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The Honourable Frederick Blake Jr, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

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YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**Monday, March 29, 2021****Members Present**

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

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

Prayer

---Prayer

SPEAKER (Hon. Frederick Blake Jr.): Item 2, Ministers' statements. Minister of Environment and Natural Resources.

Ministers' Statements

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 145-19(2):
WATER STEWARDSHIP

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The NWT Water Stewardship Strategy, guided by the Aboriginal Steering Committee, represents a shared path forward for water stewardship and preservation with NWT residents and water partners. Water partners such as Indigenous, federal, and territorial governments; non-government organizations; research institutions and universities; regulatory boards; communities; and industry work together under the strategy, to ensure our water remains clean and safe for future generations.

The success of the water strategy is based on four main areas that require concentrated efforts: working together, know and plan, use responsibly, and check our own progress. Examples of key responsibilities under each component include: negotiating and implementing transboundary water management agreements under the "working together" component; implementing research and monitoring throughout the Northwest Territories' lakes and rivers under "know and plan"; reviewing and developing guidelines and regulations to clarify regulatory and environmental assessment processes under "our responsibility"; and regularly reviewing and reporting on implementation of activities in our action plans under "check our progress."

Traditional knowledge is an integral part of the water strategy, providing valuable information and important guidance for all stewardship actions. Specific actions on the importance and inclusion of traditional knowledge are identified in all four components of the water strategy. The next action

plan to support the water strategy will cover the period of 2021-2025 and will build on the momentum we have gained over the last decade. This new plan will address current priorities for water stewardship in the Northwest Territories. As part of the development of the next action plan, we have worked with and engaged our water partners to continue to understand NWT water priorities to ensure northern voices are reflected. We thank all those who have taken time to participate. Upon finalizing the next action plan, we will release a "what we heard" document that will show how this important engagement informed the plan.

Mr. Speaker, we are also making progress on modernizing the existing Yukon-NWT Transboundary Water Management Agreement signed in 2002. We have updated the agreement that commits us to responsibly manage shared waters in the Peel and Mackenzie Delta basins, and we developed a similar new agreement for the Liard River Basin. These new agreements are consistent with the water strategy and the 2015 agreements signed with Alberta and BC. Consultation has occurred, and public engagement ended on March 15. We are now reviewing this feedback to ensure that it is addressed.

Mr. Speaker, beginning last summer, the water levels on the Great Slave Lake reached record highs, as did water levels in many rivers flowing into it. We know Northerners have questions about why this happened, and we are actively working to provide answers. Our government, along with experts from the Governments of Alberta, British Columbia, and Canada, worked together on an analyzing of our major shared waterways, such as the Peace and Athabasca Rivers. We learned that these high water levels were driven by high snow and rainfall across northern British Columbia, Alberta, and Saskatchewan. Based on this information, we anticipate Great Slave Lake water levels will not likely return to normal for a while. Current conditions are unprecedented, and what happens over the next few months will depend on several things like the timing and volume of precipitation, the timing and the rate of snow and ice melt in the spring, and the thickness of river and lake ice.

Mr. Speaker, partnerships are what water stewardship is all about. This government is

committed to working together to ensure that the waters of the Northwest Territories remain clean, abundant, and productive for all time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 146-19(2):
INVESTING IN AGRICULTURE

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Mr. Speaker, the season for planting may still be a long way off, but February 23rd was Agriculture Day in Canada. We have much to celebrate and work towards in support of agriculture in the Northwest Territories. I will also speak to the connection between the agriculture industry and efforts to strengthen food security. Despite the snow and still frigid temperatures, right now is, in fact, an important time of planning and investment for food growers and harvesters across our country and in the Northwest Territories.

Mr. Speaker, as we mark Agriculture Day this year, the Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment is preparing to implement the fourth year of the GNWT's Agriculture Strategy, The Business of Food: A Food Production Plan. Since 2017, we have invested in planning, training, capacity building, community partnerships, and regulatory improvements designed to position our commercial agriculture sector to increase its production of fresh, healthy, safe, and more-affordable locally grown food choices.

The industry has indeed grown, and as recently announced, the Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment has responded to requests for increased financial supports for large-scale development on established and growing commercial farm businesses. Three significant investments were made this winter in farms in the Hay River area under the federal Canadian Agriculture Partnership. We continue to take stock of the progress that is being made by farmers and harvesters in order to determine what investments and initiatives are needed to continue the evolution and growth in our territory's emerging agriculture sector.

Mr. Speaker, our government's first agriculture strategy was introduced as a means to advance regional economic development and diversification, but we also recognize that our agriculture sector can do much more than diversify and strengthen our economy. Our government's mandate includes a commitment to increase food security through locally produced, harvested, and affordable food. The growth of our agriculture sector is central to

this commitment, and for the past year, the COVID pandemic has brought it to the forefront.

Food security is an issue that impacts everybody in the territory and, for too many of our residents, touches every aspect of their lives, particularly affecting health and education outcomes. It is an issue that rightfully is now commanding a collaborative all-of-government approach. While this work is being led by the Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment, we are reliant on support from the Departments of Health and Social Services, Environment and Natural Resources, and Lands as well as our ongoing partnership with the Government of Canada.

