the support for Indigenous businesses in the NWT to keep bidding on government contracts? What business specialists will help Indigenous businesses compete on bids, mentor businesses, and form joint ventures, and provide management and technical assistance? This service is not available in the NWT for Indigenous businesses who are starting up, developing, or expanding. These are definite service gaps that I believe this government can easily address.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, a solid Aboriginal procurement plan will no doubt be a path toward capacity building, creating employment, and will support Aboriginal governments toward self-determination. Undoubtedly, this will translate to more jobs in the North. With that, Mr. Speaker, I will have questions for the Minister of ITI at the appropriate time. Marsi cho.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON COVID-19 SECRETARIAT

MR. LAFFERTY: Masi, Mr. Speaker. Today, we are talking about economic recovery here in the Northwest Territories. I believe it's time that we listen to our business sector and the public on how to boost our NWT economy.

Mr. Speaker, I have to reflect back on 150, again. That's the staff that the Premier's secretariat needs. That is one COVID staffer for every 200 people living in the territory. Eighty-seven million, Mr. Speaker. Eighty-seven million is what the department of COVID is going to cost the taxpayers in the Northwest Territories. That is more than three times what we're spending on the entirety of the Assembly's priorities over the four-year life of this Assembly. I refer to priorities like lowering our cost of living in the Northwest Territories, raising education standards, and decent, affordable housing. It also equals 300 homes for homeless and overcrowded Northerners. It equals the three new addiction treatment centres I spoke to earlier plus six badly needed community centres. It also equals 100 new classroom teachers employed continuously over the next five years of schooling.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, there are better, cheaper ways to respond to the COVID challenge, had the Premier and the Cabinet chosen to consider these options. I stand here today to say: enough is enough. Let's start listening to the people of the North. They are our voices as we stand here today, questioning these very important matters. Masi, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON EULOGY FOR RALPH ISAIAH

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Ralph Charles Isaiah of Fort Simpson was born to Rosie Isaiah and Phillip Gargan on August 16, 1975. Ralph died suddenly and unexpectedly four days before his 45th birthday, on August 12, 2020. Ralph's dad, Phillip, died the year before, on July 9, 2019. Ralph was the second youngest of four brothers and six sisters.

Ralph was involved in a motor vehicle accident in July 1991. He turned 16 years old that summer. Ralph spent the last 29 years in a wheelchair as a quadriplegic. From 1991 to 2019, Ralph was lucky enough to be cared for in his own home by his loving and devoted mother. Ralph's mother, Rosie, is forever grateful for Ralph's large circle of friends and family members who provided tremendous help, caring and helping, whether it was feeding him, taking him for a walk, or just keeping him company. After 28 years in his own home, Ralph moved into the long-term care facility on March 2019.

Ralph's being in a wheelchair did not hinder him in wanting to learn more about what he loved to do, which was navigate the computer with his mouse stick. Ralph wanted to attend college and take a computer tech course. Ralph's family moved him and his mother to Edmonton in 1999 where he attended MacEwan College taking computer course. Ralph dreamt of going on a road trip. His family planned every aspect of his journey and drove Ralph from Fort Simpson to Fort St. James, B.C. This was a month-long trip that Ralph was forever grateful for his family to make his dreams come true. The importance of family and taking care of each other is shown in its truest form.

His mother, Rosie, and family would like to thank everybody for their kind words, thoughts, and prayers. She would also like to thank Ralph's friends for playing a huge part in his life. She would also like to thank the long-term care staff in Stanton Hospital for their continuous support. He will be sadly missed. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Nahendeh. Our thoughts and prayers are with the family. Members' statements. Item 4, returns to oral questions. Item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery. Item 6, acknowledgments. Item 7, oral questions. Member for Thebacha.

Oral Questions

QUESTION 386-19(2):
TALTSON HYDROELECTRIC EXPANSION
PROJECT

MS. MARTSELOS: Mr. Speaker, can the Minister provide this House with an update on the status of the Taltson hydro expansion project? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Work continues to advance this project as it is a priority of this government. We continue to work with Indigenous partners to finalize a Memorandum of Understanding for how we will work together on this project. Efforts also continues towards the development of a preliminary business case on the project that incorporates the views and perspectives of Indigenous partners. Work also continues to collect environmental information to support the regulatory applications. This summer, we were fortunate enough to be able to have some field work to map out the bottom of the Great Slave Lake to inform possible routing for this transmission line.

Also, Mr. Speaker, I want to inform that the participants of this northern youth leadership program were involved with this work, which included 22 youth that participated in Nahidik projects. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. MARTSELOS: Given the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, I'm curious whether the Taltson expansion project will be delayed or altered in any way. Can the Minister confirm whether any aspect of this project has been changed or delayed?

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: COVID-19 has impacted our ability to do community and stakeholder engagement, just to some degree. We are also currently working with a plan that takes into account the health and safety of our residents. Other work has also continued through this pandemic. For example, the desktop technical work that has continued on the project, and specialized initiatives such as our recent field program on the Great Slave, which was undertaken with some minor delays.

MS. MARTSELOS: In May, I questioned the previous Infrastructure Minister about Taltson, and she mentioned the establishment of an Indigenous engagement community relations unit within the Infrastructure department. Can the Minister explain what this community relations unit is and what they have done to date regarding the Taltson hydro expansion?

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: The Taltson project team includes the Indigenous relations advisor. The primary focus for the role is to develop an engagement plan for the project in order to communicate what the project could look like while respectfully incorporating input and information from communities, residents, and Indigenous organizations. That work has only just begun, and meaningful engagement on the project will need to factor in the unique interests of the perspectives of Indigenous and Northern residents in order to minimize environmental impacts while maximizing some of the benefits.

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

MS. MARTSELOS: Mr. Speaker, the Taltson hydro expansion is important for a number of reasons for the Northwest Territories, particularly for advancing economic development across the territory. Does the Minister agree that this project will help attract more economic development and business opportunities for the people of the Northwest Territories? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Agreed. The Taltson hydro expansion has potential to connect ten NWT communities, and 70 percent of our population to one renewable hydro system that will stabilize the cost of electricity across the territory, reduce the impacts of the drop in the Snare system, and set the stage for clean economic growth from new to existing resource development projects, north and south of the Great Slave Lake. As we move towards construction, the northern economic impact of this project will only grow while our Indigenous partners at the table, we will enter into the regulatory process, establish critical protocols for business, employment, and training opportunities, and also work to ensure that project benefits stay in the North to the greatest extent possible. For example, approximately 600 construction jobs are expected during the construction phase over a five-year period.

Mr. Speaker, the Taltson expansion project is important to our future and economic recovery. It will provide energy-related infrastructure needed to advance our economy into the future, while also helping meet our mission targets. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 387-19(2):
TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION
RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING
RESIDENTIAL ADDICTIONS TREATMENT

MR. LAFFERTY: Masi, Mr. Speaker. [Translation] Mr. Speaker, I would like to talk about the situation in the NWT. Like I said yesterday, these are not my words. These are coming from the community, and I would like to question the Premier. Yesterday, I did not get an answer, so I am directing my question to the Premier. The Commissioner's report, so I'd like to ask her a question regarding the report. [Translation ends.]

I just want to question the Premier since she has the lead on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The 94 recommendations, more specifically for Northwest Territories. Mr. Speaker, the first question I have for the Premier is that I note, under this government, there was a promise made for a residential addiction treatment being provided here in the Northwest Territories. That hasn't been so to date yet. It's been a number of years now we've been waiting. I'd just like to know, more specifically what this government is planning to invest in in our people when it comes to residential treatment and as part of the TRC action plan, number 20 and 21, more specifically, Mr. Speaker. Masi.

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, I'd like to start by re-emphasizing the Minister's statement the other day is that we support both residential treatment centres in the South and also on-the-land programming in the Northwest Territories. Only \$500,000 is less for the on-the-land. We do put a huge chunk of resources into that fund, and again, quoting the Minister from the other day is that it looks like it's not all being accessed. Please reach out, any Indigenous communities that are looking to access that support; we will work with you through that process. I think, Mr. Speaker, that's a combination, and that's what we're looking at. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. LAFFERTY: I, for one, would like to see more of our territorial investment into our people, and that is addiction treatment. We have so many people homeless, on the street, our downtown core especially. My own people are there, too, and I am trying to reach out to them. Mr. Speaker, the next question I have is more specific to that. It will be focusing on the TRC recommendation on wellness. It has been five years since the Truth and Reconciliation Commission issued a call for new healing centres to deal with the emotion and spiritual damage caused by residential schools across the Northwest Territories in our region. The TRC especially singled out the Northwest Territories. Mr. Speaker, therefore, I ask the Premier: why are we not pursuing a northern addiction treatment centre here in the North,

Northerners treating Northerners in northern facilities, as the TRC highly recommended through the TRC actions 20 and 21, to be more specific?

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: I agree that we need treatment for people in the Northwest Territories. I am a child of family addictions, and I have seen the trauma that comes with it. I have seen family violence to a huge extent, a lot of pain and suffering for families within that. However, I also agree that you need to have different methods of care. One treatment does not work for all people. I know this is a new government. In the last Assembly, the Minister of Health and Social Services actually reached out to committee members and took them down South for a tour of the treatment centres. I was not part of that tour, but what I did hear is that it did open the eyes of MLAs to seeing and hearing the stories of residents and saying that they want choices, that sometimes it's not okay to have it in your community. Again, I have experienced that in my own family and the shame that comes with being a family member of addictions. It's impactful. I did reach out to the Minister, and we talked about it. I think that the Minister agreed that she would reach out to standing committee and offer that. If the Members are willing to take part in a tour, then we would be willing to offer that, as well.

MR. LAFFERTY: If the Premier and this government agrees, then we should be investing more in this area. It is a serious matter, a serious issue, and real-life issue today we are facing, and it's in our backyard, on the streets, Mr. Speaker. Once we walk out of here, we see them. They have no place to go, so we are here, speaking for them, Mr. Speaker. The Premier alluded to a southern institution. I can give you an example. This will not be the only time. There will be other Members' statements coming next few days. Mr. Speaker, Poundmaker's is one of the government's six addiction-treatment partners in the South. With all due respect to Poundmaker's, it's Cree. Cree is not Dene. Culture is a major factor in addiction treatment. If there is a mismatch between Cree and Dene, just imagine the mistakes of sending our people to these treatment centres down South, more specifically, downtown Toronto. That is a prime example. Mr. Speaker, how does this mismatch affect the appropriateness of the residential treatment those six institutions are providing for our Dene constituents, those with a language barrier, more specifically, too?

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: As I stated before, I think that people need to have a continuum of choices when they are talking about addictions. However, Mr. Speaker, I think there is a missing component here. I came into this Assembly because of working with homeless women, and I have had over 20 years listening to the horror

stories of women. Some of the stories, I cannot even share in this House they are so horrific, from when they were children, Mr. Speaker. I think that, if we talk about addictions treatment, we also have to be looking at mental health, Mr. Speaker, and that does not have to be in a residential setting. I think that mental health is a huge issue and leads to addictions. Addictions is not something people pick up. It's a coping mechanism, Mr. Speaker. Again, I would like to say that you cannot talk one without the other.

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

MR. LAFFERTY: Masi, Mr. Speaker. We represent the Northwest Territories, almost 40,000 people. Almost every second person you talk to, they have addiction issues or family-related matters or community members. Again, it's a real issue, and we need to start listening to the people of the North. We cannot just dictate to them that this is good for you, six southern institutions. Mr. Speaker, that leads into my next question, and that is: residential addiction treatment works best for Dene when it's integrated with elders and time on the land. Of course, this is not possible in a southern setting, southern institutions that we talked about. Dene have to wait to come home for that. Those clients would have to come home to these elders. Mr. Speaker, question to the Premier: what does her government research say about the drawbacks of decoupling of culture components from the clinical components of treatment when it comes to our Dene people of the Northwest Territories? Masi, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: I cannot just pull up the research on that at this point because I do not have it on hand. However, what I can say, Mr. Speaker, is: I totally agree. We need to consider the whole community unit when we are talking addiction support, mental health support, as well. The elders are important within that component, and I value them very much with that. That goes to the offer that we do on-the-land funding for communities to access so that they can provide that elder support and the community support that is needed.