The department has been working with these partner departments to consider how the GNWT can better support food security efforts across the territory. In doing this, the department has compiled an inventory of GNWT food security programming and developed a set of considerations to assist the GNWT in making meaningful progress on food security, and Health and Social Services lead an anti-poverty roundtable meeting focused, as well, on food security. All of these pieces will come together under a single document that we are currently drafting.

Canada's Agriculture Day is an important opportunity to celebrate the growth of this industry over the last few years, including initiatives by producers to adapt their businesses to the pandemic. It is also a chance to highlight the rising interest across the Northwest Territories to think creatively about local food production, such as shown at farmers markets, community greenhouses, and especially our small and vibrant community of commercial growers and food producers. Together, these efforts support the commitment that our government has made to addressing food security. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Ministers' statements. Minister responsible for the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation.

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 147-19(2):
COMMUNITY HOUSING SUPPORT PROGRAM

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Mr. Speaker, throughout the life of this government, I have travelled to many communities, and it cannot go unnoticed that every community in the Northwest Territories is unique and different and has different needs. Within 33 unique communities in the NWT, flexible programming is needed to ensure community needs are being met. The Northwest Territories Housing Corporation has a program to support Indigenous governments and community agencies to develop innovative, community-driven housing projects of their own design. The Community

Housing Support program works to ensure that local priorities around housing and homelessness can be met with a variety of support options.

Mr. Speaker, flexibility really is key with this program. The Housing Corporation, under this program, offers support through grants and other contributions. Supports may be in the form of policy and program design, material packages, technical expertise, land management, or surplus units when appropriate. At this time the Community Housing Support program is supporting projects in eight communities across the NWT. In Fort Smith, the Housing Corporation has completed a project with the Salt River First Nation that has led to the creation of six new affordable housing units. In this case, the Housing Corporation provided the materials and the Salt River First Nation provided the land and labour. In both Whati and Jean Marie River, similar projects were completed. Two new units were constructed in each community, with the Housing Corporation providing a contribution for the construction.

Mr. Speaker, in Nahanni Butte and Fort Good Hope, the Community Housing Support program was also used to create community-driven housing repair programs. Through these community-managed repair programs, communities prioritize the residents whose homes they think are most in need of repairs. Funding allows them to inspect houses, create a scope of work, purchase materials, and hire local tradespeople and apprentices to conduct this work. In Colville Lake, the community expressed interest in log homes, so the Housing Corporation is working on a log home demonstration project in the community. The project proposed the construction of four log homes in Colville Lake, constructed with funding from the Housing Corporation. The community will supply the logs, and we will contribute to the design, land development, and construction.

Mr. Speaker, working in partnership with Indigenous governments and community agencies is a priority of this government. Partnerships like those supported by the Community Housing Support program are critical to making sure the Housing Corporation is working to meet the needs identified by the communities themselves. The community also works to ensure that supporting communities to identify their housing priorities through the establishment of community housing plans. The Community Housing Support program is a key tool and has a role to play in supporting communities to address their housing aspirations. I am looking forward to seeing the results of these partnerships and what the next innovative, locally driven projects are that grow from this innovative approach. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

Members' Statements

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON EMERGING WISELY

MR. NORN: Marsi cho, Mr. Speaker. I want to talk about GNWT's Emerging Wisely Plan today. This document, which was released last spring in May, laid out the government's plan in how to deal with the pandemic response. First off, I want to say what a great job our medical teams have done in mitigating the spread of this virus and a big marsi cho to all our residents who have done their part by following all the current restrictions. At the moment, we have zero active cases, and this is definitely something to be very proud of.

Mr. Speaker, since last spring, a lot has happened. This pandemic is a fluid situation, and there are new developments happening daily. Over the last year, we have made some great strides in terms of vaccination development and delivery. However, we also now have to worry about the variant strains of this disease that emerged around the world.

Mr. Speaker, as of March 26th, according to the Department of Health and Social Services, the NWT has now administered a total of 23,722 first doses of the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine. Again, great job to the medical teams. That number, we're starting to closely creep up to that herd immunity number. I think one of my colleagues will be speaking of that today later. The Emerging Wisely document released last year, simply says a vaccine needs to be available to the large portion of our residents. Northerners so far have done their part to battle this disease. With that, what is our direction moving forward in terms of relaxing restrictions? I will have questions for the Minister of Health and Social Services at the appropriate time. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON LONG-TERM CARE BED NEEDS IN THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

MS. MARTSELOS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On March 11, 2021, the Minister of Health and Social Services made an announcement regarding long-term care bed projections for the NWT. Minister Green explained that the Department of Health had updated its data stream and worked with the Bureau of Statistics to redo the estimate of long-term beds needed for the NWT over the next 14

years. They concluded that the NWT does not require as many new long-term beds as they initially thought in 2015.

Mr. Speaker, as a result of this new estimate, the department also created a new prediction model to determine a new number of long-term care beds required in each NWT region. This new projection model has determined that the demand for the long-term beds in Fort Smith is greater than previous estimates. Therefore, the department has concluded that more long-term beds will now be built for Fort Smith. Fort Smith currently has 26 long-term beds in our communities. However, this new projection by the government will create another 24 new long-term beds for Fort Smith. This is a much-needed boost of infrastructure that will greatly benefit Fort Smith and the South Slave for many years to come.

Mr. Speaker, I was very happy to hear this news from Minister Green. The people of Fort Smith are also very happy with this decision. In fact, I'd like to share an excerpt from a letter I received yesterday from the president of the Fort Smith Senior Citizens' Society, Ms. Mary Pat Short, who said, "The Fort Smith Senior Citizens' Society wishes to thank Minister Green for her decision to award a 24-bed extended-care facility to Fort Smith. In Fort Smith, we have a large and steadily growing population of seniors. As each year passes, more of our seniors need the specialized care that an extended-care facility makes possible. The facility will benefit our current and future elders, and on their behalf, the Fort Smith Seniors Society expresses our deepest gratitude." Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

---Unanimous consent granted

MS. MARTSELOS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Lastly, the NWT Seniors' Society President, Mr. Don Webb, who is a Fort Smith resident, has told me verbally that he is also very grateful for the new long-term beds coming to Fort Smith. In addition, the entire community of Fort Smith wants to thank Minister Green and the Cabinet for their decision. As the MLA for Thebacha, I, too, wish to thank Minister Green and the Cabinet for implementing the renewal strategy and this decision. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON HERD IMMUNITY IN THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to start off today by thanking teachers for taking my kids back today. Second, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to

thank the health authority as they've done an incredible job vaccinating NWT residents and continues to do so. As we work towards 75 percent vaccination rate, NWT residents are wondering how this change to public health orders here in the Northwest Territories. While some question what this means for self-isolation, many NWT businesses and residents are asking what this means for within territory restrictions. In a recent letter to the Premier, the Yellowknife Chamber of Commerce asked the GNWT to provide transparent criteria and metrics to give businesses the information required to plan their operations over the coming month. Within the NWT, the letter specifically asks about removing capacity restrictions on outdoor gatherings and increasing indoor capacity limits.

Mr. Speaker, businesses need time to rehire and train staff as well as purchase additional inventory to accommodate changes to public health restrictions. Scrambling to adapt means increased operating costs or the inability to adjust in time for seasonal work. NWT businesses have been adaptive, responsive, and responsible and need the government's support through transparent guidelines to continue to put Northerners' safety first while preserving their own ability to stay afloat.

Mr. Speaker, the Chamber also raises concerns about case-by-case business exemptions. This approach does not provide clarity or certainty for businesses, is inefficient and lacks transparency and accountability. I also feel this increases administrative burden for NWT businesses, and creates a system where those with a capacity to advocate for themselves end up with different rules.

The NWT's race for herd immunity and where its finish line truly lies is unclear. While we measure our success as a territory, not all 33 communities will achieve 75 percent vaccination rate at the same time. Given our vaccination success is based on the personal choices of our adult population, some communities may never achieve true herd immunity, and understanding the consequences of this is important to the mental health and economic potential of our territory.

Residents and businesses want to support the GNWT's efforts to keep Northerners safe. Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement?

---Unanimous consent granted

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Residents and businesses want to support the GNWT's efforts to keep Northerners safe, but this partnership hinges on open communication that supports both the physical and mental health as well as the economic needs of Northerners. Let's give Northerners the opportunity to emerge wisely

by working to identify clearer goal posts, rewards, and economic supports. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON INCOME ASSISTANCE AND TAX REFUNDS

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. It's tax time again. That's especially important for recipients of Income Assistance, who are required to file tax returns in order to remain eligible. Case officers keep an eye on what tax refunds their clients might be getting. Refunds are considered "unearned income" and the amount of a refund is deducted from the client's monthly amount of income support, even if part of the refund is used to pay off other tax debts. There is an especially cruel twist to this year, thanks to COVID and the federal Canada Emergency Response Benefit, or CERB. When CERB was introduced, many Canadians who weren't really eligible claimed the benefit. Now, many of them are being made to pay it back. To ensure that no one went without income during the pandemic, GNWT did not claw back or reduce Income Assistance from April 1, 2020, to at least December 31, 2020, even if you've got CERB payments.

For those who received CERB but were not eligible, one way the federal government is collecting those debts is by garnisheeing the tax refunds of people who were not eligible. However, ECE is considering the amount of garnishee to be unearned income and deducting it from the monthly eligibility for Income Assistance. In some cases, this reduces the amount of the tax refund itself to zero. Some Income Assistance recipients are receiving no tax refund and then get less monthly Income Assistance because ECE is deducting the amount of the garnishee.

When anti-poverty advocates raised this problem of deducting garnishees from Income Assistance, the Minister of ECE says he is handcuffed by the Income Assistance regulations. He says that tax refunds are counted as income, so even though the refund is reduced or amounts to zero, the person is getting a benefit because the garnishee is paying down their debt. How does this practice encourage responsible financial management?