Mr. Speaker, one thing also I thought about while the questions were coming is that I did hear that people were saying they want choices, but I also heard that after-care was an issue, as well. The on-the-land funding might not be able to be accessed as much right now, but after-care is an issue. It's: what do these people do when they get out of the treatment centres? I know lots of research that shows that, if you do not have the proper after-care in the communities, they often slide back. That is not something we want to see. It's a continuum of

care that we need, starting from in schools right until people age. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 388-19(2):
COVID-19 SECRETARIAT HIRING PROCESS

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have questions for the Premier. Mr. Speaker, within the community of Hay River, there is some confusion among the residents around the hiring process for the secretariat. There is concern that workers are being hired without following any type of process. This is troubling, considering the cost this government will be incurring. Can the Premier confirm the hiring process and if any or all positions for the proposed secretariat have been or will be advertised internally within the government and externally for the public? What type of media is being used for advertising? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Government of the Northwest Territories is following all our hiring processes when we are seeking to staff up the secretariat. Some of the positions will be filled by existing employees from other departments. For the most part, these employees were already doing the work prior to the creation of the secretariat. Some of the positions have been advertised internally through an expression of interest process, and about half of the positions are also being filled from individuals new to the Government of the Northwest Territories. They are, at this point, either casual hires or as a result of advertising for term positions. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Mr. Speaker, another issue with staffing the secretariat concerns brought to my attention are P1 candidates. Can the Premier confirm if we are following the Affirmative Action Policy in the advertising, interviewing, and hiring of COVID secretariat staff with respect to affirmative action?

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: The affirmative action and the necessity for making sure that Northerners get jobs for northern people has been brought up in this House not only by MLAs. Ministers have also talked about it. It's a priority for our government, and I can confirm that the secretariat is following those processes. Cabinet, as a whole, is watching all hiring as it goes forward, to ensure that we use our Affirmative Action Policy as much as possible.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: I understand we have staffed over half the positions already. Of the approximately 86 staff hired to date, what process was used to hire and enter into contracts with them, and are the contracts all for the same length of time?

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: At this time, today, there is 110 employees with the COVID secretariat. Of these, 65 are currently new to the Government of the Northwest Territories, of which 62 are casuals and three are term employees. Forty-five of the current secretariat employees are currently on reassignment or transfer assignments from their home positions in other departments of the Government of the Northwest Territories. When it comes to the qualifications of employment, I would like to see as many people that can get good, stable jobs in the Northwest Territories. However, the secretariat, as I said before in the House, will dissolve as soon as the Chief Public Health Officer determines that we are safe and the public health emergency is released. Within that, then, we can't hire permanent. We have to look at term positions and casuals, and that's what we're doing at this point.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once we have a vaccine, rapid testing, or another process to confirm that COVID-19 is under control and can be satisfactorily treated, can the Premier explain to the people of the Northwest Territories what are the triggers, criteria, and process for making the decision to wind down the secretariat, and how long would such a wind-down take? How will this government deal with reprofiling and terminating staff?

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: The whole purpose of the secretariat was to be able to implement the orders of the Chief Public Health Officer. As I said in my last answer, as these orders change, our response to the pandemic will change, as well. Once the Chief Public Health Officer and the Minister of Health determine that the orders are no longer necessary and we can conclude the public state of emergency, at that point then, we'll look at winding down the secretariat. I know that we've made projections. The \$87 million almost is over two and a half years. Thirty-one million dollars of that is for this year. Twenty-three million dollars of that is covered by the federal government. I don't want it to go on. No politician in the whole of Canada, in the whole world, wants this to go on. As soon as a vaccination is found or we can get this under control, we will be looking to wind it down, but we don't know how long it's going to last. I can't give a timeline. What I can say is that, as soon as the Chief Public Health Officer deems our residents

safe, at that point, we will be winding down the secretariat. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 389-19(2):
ALLOWING MINORS IN CLASS A
ESTABLISHMENTS

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today, I spoke about a number of the Vote Growth platforms. One in particular was allowing a more flexible business area for liquor sales. Mr. Speaker, I would like to speak about one thing in particular, and that is allowing minors into Class A establishments. In the last Assembly, there was a petition with hundreds of signatures supporting this. Numerous of my constituents who own bars or restaurants have asked for this. My question for the Minister of Finance is: will she allow minors in Class A establishments? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are class A establishments and class B establishments. The class A are predominantly focused on the sale of alcohol, whereas your class B establishments are predominantly focused on the sale of food. What's interesting is that an entity or a business can apply to have both, can be a class A and a class B. For instance, a business could apply and have a class B licence on Saturdays and Sundays during brunch hours when the focus is certainly more on food. Indeed, I know there are businesses that have recently made such application and, indeed, from the point of first enquiry to the point of that being granted, took less than a month.

MR. JOHNSON: That is very much the response my constituents got the last time, and it was the response to the petition. The problem is: it doesn't reflect the reality of many business models. There are very few patios in this town. Our patio season is short. If you walk up to a patio at one of the few we have in town at a class A establishment and you have a minor with you, you can't sit down because there are people drinking only beer. That business has to decide whether people want lunch-hour beers only or they want minors, such that changing one or repurposing your entire business to be half class A and class B is not the reality of how business owners want to run their businesses. I will ask this Minister: this is a regulation change purely within her authority. Will she amend the regulations to find a model that works for class A business owners?

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: I'm not making that regulation change without more extensive consultation with the people of the Northwest Territories. At the beginning of the pandemic, when we sought to make what seemed, again, to make a fairly small change in order to help adapt the then business structure to what was going on with COVID-19, there was a tremendous outpouring of concern from all different sides, about all the different impacts. While it seems like a simple thing, I was taken aback by just how many different opinions there are across this territory and on the ways that these kinds of changes will impact them.

What I am doing is that the Department of Finance is doing a review right now of the Liquor Act and a review of liquor pricing, really looking at the entire schematic of the regime. In doing so, we'll have that opportunity to go out to consult and to determine if there's a way to adapt our system so that we can have systems and regulations that are appropriate for some parts of the territory while still ensuring that those that want different types of protections or controls can have them.

MR. JOHNSON: I recognize there is probably nothing more divisive in the NWT than liquor regulations and the Liquor Act. However, the comprehensive review of the Liquor Act, I believe, needs to be separated by this finite issue. Most of the small communities don't have class A establishments. Many of them have alcohol period. There are a handful of true class A establishments in the territory. Will the Minister of Finance reach out to those class A establishments and find a business model that works for them outside of a giant, comprehensive Liquor Act review that I agree we need to do?

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: I'm not going to make that commitment right now. Simply put, this is the only time I've actually had this specific issue raised, and I appreciate that there are quite a number of establishments, particularly in Yellowknife, for whom this might benefit their situation. I'm certainly not getting a groundswell. In fact, if anything, what I hear more is about concerns about prohibiting liquor and restraining liquor and restricting access to liquor. At the moment, we are already underway with the Liquor Review. There have already been some minor amendments made to reflect some recommendations from the Liquor Board. The department has been quite flexible in terms of ensuring that there are options and flexibility available.

Again, as I've said, for those entities, those businesses, that are seeking an exception, there is a route forward. It's not particularly cumbersome, and it can be done quite quickly. While the bigger process of consultation and review is underway, there is a mechanism by which businesses can

change their situation, can change and be a hybrid. If that proves to be untenable, then, certainly, we'll look forward to hearing that.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't know how much more of a groundswell there can be. There was a petition with hundreds of signatures. There have been numerous requests. The hybrid model of having class A and class B at different hours and in different parts of one establishment requires infrastructure changes. It doesn't allow people to have a beer solely for lunch hour in that area, which happens. My question is: will the Minister of Finance review the current liquor regulation that allows the class A and B at different hours and see if there is a way to bring them together for the same hours? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: I'm sure it comes as no surprise that the department staff are always watching what happens on the floor of the Legislative Assembly, and if there is, indeed, some sort of solution that I'm not aware of, I have every confidence they'll bring it to my attention. I'm certainly not, at this moment in time, going to commit and say the solution is easy or obvious or simple because, just as there may be hundreds of people expressing one view, I expect that there are many more that express a different view on what is a very divisive issue.

We certainly made changes quickly to the liquor regulations, but it was clear that there were changes that could be made that would have impacts, and positive impacts. We made those changes only after having some consultations, not only with business owners, but with community governments, with Indigenous governments, and with members of the public. While it may seem like a small change, in my experience already, that change is not small and can have significant ramifications. I am always alive to the opportunity to make quick changes that have positive benefits, but that is about as far as I will go in terms of where this direction might go. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 390-19(2):
INTRODUCTORY TRADES PROGRAMS IN
INUVIK

MS. SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I understand that each school board gets to decide how they use their funding allocations they receive, but they only have enough for their core classes, O and M, then they get a bit for the inclusive

schooling, and then for Indigenous language and education. I would like the Minister to look at how regional schools can be allocated funding to increase their trades classes for regional and small communities. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes. Minister of Education, Culture and Employment.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the former chair of BDEC, I'm sure the Member knows the funding system better than me, but I want to say that, yes, that is exactly the plan. I committed to looking at the funding formula along with the Education Act during the life of this Assembly so that I can ensure that we can better support our small communities and regional centres. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. SEMMLER: Over the years, the campus in Inuvik has lost many programs. They have lost the environment and natural resources program most recently. They have lost the recreational leadership program, and they do not have any more trades program or intro to trades programs in our local Inuvik campus. Will the Minister commit to looking into utilizing the college in Inuvik to return programs that have benefited the regional workforce by bringing back Intro to Trades programs?

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: I don't get too much into the operations of the college and what they offer on a regular basis, but I can say that delivery of trades programming in the Beaufort Delta is one of the priorities of that campus. I thank the Member for bringing this up. I do appreciate bringing some attention to the campus in Inuvik because I believe it is under-utilized and we can do more. We can expand. That is the impetus behind this entire transformation, so that those types of programs that lead people into the workforce can be delivered where they need to be delivered. I am very alive to the need for tradespeople. The regional staff from Aurora College in the Beaufort Delta is very aware of it, and they talk to the Indigenous governments on a daily basis and are well-aware of what the needs are. Our public administrator is from the Beaufort Delta. I was just talking with him today about this very matter, so it's definitely at the forefront of our minds.

I can't commit to making any programming changes, especially in light of COVID, where things like trades programming especially have really been curtailed because of the limitations placed on the college by the Office of the Chief Public Health Officer. What we are offering now is a combination of a little bit of in-person, but mostly online. Unfortunately, I can't have a "yes" to this one, as well.

MS. SEMMLER: Just because we're in the process of transitioning or looking toward a polytechnic university, this shouldn't mean that everything else in our college system should be cancelled and put under review. What is the long-term plan for the Inuvik Aurora campus to build NWT capacity in the NWT workforce?

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: I don't have a long-term plan right now. That's what we're working on. There has recently been a couple of discussion papers released, one on areas of specialization. One of the proposed areas of specialization is trades, skilled trades, and technology, so similar to what the Member is talking about. Right now, it is tough to expand and transform at the same time. There is a lot of effort put into strengthening the foundation of the college and transforming it, and one of those steps is going to be a facilities plan where we look at what exists in all of the different regions and what we can then offer in that region, how we build on those natural advantages. The long-term plan, that's what is in the works right now, and that's the exciting transformation that is happening.

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

MS. SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What I would like now is a short-term plan. I understand we're in a pandemic, but we still have students and we still have a college there that is still operating. What is the plan for this winter, the winter semester, and do we have a plan for next fall as to what kinds of courses they are going to be having at the Inuvik College? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: I can provide the Member with a list of all the programming that is happening at the college this fall, or rather this upcoming winter. Again, COVID-19 has really hampered anything that can be done. I know that the JK-12 schools are back in, but I can't say the same for adult programming. Right now, it's mostly distance. As for fall 2021, that is, again, dependent on the state of the pandemic, and so those plans are being worked on. Without knowing what state we're going to be in and what the orders are going to say, it's really hard to tell at this point. I'm sorry I don't have more concrete answers for the Member. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 391-19(2):
COVID-19 BORDER AND TRAVEL
RESTRICTIONS

MR. BONNETROUGE: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the health Minister. The residents of my riding have grave concerns with the

Coronavirus spreading into the Northwest Territories through the 60th parallel border check stops. They do not want to see the second wave come into our communities. What intensifies their concern is the many sightings of Alberta and BC license plates travelling into our communities. One would expect detailed information, including temperature testing, before they are allowed to continue into the territory or, at the very least, turned back. Can the Minister provide an update as to what steps are taken when dealing with out-of-territory travellers into the NWT? Mahsi.

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

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Department of Health and Social Services doesn't direct the border enforcement, and so this question would be better directed to the Premier who does. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. Honourable Premier.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We will have to get back to the Member about the testing that is done. My understanding, though, is that the testing that we have, and I'm not the health Minister so I don't know all of the different ones; I think there are three different test machines that we use and a whole bunch of tests. Right now, the priority is using them for essential workers, people who are in our healthcare field, our dentists, et cetera, like that. The Chief Public Health Officer would like to be able to test every single person coming in, as they come in, but at this time, our testing capacity, my understanding is that we don't have the ability yet. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. BONNETROUGE: Mahsi for that, Premier. You touched upon just the testing stuff, but I was more wanting to know the type of information that is collected from the travellers at the border, especially if they have Alberta plates, BC plates, because we are seeing too many of them coming into our communities. There is a big concern about that. I just wonder if you could touch upon that topic.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: That one is under the secretariat. I can actually provide the information to the Members. I'll get a list of all of the information. It's been a while since I had that briefing, but my understanding is that the information that is gathered from the people who drive up to our borders or land in an airline is asking them where they are from, show us your ID, where are you going to, what is your purpose here. If they are going to be self-isolating, where are they self-isolating at? If it's going to be at an isolation centre, then the process followed is that, at the end of each day, our border patrols actually phone the isolation

centres and give a list of the names of people who are going to be there to ensure that they have driven up.