I have read the regulations, and I think that the Minister has discretion for leniency, especially during this extraordinary pandemic. I will have questions for the Minister on why people should lose part of their mealy Income Assistance as a penalty for money they were supposed to be able to keep in the first place. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON GOVERNMENT'S EMERGING STRONGER PLAN

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Responding to COVID-19 has been hugely challenging for our territory and the world. It has changed the way we socialize, work, and live our lives. Northerners have been quick to adapt, and everyone deserves credit for their efforts. As a result of our swift and aggressive response to COVID-19, through the implementation of strict public health measures and border restrictions, the NWT has been the most successful in containing the spread of COVID-19 in Canada. According to Emerging Wisely, the need to gradually and safely ease our restrictions has always been part of the plan.

As COVID response technology is improving and becoming more available, it is time to develop a strategy to emerge from our bubble. In engineering, we recognize that no project can ever be designed to 100 percent safety as the cost is too high and the design generally impractical. Likewise, when it comes to the NWT and COVID, the cost for 100 percent safety has been our economic and mental health.

Measures have been in place for over a year; travel restrictions, self-isolation protocols, and physical distancing are our reality. The cost of this new reality has been the loss of small business; an increase in substance abuse; and greater incidents of violence and mental health issues. What this is telling us is that we need to strike a better balance between managing the risk of importing the virus from outside of the territory and allowing people to be with their friends and family and businesses to operate.

We should be exploring options such as requiring travellers to produce negative COVID test results upon arrival. This could then be followed by a shorter isolation period, after which a second negative COVID test could be taken to clear the individual. While this may seem risky, it is a calculated risk that we must be willing to take. If we chose to continue to accept a very low risk of COVID infections, we are choosing to accept mental health, addictions, and domestic violence issues.

Residents need access to southern family. Many grandparents have yet to meet their grandchildren. People shouldn't have to make choices between their job and being with a dying parent, or between cancer treatment and the fear of isolation. Stigma, fear, and an adapting healthcare system are

causing people to go undiagnosed and untreated for illness.

I recognize that navigating a global pandemic, especially while many jurisdictions are heading into a third wave, is a complex challenge. Therefore, I urge utilizing a science-based approach to easing restrictions with clear criteria, dates, and key milestones so that we can create a balance between the risk of COVID infection while protecting people from social harm and saving the economy. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON LONG-TERM CARE BED NEEDS IN THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In December of 2015, a final report titled "Northwest Territories Long-Term Care Program Review" was submitted to the Department of Health and Social Services. The report, some 288 pages, based on statistics and relevant data available at the time, identified requirements for long-term care facilities through the Northwest Territories. On March 11th of this year, the Minister of Health tabled a 17-page document that confirmed a substantial reduction in projected long-term care bed needs identified in the 2015 report, not only for Hay River, but for the NWT as a whole.

Mr. Speaker, in 2015, 48 beds were identified for Hay River, which included Enterprise and K'atlodeeche First Nation. Both reports appear to have overlooked the communities of Fort Resolution, Fort Providence, and Kakisa, which, combined, represent an additional population of 1,400 people and are in the Hay River catchment area.

Mr. Speaker, upon review of the reports, I have concluded that, through the use of statistical information only, projections can be skewed to meet the department's objectives of the day. Compared to the most current analysis, the 2015 analysis was comprehensive and looked beyond statistics by considering the tangible and intangible uniqueness of the NWT. It looked at a demonstrated higher incidence of chronic diseases, lack of available and appropriate housing, and limited and necessary supporting community-based infrastructure, all of which contribute to higher rates of institutionalization in the NWT as compared to Canada as a whole.

Mr. Speaker, the department, in the most recent analysis of extended care beds, makes the point of having seniors age in place through more effective

homecare services. To accomplish this, the Minister of Health stated that the department is committed to improving supports by looking to clients, families, communities, government, and non-government agencies to assist. This sends a message to me that the government is looking for a way to offload responsibilities to an already taxed NGO sector, underfunded communities, and families who may not be in a position to offer 24-hour care. Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

---Unanimous consent granted

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Other than recommendations from the NWT Home and Community Care report dated September 26, 2019, I have not seen, in support of its intent to reduce the number of long-term beds for Hay River, a substantive action plan from the department that establishes how it will achieve effective homecare for Hay River or throughout the NWT. As it stands now, there are no additional dollars, infrastructure, or identified staff increases to support that objective.

Mr. Speaker, the argument for reducing the number of beds for Hay River is weak at best. I would recommend that the department stay on track and complete the 48-bed facility in Hay River. If other communities, such as Fort Smith, require additional beds, then let us look at making that happen in the near future, but not at the expense of Hay River and the surrounding communities that we serve. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON RECOGNITION OF FRONTLINE WORKERS, VOLUNTEERS, LEADERS AND ELDERS IN NUNAKPUT REGION

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today, back from our two-week break, I just want to thank some people. Being home for the last two weeks, you see how hard the people are working, our communities, our front-line staff. I really want to thank our schoolteachers because we had a shorter break in Nunakput so that they could go home earlier this year; our RCMP staff and our health centre; and I would like to thank the mayors and councillors, Tuktoyaktuk Community Corporation, Paulatuk Community Corporation, Ulukhaktok, and Sachs Harbour. Also, our elders' committees are working so hard, and our local DEAs, our IRC, for helping with all of the suicide prevention workshops that they are doing in the Beaufort-Delta. I really thank them for that. They really stepped up. I would like to thank our government and the federal

government for helping and assisting in getting funding to make things happen while we are in these COVID-19 days. I also want to thank all of our recreation staff that have been keeping our youth busy and occupied at night in our youth centres.