I do know, Mr. Speaker, that we see a lot of people coming up with driver's plates that are not from the NWT, and that is a concern. I hear that all the time. However, all of them are either essential workers, or some residents in the NWT still have the plates if they are snowbirds or those kinds of things. Every person who comes through the border, though, has to have either a social-isolation plan or an exemption from the Chief Public Health Officer as an essential worker. That, I can say.

MR. BONNETROUGE: Mahsi for that bit of information. There are still a lot of concerns with travellers. I note that the enforcement team are all stationed in Yellowknife and not out in the communities. My question is: has the enforcement team ever been stationed at the 60th border check stop to monitor travellers and to assist the border check stop staff in their duties?

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: I cannot say if the border team, the enforcement team, has been at the border to monitor people coming across because I have not heard that that has been a concern. We have only had one person that I know of who actually tried to run the border, and the RCMP were called in that instance. If we have issues with people trying to run the border or not complying, the RCMP is called immediately for that, Mr. Speaker. The enforcement team is actually to make sure that people are following the Chief Public Health Officer's orders, that they are self-isolating, that they are abiding by those things.

However, I do want to say, Mr. Speaker, we have got cases in the NWT now. It's critical at this point, and I know that people are tired. They have been hanging on for a long time, but this is not the time to let down our guard. Now is the time that we have to make sure. We can't confirm that every single person who comes across the border is going to be COVID-free. We are seeing that that's not happening, so every single person, I cannot plead enough, needs to start abiding by the Chief Public Health Officer's orders. Keep your distance. The best things you can do: keep that 2-metres distance; wear a mask; protect your neighbours; wash your hands frequently; and keep your circle small.

Mr. Speaker, all of us have a responsibility now. None of us want to see this in the NWT. We have been very fortunate doing what we did, but we knew it was only a matter of time. Now is not the time. I am pleading with everyone. Please do your part to help keep us safe.

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

MR. BONNETROUGE: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. I wish your enforcement team would have a hotline to Big River gas service station in Providence for all the information they need in terms of travellers. Anyways, there are many concerns that local NWT residents are travelling to Alberta and places beyond for vacations or to get out of the territory for various reasons, including going to casinos. Most are returning but not self-isolating and going on about their business, including partying with residents. This is one sure way the coronavirus will enter our territory, and it does get people's anxiety levels up there. How will the Minister's department deal with these situations or the CPHO's office?

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: A couple of ways. Again, I already spoke about the necessity for all of us to be diligent at this time, but I also want to stress that, when I am saying that, being diligent does not mean pointing people out; it does not mean shaming your neighbours. We need to be kind to each other. However, if you do know that you've got a community member who is supposed to be in self-isolation and they are not, please call ProtectNWT or the 811 line. That is the link to the enforcement team, who will do an investigation on it, Mr. Speaker.

However, I do know that, of the just over \$31 million that we are expecting to spend this year, worst-case scenario, almost \$13 million of that, Mr. Speaker, is for our self-isolation centres. I already said in the House the other day, we have got to get that down. We need to still pay for people who are on medical travel, people who have poverty and stuff. We should not be supplementing for people to take three, four, some people are taking many vacations. We need to look at that because we have an obligation to keep our people safe, but we also have an obligation to try to be as fiscally responsible as possible. Those are discussions, now that we have the secretariat, where we actually have control, and we are starting to look at those. You will see, probably, changes before the next sitting. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 392-19(2):
IMMIGRATION NOMINEE PROGRAM

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have misplaced my questions. There we go. Sorry, Mr. Speaker. One of the greatest returns on investment for the Government of the Northwest Territories for revenue generation in the Northwest Territories is people, Mr. Speaker. Increasing the federal transfer payments by increasing the

population of the Northwest Territories helps to build our skilled labour force, expand our diverse demographics, and reunite families of rooted immigrants. Can the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment tell us how many immigration nomination spots the NWT gets every year and how many of those spots they actually fill? Thank you.

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

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Northwest Territories, through Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, is allocated between 250 to 300 spots. It varies from year to year. This year so far, from January 1st, the employer stream of the Northwest Territories nomination program has issued 59 nominations. There are another 23 applications in for review, so we could have quite a few this year. Generally, it's been around 70 over the last number of years. We were up to 100 for a little while. This has all grown since 2009, when we had three, I believe. When we are talking about these numbers, there are these people and their families, too, so it's almost 900 people so far, since 2009. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you to the Minister for that information. It's good news to hear we still have room to grow and that we can get there. One of the objectives of the immigration strategy is to track the retention of applicants. Is this work being done to date, and does the program track the reasons why new residents might actually be leaving the Northwest Territories for other areas or other provinces or territories in Canada?

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: The Member is correct. That is one of the key goals of the strategy. That work is starting this year. The tracking is difficult given that, when someone is a permanent resident, they can go wherever they want and that any sort of information they share is voluntary. It's not like we can put their name in a database and just track wherever they go. That being said, the federal government does have information on these individuals, and we are working on a way of coming up with a way to share that information or have the federal government share that with us so that we can begin that work of tracking them and better understand some of the questions that the Member is asking. That work is starting now and will be ongoing.

MS. CLEVELAND: That is very good to hear, and I look forward to seeing some of the reports that come out of that. Mr. Speaker, I serve a very diverse riding, and one of the reasons that I have been alerted to as far as why foreign nationals might be leaving the Northwest Territories is access to supports required to fulfill their immigration applications for the federal government. Examples

of this can be people needing to go get medical tests or people needing English-language proficiency tests. These supports need to be readily available in the Northwest Territories so that people have access to them without having to travel down to Alberta, which is quite expensive. Right now, given COVID, people have to then come home and self-isolate after paying out of pocket to pay for a plane ticket, to pay for accommodations. That is a very, very expensive process to fulfill your obligatory application process. Mr. Speaker, I am wondering, given the incredible cost of this, can the Minister advise when services like English-language proficiency testing will be available once again in the Northwest Territories?

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: I want to actually commend the Member because she has really been pushing this issue for a while. I think she really lit a fire under the department, and she really highlighted this issue. I actually have some good news for the 70 or so people who need to travel South to get this testing every year. Individuals requiring the English-language proficiency tests for immigration processes will be able to access this test on a regular basis in the Northwest Territories in the coming weeks. The Department of ECE is providing financial support to College Nordique to help them become an approved language-testing centre for the Canadian English-Language Proficiency Index Program, and that's the language test. This will ensure that the foreign nationals in the territory no longer need to travel South and, now, that they don't need to come back and isolate for two weeks or wait for these administrators to come to the Northwest Territories. Barring any unforeseen delays in securing the necessary hardware that we have to get from southern suppliers, delivery of language testing at CNF could begin as early as December.

The department's contribution to CNF will support six offerings of the test each year, with each offering able to accommodate 12 individuals for a total of up to 72 individuals annually, and like I said, the average number is around 70 who require this. In addition, we are working with CNF to ensure that if there are 75 or 80, that we can accommodate that, as well. This is a great news story. It's going to save a lot of people a lot of money and a lot of time, and it makes the Northwest Territories a more attractive place to immigrate to. I want to congratulate the CNF on becoming a certified remote testing centre.

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

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Minister and the department staff for working diligently on this one. I'm happy to say

that the Minister of education is currently my favourite person in this room right now.

---Laughter

Mr. Speaker, can the Minister please provide details regarding the next immigration strategy as the existing one is set to conclude in 2022? Thank you.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: The Member is correct. 2022 is when this one ends. In the coming months, there will be engagement with the business community on our labour market initiatives and skills for success, and we're going to take that opportunity to also discuss some of the ways we can improve immigration. We're going to get feedback from the community there. Late in 2021, we're going to go out and really engage stakeholders and our partners so that we can develop the next immigration strategy so that it's ready to begin as soon as this one ends. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 393-19(2):
 INUVIK-TUKTOYAKTUK HIGHWAY AND
 DEMPSTER HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE AND
 UPGRADES

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Minister of Infrastructure. I'm going to go back to her region, so hopefully, she's going to make her constituents super happy here with her answers today. Mr. Speaker, I would like to know if the Minister could provide me with an update on the money that was needed to fix the ITH and the repairs that were done this year on that. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Great Slave. Minister of Infrastructure.

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am happy to hear that the Member is excited for some work in my region. I appreciate that. We'll see what we can do. I want to start off by talking about the Inuvik to Tuktoyaktuk Highway. Last year, we had maintenance completed, and it was 26 kilometres of gravel resurfacing that cost about half a million dollars, and that was funded by Infrastructure. We also have a three-year contract with Gruben's, Northwind, for the operation and maintenance of the highway, so work is continuing, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

MS. NOKLEBY: We are currently in the process of reviewing the capital estimates for 2021-2022, and I don't see any money in there for either the ITH or the Dempster Highway. Could the Minister please tell us how she is going to find money to repair both

highways, which do need work sooner rather than later?

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Yes, in my riding. I do want to let the Member know that last year, for the Dempster Highway, there was \$4.5 million annual budget for Highway no. 8 rehab and the maintenance works, which totals up to year 2023-2024 of a total of \$22.5 million. It has been approved in the capital plan. That work continues. We are looking at improvements on the Dempster Highway. I also want to add that the plan is to have 3 kilometres reconstruction starting next year. Every year, we do a certain amount of kilometres, and that's on timeline.

MS. NOKLEBY: We heard a lot about how the 3 kilometres a year, piecing away at fixing those roads is not adequate. I believe your colleague from the region brought that up. I would like to ask the Minister to commit to going to the federal government and actively engaging for rehabilitation money for the Dempster in the range of hundreds of millions of dollars that is required?

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: We continue to do rehab on the Dempster Highway on Highway 8. We realize that there is a lot of work to do. We are aware, and I think where the Member is coming from is, we are doing work on the Dempster Highway from the border to the Inuvik side. That work's already underway. However, we are aware that, once you hit the Yukon border, that's another story. The road quality is not the greatest. It's not at the same standard, however, the department is working with the federal government to put a joint proposal together to be able to continue the work on Dempster Highway as we all recognize that this is much needed.

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

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Can the Minister commit to providing myself and the rest of my colleagues with information around how they are using climate change and disaster mitigation in order to adapt or look for funding from the federal government, not just from looking at, say, as an infrastructure problem, however, looking at the other methods of funding they can access through the federal government along those lines? Thank you.

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: The Department of Infrastructure is actively looking at: we've engaged the associate engineering to assess the road conditions for the Inuvik to Tuktoyaktuk Highway. Once we get the review, it will have some impact on the contract and provide recommendations that help our work plan. The firm that's out there would be able to have a look at the conditions of the road

and to provide some feedback so that we can include in some of our work going forward. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 394-19(2):
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES WAGE TOP-UP
PROGRAM

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. My question's for the Minister of Finance, the NWT Wage Top-Up Program. I'm going to change it up here a bit. I was looking at the website before the House this afternoon, and I am pleased to announce that the wage top-up program has been extended to February 28, 2021. It's kind of unusual that a Regular Member is making this announcement, but I don't recall any kind of public announcement about this being extended. This is good news, Mr. Speaker. Can the Minister tell me what kind of publicity was done around the extension of the NWT Wage Top-up Program? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Department of Finance is continually evaluating this program, and as it's becoming apparent that there is going to be additional funding still within the funding that was approved, then we'll continue, whether or not the program can be approved and extended, much the same way that much of our COVID relief programs are being administered, as quickly as we're able to identify that. In fact, one of the programs that's coming on its end point has the ability, financial ability to continue. We're trying to turn those around quickly. That may arrive with a lack of timely media releases, but that's not for lack of the fact that the more important things, we want to make sure that those programs continue to be available to the people that are applying to them and that the information will go out in due course. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. O'REILLY: It is good news that it's been extended now into 2020-2021. I think there is another issue with the program. This is a program that the employer has to apply on. Maybe an employer doesn't really want to apply for it, so is there some way in which an employee can access the funding through the wage top-up program if their employer refuses to enrol?

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: I am grateful for that question. The information that is posted regarding this program on the website does indicate that any employee whose employer is not a

member or not participating in the program can call the Department of Finance. There are numbers and email contacts that are listed on the website as I understand, and the reason being that an employee can apply directly. They can provide their paystub, and the Department of Finance will ensure that they get that top-up.

However, what we have been doing is that, when an employee contacts the department, makes us aware that there is an employer who has not participated or is not participating, it's an opportunity for us to reach out. To date, that has been a way that, in fact, we are able to get more employers involved, which then benefits not only the employee who raises it but all of the employees who may be affected. I am happy to give that information out. We are continuing to try to get that word out.