I just want to thank everybody for all of the hard work. It's not going unseen. I really appreciate all of the hard work that they are doing. I really would like to thank our elders because we are losing so many elders, Mr. Speaker. We had another death in our community of Tuktoyaktuk. We lost another really well-respected elder. We had four or five deaths in our community. Keep our community of Nunakput in prayers. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Nunakput. Our thoughts and prayers are with the community and family at this time. Mahsi. Members' statements. Member for Yellowknife North.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON RETENTION OF NURSES AND HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS

MR. JOHNSON: Mr. Speaker, nurses are the backbone of our healthcare system, and across Canada, we face a nursing shortage. The market is highly competitive to attract and retain nurses. We in the North have long struggled to fulfill all of our nursing positions. This last year has shown just how important our healthcare workers are. Our pandemic response was informed by our ability to manage the threat, and we took no chances, Mr. Speaker. However, we need to take that bold spirit to attracting and retaining our nurses.

I have had many exhausted nurses reach out to me over the course of this pandemic, offering solutions and looking for change. I believe we need to reintroduce service agreements, offering incentives to continue employment in the North. We rely on locums to a great extent in the North. However, at some point, when it is more attractive to be a southern resident nurse than it is to be a local one, many seize that opportunity and look for more flexible hours and higher pay.

Mr. Speaker, we need to offer better training opportunities for our nurses who want to stay. We need to build on the success of the Aurora College nursing program, one of our best programs that has led to many great local nurses. We need to then allow those nurses to further specialize in different fields. Many of those specialized positions are filled by locums presently, and increased training opportunities would work to solve both of those issues, Mr. Speaker. By doing this, our local nurses, particularly in remote communities, will stay longer. They will have a stronger connection to their

communities, and the culture in our healthcare system will build to retain our nurses.

Presently, one of the biggest reasons our nurses leave is workplace culture and burnout. We need to offer more flexible working hours, increase part-time options for nurses, and allow nurses to come back from retirement should they wish. We can't make it a binary of forcing nurses to either burn out or leave. Mr. Speaker, I know this is a priority of this House, and the department knows it, too. We need to make that spirit that we applied to COVID-19 and focus on retaining the nurses that we have to make sure that our healthcare system capacity remains.

I believe that our situation is actually getting worse, Mr. Speaker. We risk a downward spiral where more nurses leave for other markets, making the current nurses work more overtime, causing more to leave. We need to commit to serious action to ending such a spiral. I will have questions for the Minister of Health. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON RECONSTRUCTION OF BEHCHOKO ACCESS ROAD

MR. LAFFERTY: Masi, Mr. Speaker. [Translation] Summer is coming up. We know that the road between Rae Junction, that road hasn't been worked on for over 30 years. Last summer, they were working on it on contract. It has been over 30 years that the road hasn't been worked on, so I would like to talk about the road contract. [Translation ends]

Summer is just around the corner, so my statement today is about the reconstruction of Behchoko access road. Mr. Speaker, it has been well over 30 years since the construction of the road from Rae Junction to Rae. Just last summer, a three-year public works project to smooth out and strengthen the 10-kilometre road that gives Behchoko connections to the outside world was finally in progress.

The people of Behchoko were pleased to see the work started last spring and are eager for completion in 2023, but, Mr. Speaker, they are not pleased with the community's share of local jobs and business opportunities. Sadly, road projects seem to be an ongoing issue. Many road construction projects have promised local benefits and failed to deliver.

Mr. Speaker, have we delivered what we agreed upon last summer with the contractor? Summer 2021 is coming up, so I will have questions for the

Minister of Infrastructure at the appropriate time. Masi.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Monfwi. Members' statements. Item 4, returns to oral questions. Item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery. Item 6, acknowledgements. Item 7, oral questions. Member for Hay River South.

Oral Questions

QUESTION 678-19(2): LONG-TERM CARE

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The questions are for the Minister of Health. The Minister confirmed that new bed projections were based on 10 years of statistical information versus the five that went into the 2015 report. Can the Minister confirm what statistical evidence was considered in developing the NWT's long-term bed requirements? I have a difficult time believing that so much has changed in five years when our population has a minimal change overall. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the Member for Hay River South for that question. What has changed is a greater amount of data about actual use has allowed us to quantify the age and stage of the people who are entering long-term care facilities. We have actual information to rely on. In 2015, those were truly projections based on bed ratios for age. What we have now is actual versus projected. That is why those two numbers are different, what was required in 2015 and what was required in 2020. Thank you.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: The NWT has issues such as lack of housing, addictions, effects of residential schools, and others. Compared to the rest of Canada, these issues negatively impact delivery of extended care and homecare support due to our relatively small population. I would ask the Minister: what, if any, consideration was given to the uniqueness of northern health issues during the recent review process for determining long-term bed requirements for Hay River?

HON. JULIE GREEN: It is my understanding that, in doing that report, the Bureau of Statistics looked at issues such as the age of people going into long-term care; what their health status was going into long-term care; how much time they spent in long-term care; which community they were from and which community they went into long-term care in, which are sometimes different. They looked, certainly, at the comorbidities, as we say, more than one chronic disease, that drive people into the

requirement for higher-level nursing care and thus into long-term care. I feel confident that the health of the population was a primary consideration in looking at the bed needs going forward.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: The reality is that many of our NGOs, families, and support networks are taxed to the breaking point, yet this government wants to try and squeeze a little more out of them. Can the Minister confirm if the department, during its reassessment of long-term bed requirements, talked to those community organizations currently supporting long-term and homecare clients, and to what extent was that conversation?

HON. JULIE GREEN: It is my understanding that the consultation on the new bed projections is about to begin next month with, in fact, a trip to Hay River to talk to people there about the findings and to verify those numbers on the ground. We have not done that in advance. The study that was done was done by the Bureau of Statistics. They are not using qualitative information; they are using quantitative information about the size of the population, the health of the population, where they live, and so on and so forth. That is not the kind of document that we would normally expect them to consult on. We just asked them to produce the numbers, and that is what they did.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't really like to say it, but it appears that the process and conclusions were conceived in Yellowknife by bureaucrats with no or limited input from stakeholders, which it sounds like happened. I am glad to hear, though, that the department will be going out.

I would ask the Minister: once the consultation takes place, we may see a change. We may see that maybe Hay River only needs 24 beds. We may see that Fort Smith only needs 12 beds. We may see that we need 36, 64, I don't know, versus the 48 initially proposed, but whatever the answer, the analysis has to be done right. It has to take into consideration what the community needs, and for Hay River, it would be surrounding communities, of which there are five of them. I would ask the Minister if she would at least commit her department to during the reassessment to really consider Hay River and the area that we do serve and the needs of the people. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. JULIE GREEN: I would like to just say a word about the catchment area for Hay River. Kakisa and Fort Providence are within the Deh Cho Health and Social Services Authority area, and so generally speaking, they are served out of Fort

Simpson, which is the headquarters for that authority; Fort Resolution is within the Yellowknife Health and Social Services Authority, so they are served from Yellowknife. The Hay River long-term-care bed projections are based on the Town of Hay River, K'atlodeeche First Nation, and Enterprise.

What we know about the occupation of the beds right now is that, at the extended care facility in Hay River, there are 23 people in there; 17 of them are over 70; there are two who are under 60; there are a number who have a diagnosis of dementia; we have got a number of people on the waiting list; there is a respite bed available, and that the work provided at Woodland Manor is equivalent to 35 full-time positions. We have a lot of information about what is going on now, and we have a rationale for what we are projecting to happen in the future. The task the department has and I have as the Minister is to verify these numbers and persuade the Member and residents of his community that these numbers are factual and verifiable and reliable and that these are the numbers we are going to go forward with. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 679-19(2):
ROAD CONSTRUCTION ECONOMIC BENEFITS

MR. LAFFERTY: Masi, Mr. Speaker. The Rae Access Road upgrade is now under way this last summer and this summer. The people of Behchoko are grateful for this long-awaited improvement on highway safety, but they are not happy with the token number of jobs and business opportunities that the project has created for the community. Mr. Speaker, the project is on Behchoko land and also uses public money, so I have questions for the Minister of Infrastructure. Could the Minister tell this House what the general policy is respecting local economic spin-offs from highway projects such as the Behchoko access road contract? Masi, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We don't have a policy per se on some of these tendered contracts. However, specifically for the Rae Access Road, RTL Construction started the work and were expected to finish this fall, of 2021. About 60 percent of that work is completed. The peak season, we had about 28 people who are employed. Of that, 16 were Tlicho citizens, which, again, is 57 percent local involvement. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. LAFFERTY: I am more focused on the targeted agreement between RTL and also Tli Cho Construction, Tlicho Government, so can the Minister of Infrastructure tell this House what the actual local employment and business targets are for the Behchoko access road project?

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Further to the infrastructure cooperation agreement between the GNWT and the Tlicho Government, an agreement has been reached where the Tlicho businesses will supply 25 percent of labour to complete the Rae Access Road construction project.

MR. LAFFERTY: Since at least two summers, actually 2021, 2022, 2023, three summers, I am more interested in what the targets the Minister has alluded to and also the training apprentices components of local benefits agreement, so where is the training and apprenticeship component of the local benefits agreement within the contract itself?

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: I don't have that level of detail with me in terms of pulling the actual agreement here as quickly as I can find it, so I may have to get back to the Member. I will get back to the Member in terms of more specifics on the contract.

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

MR. LAFFERTY: Masi, Mr. Speaker. Obviously, the 25 percent target, that would have to be closely monitored. We have experienced in the past, whether it be with Stanton or other mega projects in the past, where it really has not been fulfilled, so I will be keeping an eye on that. Mr. Speaker, my last question is: what I would like to know is if the Minister's department has done enough to verify compliance with the local hiring targets and what enforcement measures they have taken when the targets are not met. Mr. Speaker, we still have a three-year summer project, so this is very important. I would like to know so we can get some answers on that. Masi, Mr. Speaker.