MR. O'REILLY: Again, I would like to thank the Minister for that good news, and I would like to get it out even further. The wage top-up program really, Mr. Speaker, is a clear sign that our minimum wage is way too low. I know we are going to be doing a review of the minimum wage. We have also got evidence about a living wage, conducted by an NGO, that says it needs to be a lot higher. Can the Minister agree to support a permanent increase to the NWT minimum wage to \$18 per hour or higher?

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: The minimum wage process and the committee does fall under the Department of Education, Culture and Employment, but I just want to speak to the genesis of this program. Where this program came from arose out of a need identified in COVID-19 by the federal government that low-wage earners were at risk of leaving the employment workforce, leaving the labour force, and so this program was really designed to ensure that folks who were often in front-line positions, such as the grocery stores, stayed employed. It was really targeting a very specific concern that arose in the course of COVID-19. To the extent that minimum wage is, in fact, too low in a general sense, that is a question for the committee that has been struck.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Colleagues, our time for oral questions has expired. Item 8, written questions. Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

MR. NORN: Marsi cho, Mr. Speaker. I seek unanimous consent for additional time for oral questions.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. The Member is seeking unanimous consent to go back to Item 7, oral questions. Are there any nays?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Nay.

MR. SPEAKER: Sorry, colleague, that was "nayed." Written questions. Item 9, returns to written questions. Item 10, replies to Commissioner's address. Item 11, petitions. Item 12, reports of committees on the review of bills. Item 13, reports of standing and special committees. Item 14, tabling of documents. Minister of Environment and Natural Resources.

Tabling of Documents

TABLED DOCUMENT 192-19(2):
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES SPECIES AT RISK
COMMITTEE 2019-2020 ANNUAL REPORT

TABLED DOCUMENT 193-19(2):
CONFERENCE OF MANAGEMENT
AUTHORITIES SPECIES AT RISK ANNUAL
REPORT 2019-2020

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following two documents: "Northwest Territories Species At Risk Committee 2019-2020 Annual Report" and "Conference of Management Authorities Species At Risk Annual Report 2019-2020." Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Tabling of documents. Minister of Health and Social Services.

TABLED DOCUMENT 194-19(2):
ANNUAL REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CHILD
AND FAMILY SERVICES 2019-2020

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table the following document: "Annual Report of the Director of Child and Family Services 2019-2020." Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Tabling of documents. Item 15, notices of motion. Item 16, motions. Item 17, notices of motion for first reading of bills. Item 18, first reading of bills. Item 19, second reading of bills. Item 20, consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters: 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, 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. The committee wishes to deal with Tabled Document 181-19(2), Capital Estimates 2021-2022, to deal with the Departments of Education, Culture and Employment; Industry, Tourism and Investment; and Finance. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): [Microphone turned off] ...

MR. NORN: Did I make an error? Yes. Madam Chair, can I just have a moment?

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Mr. Norn.

MR. NORN: Thank you, Madam Chair. I apologize, colleagues, for the error. Committee wishes to consider Bill 11, Legislative Assembly Officers Standardization Act. Marsi cho, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

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

---SHORT RECESS

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): We'll call committee back to order. Committee, we have agreed to consider Bill 11, Legislative Assembly Officers Standardization Act. I will ask the Member sponsoring the bill to introduce it. Mr. Johnson.

MR. JOHNSON: [Microphone turned off] ...I would like to bring witnesses in the Chamber. Should I do that before or after my opening remarks?

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): After you introduce, just introduce the bill first.

MR. JOHNSON: Okay. Thank you, Madam Chair. I would like to introduce Bill 11, Legislative Assembly Officers Standardization Act. I have opening remarks if that will please the committee.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Yes.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. An analysis of the legislation governing statutory officers in the Northwest Territories was done and identified a number of areas of inconsistency that could be remedied through statutory amendments we see here today.

These amendments allow the Legislative Assembly to address a number of inconsistencies among them the terms governing its statutory officers. While some differences among these terms are both expected and desirable, some officers currently lack benefits and protections available to others, without obvious reason.

Bill 11 will amend eight statutes related to officers of the Legislative Assembly:

- Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act;
- Elections and Plebiscites Act;
- Human Rights Act;
- Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act;
- Official Languages Act;
- Ombud Act;
- Public Service Act; and
- Health Information Act.

The targeted revisions to existing legislation governing statutory officers will bring greater consistency to the specific terms and is required. Throughout Bill 11, these include:

1. Term of appointment: this will change the term of appointment for all statutory officers to four-year terms.
2. Resignation, suspension, or removal from office: these provisions allow the speaker, on the recommendation of the board of management, to suspend the statutory officer with or without pay when the Legislative Assembly is not sitting.
3. There will be changes to remuneration and benefits, to standardize the pay and benefits to ensure consistency across all full-time statutory officers.
4. We will standardize the travel and expenses, such that statutory officers would be entitled to reimbursement of expenses incurred for travel to meetings, training, or official business, consistent with the types of rates set out in the Government of the Northwest Territories employee duty travel policy.
5. We will make amendments to clarify the role of other employment. Given the roles as independent officers and the potential conflict with holding a position within the public service, these provisions clarify that

they may hold other employment, with prior approval, but not a position within the Government of the Northwest Territories.

6. Lastly, we will make amendments to the Oath of Office, to provide amended wording to align with other statutes, specifying the oath can be taken by the Speaker or the Clerk.

Thank you, Madam Chair. That concludes my opening remarks. Individual Members may have additional comments or questions as we proceed with the consideration of this bill.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member for Yellowknife North. Would you like to bring witnesses into the Chamber?

MR. JOHNSON: Yes, Madam Chair. I would like to bring Kim Wickens, the deputy clerk, Members and Precinct Services, and Mikaela Robertson, the legislative drafter for this legislation. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Sergeant-at-Arms, please escort the witnesses into the Chamber. Can the Member just reintroduce the witnesses, please? I know Ms. Wickens, but the other witness?

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes, Kim Wickens, the deputy clerk, Members and Precinct Services, and Mikaela Robertson, the legislative counsel, just joined us in the Chamber.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. I will now open the floor to general comments on Bill 11. Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. I just want to express my appreciation for the work that went into the bill by our staff. There is a lot of research that went into this, as well. These are very important positions that are set up through our legislation, and in many cases, the people who are appointed have a very specialized skill set. They often have to deal with adjudicating different kinds of interests or dealing with complaints, investigations, and so on, and they are often based on certain rights that are set out in legislation. These are very important pieces of legislation, very important offices that we set up that report to us, but really perform a very important public function for people here in the Northwest Territories. I think we want to make sure that we get this right, and I do support the principle of consistency in trying to make sure that all of these officers receive fair compensation, fair benefits for the hard work that they do.

Madam Chair, there is one issue that I do want to speak about in general, though. It's a very kind of

curious bill that just ends up in Committee of the Whole without having gone through any kind of public review, and I want to assure the members of the public that there was a lot of research and work that went in behind the scenes to prepare this bill. It is kind of odd that it just ends up in Committee of the Whole without any opportunity for public comment or review. I do think that is something that we need to turn our minds to collectively in the future about bills like this that just come into Committee of the Whole and perhaps try to find some ways to allow for some level of public engagement.

However, I don't want to hold this bill up in any way. It's important. We have some deadlines in terms of looming appointments to fill some of these positions, Madam Chair, so I do support the bill moving forward. Thanks, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. Member for Yellowknife North, do you have any response?

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I thank the Member for his comment. Yes, I believe we can have a conversation following about how to make sure that legislation that we have to pass quickly and proceed directly to Committee of the Whole still has some form of public engagement. I do note that unanimous consent is required for that step so that, if any Member did not want to move a bill into Committee of the Whole, we would not have, but I take the Member's point. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member for Yellowknife North. Member for Frame Lake, did you have any further comments? Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. Members are there any more general comments on Bill 11? Does committee agree that there are no further general comments?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Committee, we will defer the bill number and title until after consideration of the clauses. Please turn to page 1 of the bill. Clause 1. Are there any comments? Member for Frame Lake.

COMMITTEE MOTION 37-19(2):
BILL 11: LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OFFICERS
STANDARDIZATION ACT - DELETION OF
SUBCLAUSE 1(4) AND (5),
CARRIED

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. I'd like to move an amendment to the bill. I move that Bill 11 be amended by deleting subclauses 1(4) and (5). Thanks, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): The motion is in order. To the motion. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. I would like to have a quick chance to explain what this is all about. This part of the bill sets the mandated terms of employment, so to speak, for the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Commissioner moving forward. I want to start by saying that this bill is not going to change the current terms of employment for any of our statutory officers. That is always the principle. You don't want to change someone's terms of employment while they are in a job without their consent and agreement and so on, so that is not what this is about. This is about moving forward once appointments are completed, when we fill those positions again.

We did receive, as MLAs, some communications from the Access to Information and Privacy Commissioner about the term of office. There is sort of a national, I'm not going to use the word "standard," but an approach where the people in those positions in most of the other provinces and territories serve for at least five years, so there was a request from the Commissioner to consider changing the term as set out in the bill from four to five years. I know this is a bit strange, but I am going to move that we delete the part of the bill that would change the term, so that this Commissioner would remain in office for five years. Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes, the initial purpose of this legislation was to standardize all of our appointments to four years. I recognize that some of the officers reached out and expressed a desire that five years is the standard. I will point out that five years does sometimes mean that the appointments will fall on an election year, which has made it difficult in the past. The legislation does allow appointments to continue up to six months after their expiration, so there is a possibility we can make those appointments. Ultimately, although I am introducing the bill, I don't have a strong opinion on four or five years. I believe these officers do great work. They are arm's length, and if they have expressed four or five years, I will simply abstain from the Member's motion. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

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

---Carried

To clause 1 as amended.

---Clauses 1 through 6 approved

Any comments to clause 7? Member for Frame Lake.

COMMITTEE MOTION 38-19(2):
BILL 11: LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OFFICERS
STANDARDIZATION ACT - DELETION OF
SUBCLAUSE 7(4) AND (5),
CARRIED

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. I'd like to move the amendment here that Bill 11 be amended by deleting subclauses 7(4) and (5). Thanks, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. The motion is in order. To the motion. Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. I know there are some eager beavers in here, but I just want to explain what this all about. This is the part of the bill that sort of changes the mandate terms for the Ombud, and the effect of this amendment would be to keep the term of office at five years. We received, as MLAs, written communication from the Ombud this morning suggesting that there's something called the International Ombudsman Institute, and their best practices paper from 2017 says that terms of fewer than five years should be avoided. I think she sent out some additional rationale here, which I think is good reason to look at keeping the current term. That's why I thought it would be worthwhile to bring forward this motion. Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'll just note that essentially what the Member is doing is not changing the legislation. The current term in the act is five years. Our current Ombud was appointed under that, so their contract will continue. Where we're at in this motion being made, the next one will also be five years. Once again, the difference between four and five years I don't believe is a substantive point. I will simply abstain from the motion. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Question has been called. All those in favour? Opposed? Abstentions? Motion is carried.

---Carried

Does committee agree clause 7 as amended?

---Clauses 7 through 10 approved

Committee, to the bill as a whole. Does committee agree that Bill 11, Legislative Assembly Officers Standardization Act is now ready for third reading as amended?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, committee. Bill 11: Legislative Assembly Officers Standardization is now ready for third reading as amended. Does committee agree that this concludes our consideration of Bill 11, Legislative Assembly Officers Standardization Act?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member. And thanks to our witnesses. Sergeant-at-Arms, you may escort the witnesses from the Chamber. Committee, we have agreed to resume consideration of Tabled Document 181-19(2): Capital Estimates 2021-2022 with the Department of Education, Culture and Employment. Minister, do you wish to bring any witnesses in?

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Yes, please.

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, we have my deputy minister, Ms. Rita Mueller, as well as the assistant deputy minister of corporate services, Mr. Sam Shannon. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. The committee has agreed to forgo general comments. Is the committee agreed we will proceed to the details contained in the tabled documents?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Committee, we will defer the department totals and review the estimates by activity summary, beginning at page 12 with information item on page 13. Education, Culture and Employment, junior kindergarten to grade 12 school services, infrastructure investments, \$30,148,000. Are there any comments? Member for Yellowknife North.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I see there are three, essentially, schools: the new school, Sissons, in Yellowknife, Mangilaluk in Tuktoyaktuk, and a new school in Colville Lake. I'm happy to see this. I believe, when we look at the capital needs of a number of our school districts, they are significant, and we need to improve our schools. The Colville Lake school replacement is long overdue, and I'm happy to see that. However, I was hoping I could just get a sense from the Minister of how on pace we are to meeting the needs of our school districts in new infrastructure. I believe it's quite well accepted that we have a giant infrastructure deficit across the NWT, but can I get a sense of how that all applies to education infrastructure. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. There is always additional wants and needs coming from communities regarding their schools. That said, the safety of schools is always prioritized, so if there are pressing safety concerns, those are treated as urgent and dealt with so that the health and safety of students is not compromised. That being said, we have a lot of schools. We have 49 schools, and at some point, they all need to be replaced. We will never, ever catch up to where I wish we were, but we do a good job of maintaining the safety of schools. I can hand it over to my assistant deputy minister who can elaborate, perhaps. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Was it to the deputy minister? Sorry. Mr. Shannon.

MR. SHANNON: Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you, Minister. Like the Minister said, it's an ongoing process to make sure that all the schools are up to the specs that we all wish them to be at. In terms of process each year, we reach out to all education bodies to gather a survey of all their upcoming and wished-for capital needs. All those go into a list, and as the Minister said, we assess those based on a number of criteria, with safety utmost in that list. From there, we identify our priority projects going forward on an annual basis. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. In speaking to people of Colville Lake and hearing their concerns regarding the school, I know there is increasing demand for schools to essentially also become community spaces. I see here we're going to build a community gymnasium. I believe another huge gap in our education system is building schools that have daycare spaces in them. Can I

have the Minister speak to any work we are doing to kind of make sure our schools can truly become community spaces and any work being done to incorporate daycare into our school infrastructure? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. The Member is correct. There is a growing desire to have schools as centres of the community. In many ways, they already function like that when communities use the school gyms for gathering places for feasts, when the libraries in schools are the public libraries. However, there is an acknowledgement that we can do more, and to that end, ECE has revamped its capital standards. Those are how we decide what gets put into the different communities from a technical standpoint, and those new standards include gyms for all schools, regardless of sizes. They include the option for early learning and childcare spaces in the schools.

We always work closely with communities. There are always a lot of consultations, and then the schools that we end up with are always reflective of the communities. We have taken the approach now of working even closer and listening to communities who want to create projects that are bigger than a school. Perhaps they include other aspects, other pieces of commune infrastructure, as well. While we have not gotten there yet, those are the kinds of projects we are working on right now in places like Colville Lake. Thank you.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. On the one hand of this spectrum, I fully support our schools becoming community centres, and there being mandatory gymnasiums for a school regardless of the size is a great step. I get concerned that, given the needs of all of our schools and all of our infrastructure, of our education bodies, that, the more we start to build better infrastructure, it becomes at the expense of other communities who need simple renovations. Can the Minister just speak to whether there are any guidelines or parameters to make sure that the long-term capital planning for our education bodies is essentially done evenly, that, if we go out and build the best school in one community, it's not coming at the expense of another? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. Right now, we build the best schools where there are the most students, which means there is not equitable access to all of the facilities in small communities that there is in larger centres, and that is what we are trying to remedy. We could just go by population base, which we have been doing, and we wind up where we have schools with no gym. Then those students, they don't have the time to practise indoor sports, which means they can't go in the tournaments to different regional centres and things like that. It would be great if those facilities existed within communities already and we did not have to put them in the schools, but the fact is: if we want equitable access, we have to change the way we are doing things. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Minister. I will move to the Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. My colleague from Yellowknife North asked my question about whether we actually design new schools or renovations to include childcare space, but I have a couple of questions I would like to pursue. Full disclosure: I live across the street from Ecole J.H. Sissons, and I am watching it come down over the last several weeks. I am just wondering where we are with the scheduling of that. I know COVID-19 has probably delayed that project a bit, but I just would like to get a little bit more information about where we are at with the scheduling of that because there was a lot of public concern around that in Yellowknife. The school board had to make a lot of decisions about where to put the kids to try to minimize the impact on families and students and so on. I am just wondering where we are at with the scheduling for that particular project. Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. I would like to hand that off to my assistant deputy minister, who is very up on where we are on the day-to-day operations of that. Thank you.

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

MR. SHANNON: Thank you, Madam Chair. In terms for J.H. Sissons school, we are currently on track and on budget with that. The demolition contract is just finishing up. At the same time, the construction contractor is now working on site, as they are continuing to complete the removal of the foundation from the bedrock. Initially, we were slated for handing over to the construction contractor the week of October 1st. It's looking like that will be this week. As I said, that was within the contingencies built into the schedule and the

budget, so we are hopeful to have the construction contractor take over full custody of the site, looking like this week or early next. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. I appreciate that response. I just have to walk by it every day, so I am very curious about that. I appreciate the support of the department in getting that important work done. My other question was about the Mangilaluk School. I know some of us had an opportunity to go up to Tuktoyaktuk in August, and I know that the Member for Nunakput has done a lot of work to try to expedite that and get it moving along. I am just wondering where that project is at. Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. There were some delays in that project, but I am happy to say that work is getting started. We are putting people to work on that project. I can pass it over to the ADM again for some more details.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Minister. ADM Shannon.

MR. SHANNON: Thank you, Madam Chair. For Mangilaluk School, the contract was awarded to the Inuvialuit Development Corporation late this past summer. In early September, we received the construction schedule and foundational review for phase 1. For late September to October 2020, there was the mobilization of personnel to site and basic preparatory site works. For the timeframe we are in right now, which is slated to run from October till November 2020, the contractor is working on putting the pilings in place. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. Just to be clear, the work has started now. Are people from the community getting jobs from this? I am just kind of curious. Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. I do not have those statistics on me right now, but I can promise to get those back to the Member.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Minister. Member for Great Slave.

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. I am just curious again, also, about the schools. I know there was a lot of discussion around budgets and things for the construction of these schools or the additions. I am just curious because I believe you have maybe had to cut some of design and fill and things to reach the budgets in your negotiations. I am just curious if the Minister can provide me, it does not have to be here today, with some information on where the designs were altered in order to make the budgets that you had allocated for this. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member for Great Slave. Minister of ECE.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. We have increased the budget for Mangilaluk to ensure that we build it the way we need to build it. I have addressed this in the House before. ECE used to use a method of determining costs that we have since improved greatly. Some of the older schools, they were not the best estimates. Those have been improved, and going forward, we will ensure that we get it right the first time. However, perhaps if the ADM wants to add anything, he can. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Minister. ADM Shannon.

MR. SHANNON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I do not have the details of any scope reductions or any changes to the initial contract with me right now, but we can certainly get that for the Member. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, ADM Shannon. Member for Great Slave.

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Madam Chair. That is all I had to ask. If they could provide the information, that would be good. Thanks.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): All right. Thank you. Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

MR. NORN: Marsi cho, Madam Chair. I just had a question for the Minister, just listening to some of the comments here about the long-term capital plans in terms of schools. I did not see any the schools in my riding here on that list I have in front of me at page 13. I just want to see what the long-term plans were. I know that I am going around the lake here, but in Ndilo, they are screaming for a gym there.

I am looking at a CBC report. Last year, there was some basketball outside, and in that interview, Chief Betsina said we need a school gym here. We want to push for it for our kids and stuff. I mentioned already in the House: they have a real small play area there. That's not even a gym. It's not much bigger than a volleyball court, and I think

they deserve a gym out there. Like I said, a lot of schools around the Yellowknife area, you can look up at the nice banners up there and take pride in their gyms. They can't do that in Ndilo. I think I just want to see what the appetite was that. That's my first part.

Then, I wanted to see what the plans were for the other schools in terms of: there are some older buildings. Like in Deninu Kue, that school's quite old. If there's any sort of late-stage retrofits that might be done, if it's on the radar of the ECE. Same with, what also is going on with KDFN and Dettah, as well. Marsi cho.

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

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. I will just warn the assistant deputy minister that I will be passing this off momentarily, so he can give the information on all those schools. To Kalemi Dene School, I know the Member has been very passionate about the lack of gym there. The school was built, I believe it was 2009, and it was built before we had these new capital standards, meaning that a gym wasn't included with it because of the number of students. That would change now going forward, and if there was a retrofit, it would include something like a gym.

As alluded to earlier, there's a lot of needs. There are schools that need to be replaced completely, and those often take priority. I agree with the Member that the students do deserve a gym. However, the number of schools that we can renovate or retrofit or replace is very limited. I wish I had a better answer for him, but that's where we are right now. I can hand it over to the assistant deputy minister for updates on the other schools, as well. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Minister. ADM Shannon.

MR. SHANNON: In terms of Kalemi Dene School in Ndilo and Kaw Tay Whee School in Dettah, the department has raised both of these, we put them forward as part of the capital planning process, but unfortunately, other priorities have taken precedent over them. We are committed to continually raising those as the process continues.

In terms of the school in Fort Resolution, I'm just getting the final number, but it was in 2001, I believe, there was a mid-life retrofit completed on that facility. Again, it's listed in our capital needs, and it's an area that we look at as we go through the capital planning process on an annual basis. It's to the point where other projects had been selected ahead of it. It's certainly on our radar and will continue to be so. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. NORN: Just one quick question for the Minister, as well. I'm hoping that, my question is: are they consulting with their local DEAs, just to get a good pulse on what the needs are as part of this process?

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

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. Yes, absolutely. ECE has a very close relationship with the education authorities. I meet with the education ministers on a regular basis. I will be meeting with them next week. At the department level, there are discussions every day. We are definitely aware of what the schools want and what the schools need, and we do our best to accommodate them. Thank you.

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

MR. NORN: One last comment, thank you. Sorry. I jumped the gun a little bit. Just a quick comment. For me, I'm hoping that, not far in the too distant future, I will be able to go into Ndilo and just envision those little banners up on the wall there. I'm hoping that we can get there. Marsi cho.

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

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. I'd like to ask my deputy minister to add something.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Minister. Deputy Minister Mueller.

MS. MUELLER: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thanks, Minister. Just to add, it's a very minor project, but for example, in trying to further explain the relationship with the DEAs, every year as the ADM's alluded to earlier, we actually go through a whole process of identifying any of the needs in every single school. It's done every year. It's a requirement. As part of that, in Dettah, it seems like a very minor project, but they did identify that they really needed a washer/dryer to be installed and to have all of that within the space that they have. That tender was advertised September 16th, and it closed on October 1st. Even though that's minor, that is being done right now. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Deputy Minister Mueller. I will move to Member for Thebacha.

MS. MARTSELOS: Thank you, Madam Chair. First of all, I want to say that education, I have always been very, extremely supportive of education and

the department of education because one thing you can give a child is a good education, nothing else. I've always been very supportive of schools, and the people that work in them, and the people that do everything to help that child grow and go on to life and do incredible things.

I want to congratulate the Minister for thinking out of the box for the Colville Lake school replacement. I sat with that chief on many occasions, and we had lots of discussions about lack of facilities in his community. Giving them a gym is like probably giving them everything else in the world that they could wish for. Thinking out of the box sometimes is a little bit difficult, and people might think that, everybody else, we have to make sure that the communities have the same as everybody else. Making that first step, it's a positive comment that I want to say, is that I am sure that he is very, very happy, and I want to thank you for that. I have no questions because I am very supportive of education. Thank you.

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

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I want to thank the Member. She is very supportive of education, and I appreciate it. I look forward to working with her over the next few years to advance the initiatives that this Assembly has set in terms of improving outcomes and ensuring that we do have equitable access to education, no matter where you are or who you are. Thank you.

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

MR. LAFFERTY: Masi, Madam Chair. I really enjoyed the Minister's statement on listening to the community and the people, basing their decision on their community's needs. That's a real, true statement and a very powerful statement, and as Ms. Martselos alerted to, thinking outside the box. Those are discussions that we need to have at this level. We're a government level. We need to be thinking outside the box. I would like to thank the Minister for that.

I do have a couple of questions, Madam Chair, more specifically to Chief Jimmy Bruneau School that's been highlighted here. As you know, there's been a major retrofit, 1995. It's been 25 years. That school is older than me, over 50 years old. Probably, one of the older schools in the Northwest Territories. It is deteriorating. We met, the Minister and I met with my leadership back in January, I believe, and there's a future request for the replacement of the school. Not a retrofit, replacement. That's why I highlighted the statement that he's made, and it is 50-plus years old, Madam

Chair. Those are discussions that need to take place.

That's a long-term investment, but at the same time, this bus garage has been in the books for quite some time now, I believe. It's been a real issue with the bus garage. Since the 70's, we've been commuting students from Behchoko, Wha Ti to Edzo on a daily basis. The bus garage has been a real issue and challenges. My first question, Madam Chair, are we going to be waiting for a new school to be before we deal with this garage, or are we going ahead with our garage, retrofitting the garage? That's a separate building. I'm not sure if that work has been done.

Also, before I forget, Madam Chair, I believe O'Reilly may have touched on this, on the demolition. We talk about contracts. Obviously, the contracting issue is a major issue, now. We have been closely monitoring that. It must be northern and locally beneficial. I want to make that clear today, that, if my school is coming down, obviously, we don't want southern contractors to come out and build schools for us. We have the capability in the North, so I want to make that clear.

My first question is: the school, we're still working on it with the Minister, but the garage part, I'm just curious. Is it going to go ahead, or are we going to wait on a new school? Masi, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member for Monfwi. Minister of ECE.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. For those who don't know, the background of the school is that it is an older school. According to the technical inspections, with the retrofit, it could stand for another couple of decades. However, the Tlicho Government have strongly expressed their, I don't even want to say "desire." They have said there is no other way to do it. They want a new school in Rae, in Behchoko. In the old days, ECE may have just said, "No, we are going to retrofit the school in Edzo." That's how the school got there in the first place. The federal government put the school there against the wishes of the community. Now, 50 years later, we have this opportunity, perhaps, to right a historical wrong, and so we have agreed to work with the Tlicho Government to try and access some federal funds, or some funds from somewhere, so that we can facilitate the building of a new school in Behchoko.