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: I want to start off by saying it was a struggle to find some of the workers as the diamond mines may attract many of the available workforce and also some other projects, like the Tli Cho Construction. However, I do want to say that RTL, the construction company, was able to maintain over 25 percent of the local labour requirement as per the ICA. Construction will resume in May 2021 and is expected to be completed, the full project, this fall, 2021. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's not a three-year project. It will be done this fall. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 680-19(2):
INCOME ASSISTANCE AND TAX REFUNDS

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. My questions are for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, who administers Income Assistance. First, I would like the Minister to confirm that it is this government's position that a garnishee of a tax refund is counted as unearned income and is deducted from Income Assistance payments to that client. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Income Assistance Regulations, Section 4(j), (n), (o.2) state that the following shall be considered unearned income. That includes the GST tax credit, income tax refunds including payments of tax credits, so, yes, that is the correct interpretation of the legislation. Thank you.

MR. O'REILLY: I want to thank the Minister for confirming that. Yes, the Minister said that Income Assistance clients can use their annual "unearned income exemption of up to \$1,200 to offset the penalty for the garnishee." While this may be true, most people are required to pay back CERB through tax-refund garnishees, and they probably owe a lot more than \$1,200. This exemption was meant to offset the occasional gift from family or friends. Will the Minister be lenient in his interpretation of the words "tax refund" in the Income Assistance regulations and not claw back garnishees from tax refunds for CERB recipients for money that was never supposed to reduce Income Assistance in the first place?

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: CERB never did reduce Income Assistance. Right now, if someone receives a tax refund, it is counted as income. If the Government of Canada takes that back, it's still counted as tax income. The Income Assistance Program does not pay debts. However, the Government of Canada has stated that they are not going to be clawing back any of the monthly or quarterly tax credits that people received, such as GST or Child Tax Benefit, so it would likely only be the income tax refund. For the majority of clients, that's worth \$350, so that would be \$350 out of the \$1,200.

The Government of Canada is taking a compassionate approach to the collection of these debts, and I encourage any residents who have to pay CERB back to contact the Government of Canada and create a payment plan so that they can avoid hits like that. Right now, they're not strong arming. They're not taking a very aggressive approach, and they understand that not everyone is

in a situation to repay this money. There are financial hardship provisions to ensure that a person is not put into undue financial hardship because of recovery of government debt. However, in order to get that from the CRA, you have to reach out to them, so I encourage anyone who has to pay CERB back, to reach out and make payment arrangements.

MR. O'REILLY: I want to thank the Minister for that compassionate response. It's great to point to the federal government and try to get compassion from them. I'm talking to the Minister on the floor here; he needs to demonstrate and lead with some compassion from our government. This perverse practice of deducting garnishees from tax refunds from Income Assistance is going to lead to excessive hardships for many NWT residents who received CERB payments. Can the Minister tell us whether this situation is being tracked and what percentage of total Income Assistance recipients are suffering from this deduction of garnishees from their monthly payments?

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: I can also point out that a number of people have voluntarily paid back CERB once they realized that they weren't eligible for it. They made repayment arrangements. There're a number of people who are working who aren't on Income Assistance who may have to pay CERB back. The Income Assistance program has continued throughout CERB, and it continues. No changes have been made except for the exemption of CERB, so there has been a very compassionate response.

To the Member's exact question, which I should have answered first because it's alluding me somewhat. Yes, tracking the results. Generally, there is reporting done on a monthly basis with Income Assistance. However, during the pandemic, that was put on hold, and we've asked people to report their income starting in November. We've taken a lenient approach with that, and those numbers are still tricking in. We don't have a total of how many people received CERB and do not know how many people need to pay it back. It's a small percentage of the total number of Income Assistance recipients.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. I want to thank the Minister for that, and of course, I'm going to be asking him the same question in May/June. That's a quick heads-up. Look, I'm convinced that we will be punishing Income Assistance recipients who were supposed to have no deductions as a result of CERB payments, who now have to pay it back through garnishees to tax refunds. I think that's just a result of a harsh

interpretation of the regulations. Will the Minister exercise some discretion and stop a garnishee on tax refunds as being considered unearned income or change the regulations now to stop this punitive and perverse practice in these extraordinary times? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: No, we won't be changing the regulations. We won't be stopping this practice there. The CRA, whose program this is, has policies to prevent undue hardship. The Income Assistance Program has policies to exempt these types of funds. There're people who have made payment arrangements with CRA. There're people who have already paid this back. We'd be punishing them for paying the money back when they could have just not paid it back and had it forgiven by Income Assistance. Essentially, what the Member is asking is that the GNWT take over the CERB program and then pay CERB. That's what we would be doing by basically writing off these amounts. The CERB was a federal program, and the feds are handling it. We are in contact with the federal government. I've had calls with the relevant Ministers, and I told them about our situation here in the territory and that they need to take a compassionate approach. From everything I can see, they have been doing that, and we will continue that advocacy. I'm happy to keep the Member and the Assembly updated with any progress and let everyone know what we hear. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 681-19(2):
HERD IMMUNITY IN THE NORTHWEST
TERRITORIES

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Today, my questions are for the Minister of Health and Social Services, and my first question for the Minister is: can she confirm the vaccination rates in the Northwest Territories by small community, regional centre, and also Yellowknife? Thank you.