We are not there, yet, not by a long shot. The future of that bus garage might hinge on that. Perhaps I can hand it over to my deputy minister who is more familiar with this, and she can give us some details on the Member's question. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Minister. Deputy Minister Mueller.

MS. MUELLER: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you, Minister. In the technical review of that school, it is a unique school compared to others. The technical review looked at that entire building, for those of you who have not been in that particular facility, in four distinct sections. The first section was the residence, because that was a residential school for many years. The second section was what they called the mechanical and cafeteria wing of the school. The third section is actually the main part of the school where the majority of classrooms, library, and administrative offices are, including the gym. Then the fourth section was the bus garage, and that's how that technical review was done. In the technical review, they found that the residence and bus garage were the two areas of most concern, for a variety of reasons, but that the mechanical and cafeteria wing and the main section of the classrooms and gym and library and so on in the school were very sound technically, but needed upgrades.

To answer, or to further expand on what the Minister was saying: right now, where we are at is working with the Tlicho Community Services Agency, the Tlicho Government, Infrastructure, the Department of Finance, and ourselves. We have developed terms of reference, and we are creating a working group to look at, again, as the Tlicho Government has indicated, they really don't want to entertain work on the existing site. They would like a new school built in Rae. With that, right now, any kind of decision about the bus garage, as one of those four sections, is on hold until more discussions can take place with the Tlicho Government and the Tlicho Community Services Agency. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Deputy Minister Mueller. Member for Monfwi.

MR. LAFFERTY: Masi, Madam Chair. I knew that was the answer, but I had to put it on the record. The Tlicho Government and myself and the Minister will have to deal with the school replacement. It's a clear message from the community, not just the government, but the community, for a new school to be replaced.

Daycare is in the residence wing. I'm not sure what is going to happen with the daycare. We have so many students in there. That's one area that is part of the wing that is going to be demolished, apparently; demolition. The old school residence has been very well used over the years, since the 1970s. It was used for trades programming, residences for students in outlying communities. Apparently, it's no longer in use, for future use. Was there engagement with the community to get rid of

the residence wing, or has that decision been made by the department, to say, "Due to it being unsafe, we're going to tear it down"? Because there were talks, and even the chairperson of TCSA was talking about potential trades programming in that residence wing. I'm just curious: has that been considered? I just need the latest update on that, Madam Chair. Masi.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member for Monfwi. Minister of ECE.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. I'd like to hand it to my deputy minister.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Minister. Deputy Minister Mueller.

MS. MUELLER: Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you, Minister. Really, as I mentioned, the steps that we've been working on are to establish a very formal working group, as was the desire from the Tlicho Government, and it involves many different groups to look at the whole scope of where we're going moving forward. As far as the residence is concerned, the Member is right. The daycare is in part of that residence, old residence, and a lot of other actual programs were in there, as well. School-related programs are no longer in there. The majority of the space is being used as storage for the school and/or for the Tlicho Community Services Agency more broadly, not just for education, and there are only sections of that building that are being used right now.

We also had that area, as we always do, regularly inspected for safety, and really what the technical report said was, right now, it is still safe. You can do some of these activities in there, but in a very short period of time, in a couple of years, that might not be the case. That's where we're at right now. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Deputy Minister Mueller. Member for Hay River South.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. First of all, I would like to say that we know education in the smaller communities is sometimes somewhat wanting, so I am pleased to hear that we are constructing and building schools in the smaller communities, northern communities. I know that these buildings will provide an appealing learning place and also a safe place to encourage indoor sports and other activities. Hopefully, it will help with any social issues, as well.

I think it's important to note that this government exists because of our Indigenous peoples and our Indigenous population, so we have to ensure that they are provided with infrastructure just like Yellowknife and the regional centres, as well.

Sometimes, we may have to give up a little bit in the bigger communities so that the smaller communities have an opportunity, as well. I am very pleased to hear that the Minister is actually listening to the people and placing the students first. That's, I think, what people were expecting from this government, and so it is heartening to hear that.

One thing I'm curious about, though, is: you talked about hearing from the communities on the buildings themselves. I'm wondering how much input they maybe had in the design of the building to ensure that it meshed with possibly their learning style. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member for Hay River South. Minister of ECE.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you. The deputy minister would be happy to speak about that.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Minister. Deputy Minister Mueller.

MS. MUELLER: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you, Minister. In any kind of major project, whether it be what we call a major retrofit to an existing building or it's a brand new building, a brand new school, one of the fundamental components of that is establishing, often, community working groups of interested people as well as, of course, the local DEA and the regional DEC, and being part of really identifying what is unique and special, what kind of space that they want, because often what people want to know the most about is the actual visual space, what they can see, the interior, the design of meeting spaces or what a community school library might look like or the gym and that type of thing. That's actually a fundamental part of any major retrofit or new school build. It's essential, actually, to hear what parents, students, all levels, the community, are hoping for for their school. That helps really in the development of the design, but the reality is: it's often everybody wants everything, and then it has to be scaled down to what the scope of the project is and the funding available. Thank you.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just want to make one comment, and that's with respect to the power doors accessibility in Kakisa. I'm glad to see that in there, and I think that's got to be taken into account in all the schools because, in the smaller communities, I think they're forgotten about. There are people that need that access, and this is a good start. Hopefully, it's built into all future schools. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member for Hay River South. Does the Minister have any comments?

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Sure. Thank you. I appreciate that observation. We can't give everybody everything, but I think that what we have to give everyone is access. Both the department and myself have prioritized these types of projects where we can ensure that everyone has equitable access, regardless of what your circumstance might be. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Minister. Any further questions? Committee, do we have any further comments on this section? Seeing none, I'll call the page. Education, Cultural and Employment, junior kindergarten to grade 12 school services, infrastructure investment, \$30,148,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Members. Please return now to department summary found on page 10, Education, Culture and Employment, Capital Estimates 2021-2022, \$30,148,000. Is the committee agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Mr. Norm.

COMMITTEE MOTION 39-19(2):
TABLED DOCUMENT 181-19(2): CAPITAL
ESTIMATES 2021-2022 - EDUCATION, CULTURE
AND EMPLOYMENT - DEFERRAL OF
DEPARTMENT (PAGE 10),
CARRIED

MR. NORN: Marsi cho, Madam Chair. I move that does committee defer the consideration for the estimates for the Department of Education, Culture and Employment at this time. Thank you, 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 those in favour? All those opposed? Abstentions? The motion is carried.

---Carried

Consideration of the department summary has been deferred. We'll take a short break.

---SHORT RECESS

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Committee, you have agreed to review the Department of Industry,

Tourism and Investment next. Does the Minister wish to bring witnesses into the Chamber?

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Yes, I do, Madam Chair. I hope I have the right department's witnesses imminently waiting. I will find out shortly, I think.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. We have Tracy St-Denis, assistant deputy minister of ITI, and Nina Salvador, who is director from ITI, as well. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Minister. The committee has agreed to forego general comments. Is the committee agreed 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 35, economic diversification with business support, with information items on page 36. Any comments, Members? Member for Hay River South.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I am pleased to see the construction of a new fish plant in there, processing plant. I am just wondering where we are in either the tender phase or the construction phase at this point. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. This file is finally advancing, and I am happy to say that there is now a request for proposals out, only just recently. Once that comes back, obviously, the matter will proceed. It will be a design and build, so we will get the design process going, at which point we will certainly get back in touch with MLAs. Essentially, the file is now proceeding. Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. With respect to the design, have there been any changes since the original design? Has it been downsized by any chance? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes, there have been some changes. I will turn it over to the assistant deputy minister in a moment, but the changes, I just want to say, are good news in that it was after a review that was done by Memorial University with a view to ensuring that we are, in fact, being as efficient as possible in the design proposal that is available. The changes that are there do make it a more efficient design request, a more efficient processing plant, and also will ensure that there is capacity for more value-add in this plant, namely that it will be able to be certified. With that, to the specifics of that downsizing, if I could ask to turn it over to Ms. St-Denis, please.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Minister. ADM St-Denis.

MS. ST-DENIS: Thank you, Madam Chair. I would just add, to the Minister's point and the MLA's question, that there has been an additional change, that the footprint has been reduced by 32 percent. With increased efficiency, we are looking at a smaller footprint. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Ms. St-Denis. Member for Hay River South.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just want to confirm: is this plant going to be a federally inspected plant, where we can sell product into southern Canada? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes. That is the intention, is that it will be designed in a way that it can be approved by the CFIA. I do not control that approval process, but that is the intention, is that it will be designed in a way that it can meet that level of inspection. Thank you.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just want to go back to the size of the plant. It was indicated it was going to be reduced by, I think, 32 percent, and I am just wondering: was this actually based on efficiency, or was this based on reducing the cost, because I know, when the original tenders went out, they came in over budget. I'm just wondering if it was a combination of both or one or the other. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. I will ultimately turn this back over to the ADM. I think just to start, in case I miss anything, there certainly was a process that delayed this because the receipts that we had back on the tender were significantly over budget, but that gave the opportunity to go out and make this a more efficient plant. I'm not going to go so far as to say it's a combination. I think one fact led to another, and it ultimately turned out to be a better product. If I could just check and see if there is anything further the ADM wants to add.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Minister. ADM St-Denis.

MS. ST-DENIS: Thank you, Madam Chair. I would agree with the Member and the Minister that it was both efficient use of process as well as the savings on space and trying to be a bit more efficient in using that space. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Ms. St-Denis. Member for Hay River South.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. The equipment that's going into this building, my understanding that it was purchased before any design was done or in place. I'm just wondering if this equipment was new equipment that is going in there or is it used. The equipment that was purchased, will it fit into that building? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. There is some pre-purchased equipment, but as to the specifics of it, I'll turn that over to the ADM, please.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Minister. ADM St-Denis.

MS. ST-DENIS: Thank you, Madam Chair. All of the equipment that was purchased is new. The equipment is being used in the new proposed plant. There were two forklifts that were propane-based that were recommended by the consultant at the time. They will be repurposed but used outside of the facility, but they'll still be used. Yes, new equipment, and they will be used in the new plant. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Ms. St-Denis. Member for Hay River South.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just want to talk about the operation of the facility. Will the GNWT be operating it, or will another entity be operating that facility? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Ultimately, it is intended that the Tu Cho Fishers Cooperative are expected to be the operators of the facility, and an MOU was recently signed with them just over the past summer. Thank you.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. Talking about the reduced size, what impact did that have on the fishermen? The fish coming off the lake is not a lot. It's probably a million pounds or less. My understanding is: there is quite a bit of that catch coming out of Yellowknife, as well. What is the chance of that facility running at 100 percent during the first year? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. I will turn over to the ADM in a moment, to see if she has any specific numbers. I do want to just note that, although the size of the catch may not be large, we want to put this position, this project being within that of regional economic development strategies that for those groups, and those communities who are impacted by this opportunity, that it does still have a significant impact on their local economic strategies and local economic opportunities. As to the specific numbers about what this might get to in the first year or the anticipated numbers in the first year, again, I'll ask Ms. St-Denis to take that, please.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Minister. Ms. St-Denis.

MS. ST-DENIS: Thank you, Madam Chair. We're actually working on a program this winter with the fishers to look at a winter fishery. The intention is to spend this time while we're planning and building the plant to get production up. The plant will be able to produce the current catch volumes, and if needed, we'd look at working with the Tu Cho to have additional ships and have the plant operate with exceeded hours as we actually have them work with them to actually get that catch volume up. The intention is to get ready for that plant when it's open and look at utilizing the winter fishery, as well.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Ms. St-Denis. Member for Hay River South.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. Another question is: we're building this new plant, and it's part of the revitalization strategy. I'm just

wondering how this plant is going to translate into increased return to the fishermen. Thank you.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. This plant gives the opportunity for the fishers that are utilizing it to access markets that they can't currently access. For example, in terms of domestic market, it won't replace those fishers who are already out there providing to a local market, but it does provide access to, such as, the corrections facilities or healthcare facilities, places that require the fish to be approved and go through formalized processing. It similarly is going to provide an opportunity to access markets down South. Again, because we are doing our processing locally, it will ultimately be able to change the way that the fish are being priced. Further, last one, last comment from me, Madam Chair, is: again, the vision is that this will allow for alternative types of products such as roe fish and fertilizer. Really, a much more whole-of-industry approach so that even a lower-grade catch can still be utilized to find access to the markets. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Minister. Did you have any final comments?

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I would like to ask what will happen with the existing plant that's being used right now? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm going to put that one back to the ADM, please. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): ADM St-Denis.

MS. ST-DENIS: Thank you, Madam Chair. The building right now is actually a receiving station, where the fish is received and then shipped to Winnipeg. We suspect that the FFMC, the Freshwater Marketing Corporation, will look at that asset. Unfortunately, that asset has not been, over the last 30 years maybe, kept to the same standard maybe as some of their other facilities, so I suspect that they'll be looking at a few different options on what to do with that building. Right now, our focus on a new plant that can be CFIA, or Canadian Food Inspection Approved. I think that other facility would have challenges. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Ms. St-Denis. Committee, are there any other comments on this? Member for Yellowknife North.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. In general, I am supportive of this plant. I do have a number of concerns about whether this is just throwing a lot of infrastructure money at an industry that may not actually be able to meet the demand. I know the fishing strategy revitalization identifies trying to bring new fishers into the industry. Many are retiring, and they simply can't find people to replace them. I know some of the fishers in my industry have expressed concerns about the possibility of Southerners coming up and starting to enter that industry at the expense of others. Specific question is: when I look at the fishing zones, quite a significant amount of the quota is on the northern end of the lake. Key to that is having remote pickup locations such that this plant is useful to them. Are there any plans for that, and is that infrastructure included in this line item here? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm just quickly returning to the line item and while I flip let me just reassure the Member that there are intended to be pickup locations in both Yellowknife and Port Resolution, which are reflected in the capital plans for the department. There is also intended to be work being done in Fort Providence not included in this particular plan because that's being done largely through the community themselves or directly through the community themselves. The point being there would be these three different collection points, particularly, for the purposes of the plan, Fort Resolution and Yellowknife. Thank you.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I think those pickup locations are central to making sure this plant can actually reach capacity. Simply a comment to the Minister that this infrastructure, in and of itself, is not going to revive the fisheries. I feel like that is obvious, but there is a lot of concerted effort that needs to be done both by the Tu Cho and the Freshwater, our GNWT procurement of whether we can get fish into hospitals, whether we can start encouraging people to buy local fish, getting it into restaurants. Much of that work is started in the strategy, so can I just get a response from the Minister of how the revitalization strategy is proceeding in that all of the other key areas of strategy that will actually justify this multi-million-dollar plant are on track? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. I entirely agree with the Member's comments, and I am honestly still learning a fair bit about this strategy myself and came at it with not dissimilar questions, so I am happy to report that I have certainly turned a corner in terms of my hope for this, that I think that there is tremendous possibility and promise and opportunity. As I said earlier, I think in response to the MLA from Hay River, it may not be a tremendously huge contributor to the entire GDP of our economy, but it has a tremendous potential for those communities that are going to be most directly impacted.

As far as what is happening, then, with the strategy, there is already work underway, and I think it was mentioned, winter training plans right now. There are other training plans that are set to start in the spring of 2021 for potential plant workers. There are already other discussions underway with the Tu Cho fishers to increase their training and their recruitment and capacity, and ongoing discussion between all the parties. Certainly, a vision that I would have would be to bring the fishers together as much as possible to have some collective communications about what else needs to get done to move this strategy forward to their success.

Finally, one last comment, Madam Chair, is that, if this plant can indeed be CFIA certified, there may be some opportunities to use it for agricultural purposes other than just the fish. Quite a lot is happening, and there is some movement, as I say again, that the strategy is moving forward, the training is moving forward. I think we will start to see that play out over the next few months. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Minister. Are there any further comments to this page? Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

MR. NORN: Marsi cho, Madam Chair. I am kind of disappointed, though, looking down the list for this department, and I do not see anything from my riding. I did have some questions. I know I saw somewhere during our committee meetings, that there is some stuff there for Little Buffalo River, but I just want to see if there is going to be any work done in terms of long-term work in that area. Marsi cho, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member. Is this under the economic diversification?

MR. NORN: [Microphone turned off] ...ahead.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): [Microphone turned off].

MR. NORN: Okay. My apologies. Maybe we can return to that later, then.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Okay. Are there any further comments on the Industry, Tourism and Investment, economic diversification and business support? If none, I will call the page. Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment, economic diversification and business support, infrastructure investments, \$11,148,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Committee, please now turn to page 37, tourism and parks, with information items on pages 38 to 39. Does committee have comments on this? Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

MR. NORN: Thank you again, Madam Chair. I will just repeat my question. Like I said earlier, I was disappointed to see nothing in my riding on this list, a long list of projects. I want to turn my attention to Little Buffalo River. It's just outside of Deninu Kue. I just want to see if there is going to be any work on that, that area and that park, that area there, in that vicinity. Marsi cho.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. I had already started to think through that there is, and I just wanted to mention that there is the work happening with respect to the Fort Resolution collection station as it feeds into the fishing strategy. As for that park specifically, it's not in the 2021-2022 capital plan. I am just trying to see if I can find where it might fall into future plans. I do have the long-term plan in front of me, but I am not finding it, Madam Chair. I might turn it over, I am not sure to which of the two witnesses, but one of the two of them may have the answer. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Minister. ADM St-Denis.

MS. ST-DENIS: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes, there are plans. I will take a commitment away to get some more detailed information to the MLA. Thank you.

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

MR. NORN: Marsi cho. I really appreciate that, to just get something in writing and to see what that long-term plan is on that area. Marsi cho.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Are there any other comments to the tourism and parks? Member for Monfwi.

MR. LAFFERTY: Masi, Madam Chair. This North Arm obviously has been in the books for some time now, so I am just wondering where it's at. Has that

been completed? Because there has been some work done; there has been some construction on the campground, public day use, fencing, and also the loop. I am just wondering: has that been completed? I have a follow-up question, as well, Madam Chair. Masi.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. There is still some work underway on the project, so not quite completed yet.

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

MR. LAFFERTY: Masi, Madam Chair. I think 80 or 90 percent is completed, I believe, and hopefully, by next year, next summer, before next summer, I am hoping that this will be completed. Madam Chair, my next question leads into a long-term goal and objective of this department with respect to North Arm on the south side. The Minister and I were supposed to go there, but there has been a change of plans. I was going to show her which area I was referring to. It's North Arm Park, towards Yellowknife or Edzo, and then there is one that is on the south, southern side. It's connected, but there has not been any development on the other side. A lot of people from Yellowknife for some reason go to North Arm in Edzo, maybe because it's free. I don't know. Because there is a fee here, and we do not have a fee in North Arm Park, so a lot of people from Yellowknife do go there, camp out, and some overnight with their campers, and we have people coming from south, as well, at times, getting wood or going on a trip. That camp is always, especially on a weekend, it's always full, completely full. My constituents utilize that area, especially with the COVID cases now, so people are out there camping, and it gets full, so people coming from south, they continue on to Yellowknife.

I think I just want to reiterate to the Minister because, eventually, we will take a trip there to show her that one area. ADM would know exactly what I am talking about. It's on the south side of North Arm. If there is going to be a plan in place to devolve that area because it's a beautiful spot, similar to the Long Lake here. It used to be a swampy area. They took out all of the rocks, and now it's a beach, so similar. Why couldn't we do that in a small community, outside Edzo? We have a beautiful facility here. We could have similar because it is growing, North Arm area. Just wondering if there is a plan in place within the next five-year plan to focus in those areas because it gets too full almost every weekend and, obviously, we would like to have tours. Even Yellowknife people go there, so is there a plan in place for there, Madam Chair? Masi.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. The short answer is yes. I am looking forward to getting there, and I should talk to the Member after. I just want to make sure that we are going there at a time that is safe in light of the discussions at the beginning of session today, that this week might not be the week to go. However, let's have that conversation. My phone has been lighting up from those who are participating, seeing what we can do to get out there. I do want to get out on that trip. I am looking forward to getting out there, so we are going to go. I will make that commitment first. We will get ourselves there so that I can see it myself and the senior staff who are with me will see it.

Yes, one of the things that is happening right now with North Arm Park is discussions with the Tlicho under the agreement for infrastructure plans, so that conversation is being had with the work that is already under way. That conversation will need to be had with future work, but there are plans already in existence and awareness in existence of the need to expand to a camping loop. I think the commitment really is one to just make sure that we are having that conversation as those plans develop, and I certainly will commit to keeping the MLA in the know as that gets going and as that moves forward. He obviously gives all the reasons why that should happen. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I am always happy to see parks infrastructure, and I'd like to thank all of the work that our parks group does. Getting the season open and extending it this year was great work. What I'd like to see long-term, though, is extending the season into some sort of winter camping option. If you go pretty much any direction in Yellowknife, you hit tent frames all over the place. They're on the sub-islands. They're up the Ingraham Trail. I know the Department of Lands has a strategy coming to remove quite a lot of those tent frames because they are unauthorized structures; hundreds, in fact, which is going to create a huge demand that we simply cannot fill. I think the Department of ITI has a role to play. If we can let people put their tent frames up in a winter park, whether that be Prelude or the North Arm or any of these other parks, they will do it. I recently visited Iqaluit and the territorial park there, you rent a tent pad for the year. You get to put your tent frame up, and it's a really great community experience. My question for the Minister is: are there any plans to implement a winter camping season? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. This year, when the park season was extended by, I think, only a couple of weeks, the cost of doing so was \$226,000. It does certainly come with a cost. While this year was a great opportunity to try that out and to see what the impacts were, particularly in a time when there were so many local residents not able to travel, it still needs to be balanced against what the costs are and against what the actual usage is.

For this year, what I have asked is that we try to see whether or not we can do some sort of modified planning around the winter season, to provide that sort of opportunity, particularly now where people aren't able to travel. At the same time, as soon as that happens, the concern we get from the other side is that we're interrupting one of the areas where we have some of our small and medium-sized businesses in the tourism industry who provide access to these kinds of experiences themselves. There is a bit of a balancing act to be found here, and I think the best I can say is that we'll see how this winter goes and see whether or not there are some opportunities to create those options for local residents without impeding access to opportunities for the small and medium-sized businesses that operate in that sector, as well. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes. I guess I want to clarify. What I'm picturing is not that the department go out and buy a bunch of yurts and then start renting them for a fixed fee, because, in my riding, Aurora Village, essentially that is their transition for this winter. There are businesses doing that. What I am looking for is a place where residents can legally put a structure for a period of time, and usually those are tent frames up here. This runs into the issue of: sometimes, those are somewhat legal, and then they get a frame, and then they become illegal. I think this needs to be regulated. I think parks has a role to play in this.

Some of our territorial parks are not just campgrounds. I think about Hidden Lake Territorial Park, one of our largest territorial parks. Perhaps there's a way to allow some sort of temporary structure permits within territorial parks. Perhaps there is a way to give people an eight-month thing. I'm not asking for the full staff to be there, and that there be this cost of hundreds of thousands of dollars to let people put up a winter tent frame. Perhaps I could just get a commitment from the Minister that, as this demand increases as we take

down tent frames from Lands, that ITI will work with them. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Two things, Madam Chair. Firstly, the reason that there needs to be staff on-site is that, first of all, the washrooms and facilities and garbage facilities still need to be manned, even if it is below zero. There is also increased vandalism that tends to occur in the parks in the winter, with people cutting down more trees. It can't simply be that there is no staff there.

The second thing, and the thing I will commit to doing, is going back and having a conversation with stakeholders and colleagues in tourism, I'm thinking of the NWT Tourism Association, and see if this is an area where they can perhaps provide us with some guidance and provide us with some ideas that would benefit local operators and provide some opportunities but not impede on the areas where some of them are trying to move their work. Let me go and have a conversation with those folks and see if there is something that can be done. Thank you.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. I see in the budget here that there is supposed to be a wayside park number 1 on the Inuvik to Tuktoyaktuk Highway. I've had an opportunity to drive the highway now a couple of times. I'm kind of surprised that we don't build these things into the original design, but can someone tell me a little bit more about what this is going to actually be? The pull-outs on the highway now, they make the shoulder a little bit wider. I'm hoping that this is actually going to be a place where people can actually pull off. There might be some interpretive panels. There might be, I don't know, a place for people to do some things. What is this all about in the capital estimates? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. I think this really is meant to be essentially a fairly basic site with the pull-off and some essential basic facilities there, but let me see if there is anything else that I'm -- yes. Sorry. Basically, they have a very basic pull-away, not necessarily an interpretive centre, which would be a fairly significant investment that is not contemplated here. Thank you.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. I don't think I was asking for an interpretive centre; maybe interpretive panels, like we see on the highway even now between Behchoko and Fort Providence. Can I just get a little more detail about what this is? The pull-outs that you see on this highway now are marked with signs. It's like the shoulder is about two feet wider, and they call it a pull-out. If I was driving that road from the South and I thought there was going to be a pull-out and all you see is a wider shoulder, it's just a little bit misleading, maybe. Is this actually going to be somewhere where you can actually pull your vehicle right off the highway, like a loop? What else is going to be there? Is there going to be an outhouse or picnic tables, or something? What is this all about? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Sorry, my apologies there. I did misunderstand. Yes. The intended vision, if you will, is that there is a pull-out sufficient to park a vehicle, have a picnic, have the interpretive signage, and actually be able to utilize this as a space, a washroom facility, more than just the roadway on the side; something a little more than that. I understand, right now, there are some conversations happening with the local hunter and trapper association. Once that is done, this can move forward and be something that is actually usable as a space, I think more in the line of what the Member is envisioning. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Minister. Are there any further comments to this section, tourism and parks? Seeing none, I will call the page. Industry, Tourism and Investment, tourism and parks, infrastructure investment, \$3,102,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Members. Please now return to the departmental summary on page 34. Industry, Tourism and Investment, 2021-2022 Capital Estimates, \$14,250,000. Does committee agree? Mr. Norn.

COMMITTEE MOTION 40-19(2):
TABLED DOCUMENT 181-19(2): CAPITAL
ESTIMATES 2021-2022 - INDUSTRY, TOURISM
AND INVESTMENT - DEFERRAL OF
DEPARTMENT (PAGE 34),
CARRIED

MR. NORN: Marsi cho, Madam Chair. I move that this committee defer further consideration of the estimates for the department of Industry, Tourism and Investment at this time. Thank you.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

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

---Carried

Consideration of the departmental summary has been deferred. Thank you, Minister. Sergeant-at-Arms, can you please escort the witnesses from the Chamber.

Committee, you have agreed to review the Department of Finance next. Does the Minister wish to bring witnesses into the Chamber? Thank you. Sergeant-at-Arms, please escort the witnesses into the Chamber. Would the Minister please introduce her witness?

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. This is Sandy Kalgutkar, the Deputy Minister of Finance.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Welcome, Mr. Kalgutkar. Committee has agreed to forgo general comments. Does the 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 26 with information systems shared services with information item on page 27. Department of Finance, any comments? Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. Yes. A couple of areas here. If you look at page 27 in the capital estimates, some of this looks like it's related to the Yellowknife airport, at least one item here. Is this money that's coming out of the revolving fund? How does this relate to the use of the revolving fund? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. There is a committee that's responsible for all of the technology management systems within the Government of the Northwest Territories, and they have a budget assigned to them for such projects as that at the airport, as well as you'll see here, items for corrections, items for cultural places. It's that set budget is where this money is coming from. Thank you.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. Is the money for this project coming out of the revolving fund, or it's just being parked in Finance? Where does the money actually come from for this work? Thanks.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. I was actually just trying to see if it's showing, listed here. Anyhow, no, it has nothing to do with the revolving fund, Madam Chair. That's not being touched for this purpose. There is, again, it's the set amount that's allotted to new information technology products. I'll let Mr. Kalgutkar confirm the number that that comes from. It's that budget that sits in Finance and information shared services for use for all the projects that come through the committee that then determines which of the technical projects, or information technical projects should go forward. Again, I don't want to get the number wrong, Madam Chair, so I'll just see if the deputy minister has it. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Minister. Deputy Minister Kalgutkar.

MR. KALGUTKAR: Thank you, Madam Chair. The appropriation for all the information technology projects is funded through the Department of Finance, so this is in the Department of Finance's appropriation. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks for that. The top item on page 27, broadband fibre expansion link. This mentions that this is the Inuvik to Tuktoyaktuk extension of the Mackenzie Valley fibre link. I've been somewhat critical of the Mackenzie Valley fibre link in the past, kind of building the line but passing by communities without a distribution system when it had actually been pitched as a way to improve broadband access across the NWT. Does this budget item actually include a distribution system in Tuktoyaktuk, or how are people in Tuktoyaktuk going to be able to take advantage of extending the fibre link to their community? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Much like the Mackenzie Valley fibre line that has brought a point of access to communities up and down the entire Mackenzie Valley, this now, will extend that all the way to

Tuktoyaktuk so that there is that point of access. It's the backbone of the system, backbone of bringing the line up to the community, and it provides, it certainly will provide in terms of healthcare and education and the other government services that the government can be a customer of, and then with respect to residents in their homes. There's recently been the CRTC announcements supportive of a Northwestel application. That's where that final last mile, if you will, their point of home connection will take place, but this specific project from the government's point of view, makes that other part possible. Thank you.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. I've heard this, we've had this debate and discussion before, and we need a real plan to bring affordable and accessible broadband to all of our communities, not just building lines and ending them. It's like building a water line in a community, but nobody can use it. Is there any money in here for actually developing even a plan or a costed proposal of some sort for broadband across the Northwest Territories for all of our communities? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. No, Madam Chair. This is not an operational component of the budget. This is not the work. This budget doesn't speak to the work that goes on in ISSS or through the Chief Information Officer's office, which is responsible for ensuring that broadband is accessible and available to the greatest extent possible. This is an infrastructure item, so it really is just speaking to the infrastructure project that is under consideration and under planning to bring access to the fibre line into the community of Tuktoyaktuk. That is what this is. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. If this is not the place where I would expect to find work and money to support the development of a broadband plan for the whole Northwest Territories, where would I find it in the budget, in the capital budget? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. The Government of the Northwest Territories is not an Internet service provider. If the 19th Assembly decides that the Government of the Northwest Territories should become an Internet

service provider, that's a very different conversation. The capital plan budget that is here right now is: this plan is demonstrating the next significant step in terms of extending broadband access, fibre access, right up to the Arctic Ocean. There certainly are other projects that are being contemplated and discussed, some of which will be potential capital plan projects that will come through in a future year.

At this point, this is the project we have here. Internet service aspect of it, that involves ensuring that the CRTC's approval of ongoing projects through Northwestel or other smaller service providers. I'm certainly happy to speak to those, but I don't know that this is necessarily the moment in which to do that. If that's the question, then I can get back and provide more information about that Internet service provision and where we fit into it. As far as the capital planning, right now, this is the next step for us in terms of providing better fibre access in the Northwest Territories. Thank you.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. This could be more of a comment. If we have to wait for the CRTC and Northwestel to develop broadband for all of our communities, it's probably not even going to happen in my lifetime. The federal government and throne speech on lots of other occasions have talked about almost becoming like a right within Canada. There is a need for equitable access to the Internet, and we saw that with the pandemic, with distance education needs for our youth and the education system. Even applying for CERB online, whatever, people have to have equitable and affordable access to broadband across the country.

If we don't have a plan together, a costed plan, to take to the federal government, we're going to miss the boat again on federal funding like we did with housing. I just cannot stress enough to my Cabinet colleagues: we need that plan. It's not just me saying it. It's people like Just Recovery, Our Time, people across the Northwest Territories who want and have a right to access affordable Internet and telecommunication services. Where is the plan to develop that? There is no money in the budget to do it. I don't know what else to say, Madam Chair. We have to get that plan together, and the sooner the better so you folks in the Cabinet side can go to Ottawa and start to get that money. Thanks, Madam Chair. That's the big capital project that our government should be pursuing right now. Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. There is so much going in this file right now, and I was only hesitating to get into it because we're doing capital review, the capital plan that I have in front of me that we've actually got a plan for that we can move forward and get an approval so that we can get this out to contract and to tender. There is fibre to Whati that is under consideration. There is the fibre line coming up the Dempster to provide redundancy. There is the prospect of redundancy coming out of Fort Resolution which is still fairly theoretical but would give redundancy to Yellowknife. There really is a lot happening, but it's not a stage where I can come forward with a capital plan where I can give you a cost estimate and say that, in three years from now, there will be shovels on the ground to start laying that line.

This is a plan that gives projects of that nature but in terms of the bigger picture, concepts, as I say, I don't want there to be any misconception in the public that the government's not aware, that the government isn't looking at the kinds of things that I've just described and that I am not having those conversations, which I am, with federal Ministers. Just recently, in fact, had that conversation with the federal Minister because the UBF, the broadband fund is going to be opening up again soon. We do want to be there, and we want to be at the front of the line with visionary plans. A visionary plan isn't the same as a capital plan. That was my only hesitancy, but it's not for lack of having a vision. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Before I ask my question, I just want to echo what my colleague has said in that I do believe that Internet is becoming very clearly a Canadian right, not in the sense that streaming movies is a right, but in the sense that the pandemic has shown us that access to information, which in this case information means life or death, access to information was very much solely on the Internet, especially as information was coming out daily. It was changing hourly, and we're still in a situation where, even last week, with the announcement of: if you've been in this place and this place between these times, then you need to get yourself off the street and get yourself checked out and get yourself into self-isolation. That was distributed over the Internet, and if we did end up with a community outbreak, we would need people to know. We would need people to have access to that information for their health and safety.

I'd like to echo also equitable access to education. Education is a Canadian right and education was

for the most part solely delivered online during the lockdown of the pandemic. Whether or not schools were producing paper documents, there was a distinct difference between what kids were getting access to online versus what they were getting access to in paper documents. Beyond that, go to economic recovery, our economic development. Internet is a huge piece of that. I think we definitely need to put our weight behind this one, and we definitely need to not be the last people in line.

From there, I'd like to go onto cell service. One of the things I've heard frequently since starting this job and growing up in the North I've always known it, there are places as soon as you get that one pretty pink rock, you're not getting cell service anymore. You're not getting it until you get just past the quarry there. What I'm wondering is: we lose people every single year on the road to Behchoko. The Member for Monfwi has had to pull over and save a life because he luckily had a sat phone. I don't travel with a sat phone. I'm wondering where pieces for those missing cell service links are within this capital plan. Thank you.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. I agree with everything the Member is saying. I agree with everything that was said by MLA O'Reilly, as well. I don't want to make it seem like I'm not in agreement. I am, but I also want to reassure the public that I hear what they are saying and that we're taking some action on it. With respect to mobility, yes, that was raised by MLA Lafferty and some work was done. ISS did go out and do some costing of what it would look like. I don't have those numbers here in front of me, but I will commit to getting them. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Is there a plan for when different pieces of highway infrastructure within the Northwest Territories will see cell service at different points over the life of this Assembly? Thank you.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. I don't have it right now in the capital plan that's being proposed in front of us today. This is a capital plan that was put together on information that had been already developed and analyzed long before the issues came back again. Certainly, in the last round, in June, and the questions around where we were at on our cell

service. Honestly, I can't say right now, Madam Chair, I just know that it's not in this capital plan. It may well find its way into the capital plan because, again, I don't have the numbers in front of me. Maybe I'll see if the deputy Minister has recollection of what they are. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Minister. Deputy Minister.

MR. KALGUTKAR: Thank you, Madam Chair. The cell phone infrastructure is largely owned by Northwestel or Bell Canada. That is likely why it's not in the capital plan, as the Minister has said. We have done some estimates to expand that service, mainly on the highway from Yellowknife to Behchoko. You will certainly get those estimates to committee pretty soon. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Deputy Minister Kalgutkar. Any further comments?

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I have the numbers. I remember receiving that email soon after our last conversation about it from the Minister, and I appreciate that. She's consistently prompt, which is appreciated. My question, though, is not how much it's going to cost, it's where is it? That's what I'm looking for is: what is the long-term plan for that one? I don't pretend that putting together a capital plan is an easy venture by any means and that it can be very difficult to decide what a priority is. Both broadband Internet and cell service, in my opinion, are huge safety features, and safety should always be first and foremost, I think, in a capital plan. That's all I have to say, just a comment. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member for Kam Lake. Noting the time, I am just wondering if there is going to be more. Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Madam Chair, I would like to seek unanimous consent to conclude this item on the agenda before we hit the deadline.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Noting the clock, committee, I will now rise and report progress. Thank you to the witness and your witness. Sergeant-at-Arms, please escort the witness from the Chamber.

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

Report of Committee of the Whole

MS. SEMMLER: Mr. Speaker, your committee has been considering Bill 11, Legislative Assembly Officer Standardization Act, and Tabled Document

181-19(2), Capital Estimates 2021-2022, and I would like to report progress with four motions carried and that Bill 11 is ready for third reading, as amended. Mr. Speaker, I move that the report of the Committee of the Whole be concurred with. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. The motion is in order. Do we have a seconder? Member for Tu Nedhe-Willideh. All those in favour? All those opposed? The motion is carried.

---Carried

Item 22, third reading of bills. Mr. Clerk, orders of the day.

Orders of the Day

DEPUTY CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Rutland): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The orders of the day for Thursday, October 22, 2020, at 1:30 p.m.:

1. Prayer
2. Ministers' Statements
3. Members' Statements
4. Returns to Oral Questions
 - Question 358-19(2), Long-Term Care Facility
 - Question 375-19(2), Residential Addictions Treatment
 - Question 382-19(2), Truth and Reconciliation Commission Recommendations
5. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery
6. Acknowledgements
7. Oral Questions
8. Written Questions
9. Returns to Written Questions
10. Replies to the Commissioner's Address
11. Petitions
12. Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills
13. Reports of Standing and Special Committees
14. Tabling of Documents
15. Notices of Motion
16. Motions

- Motion 17-19(2), Appointment to the Board of Management and Appointment of Deputy Chair of Committee of the Whole

- Motion 18-19(2), Appointment to the Standing Committees on Economic Development and Environment, Government Operations and Social Development

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

- 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

- Bill 11, Legislative Assembly Officers Standardization Act

23. Orders of the Day

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. This House stands adjourned until Thursday, October 22, 2020, at 1:30 p.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 6:06 p.m.