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

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't have the full detail that the Member is looking for because the Chief Public Health Officer is still refining the numbers. What I can say is that we've achieved approximately 58 percent uptake on vaccine dose 1, and 36 percent uptake on dose 2. The range of community level uptake is between 40 percent and the high 70s depending on the particular community. We know from trending information that the highest uptake is in the oldest population, and the lowest is in the youngest

population. The residents of the NWT who are between 18 and 34 are well below the 50 percent uptake in most communities. At this point, it's fair to say that there is no region or community in the NWT that's met our target of vaccinating 75 percent of the population. Thank you.

MS. CLEVELAND: No. I think that's very valuable information. I think it's also important that we know where work still needs to be done, especially when it comes to public education, and where we can kind of help make sure that our younger brothers and sisters and maybe our children or family members could stand to help us reach that herd immunity. What I'm wondering, Mr. Speaker, is: since we know that we're working towards 75 percent vaccination rate and we're hoping to reach it before the summer and I am very hopeful that the department of Health is able to get there in order to achieve herd immunity, given that vaccination update has lagged in some communities, will changes to community public health restrictions happen on a community-by-community basis depending on vaccination rates?

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you for that question. It's not clear at this time whether the CPHO would make changes on a community-by-community basis. We do know that, in the month of April, she's going in to review of the whole of the Emerging Wisely Plan to look at ways in which to ease restrictions. Certainly, the vaccine rate will figure into that. The rate that we've all been discussing is 75 percent. I think that that rate is now in question to some extent, given changing situations such as the variants and how transmissible they are, vaccine uptake, a number of other things that may change the immunity level that we require in communities to say that we are fully vaccinated. Of course, as the Member knows, children are not in this group, and there are a few others who haven't been vaccinated for various reasons. The whole business of how much is enough is really up for debate at this point.

MS. CLEVELAND: I think it's valuable to have the conversation about community-by-community lifting and easing of restrictions. For example, if you end up with Ulukhaktok who ends up with 75 percent vaccination rates and they've had great success, say, in their community and they want to get back to doing social activities, they want to ease up on restrictions as far as capacity and gatherings, and if we here in Yellowknife have not reached that level, it would be really unfortunate to have surrounding communities really held back by their opportunity. Likewise, it would also not benefit Yellowknife to be held to a standard of a community up in the Beaufort-Delta or in Nunakput. Not to put people against one another, but we will have different success at different points in time. I think it's valuable to be able to look at this from a

community-by-community basis, and not strictly an NWT-wide basis, as well.

What I'm wondering is: based on where we're going, given that we are in the last three days of session and people are looking for more information, does the Minister have any idea of what types of easing of restrictions or potential changes within our borders we might be able to see within summer months? I know that we are waiting on the Chief Public Health Officer, but there is a lot of planning that goes into summer months for businesses, especially when we have seasonal-type work that occurs in the summer. People need to rehire, they need to retrain, and they need to be able to get their business going.

HON. JULIE GREEN: Let me state, first of all, that my hope is for a very high vaccine uptake so that the whole territory is able to come out of restrictions and resume life as we knew it a year ago. We do not want to pit communities against one another. That is definitely one of the risks that the CPHO will be assessing in deciding what detail to release to the public in terms of vaccination levels, whether it is feasible to release by community or by region.

Some of the variables that the Office of the Chief Public Health Officer will be looking at, as I mentioned before, is whether the vaccine will prevent the transmission of the virus. We know that it will prevent people from getting sicker, but can you still carry the virus, even when you are vaccinated, and pass it on to someone else? It also, of course, depends on the vaccination rate, and it depends on how well the vaccine protects against the variants, which I feel are now on the doorstep, now that we know there are variants in Yukon and Fort Chipewyan. It feels closer to home than ever before.

What the CPHO has said historically is that a high vaccination rate will enable us to remove restrictions internally first. That will be things such as business capacity, summer music festivals, family gatherings, weddings, and so on and so forth. Those would be the activities that are, at first, going to be relaxed, and then the whole situation around the border and self-isolation will be addressed next, depending on what is happening in southern Canada. We want to give businesses as much notice as possible to be prepared to open. I hope that we will be able to do this by the end of April when the CPHO issues her revised Emerging Wisely.

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

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Some of the northern businesses that we rely on on a regular basis continue to struggle

under the existing public health restrictions. If the GNWT cannot commit to changes in public health restrictions once herd immunity is reached or if we still don't reach herd immunity this summer, how does the Department of Health and Social Services intend to support and advocate for the mental health and economic needs of Northerners under continued restrictions in the Northwest Territories? Thank you.

HON. JULIE GREEN: I find it hard to answer a huge hypothetical there that crosses many different departments. What I want to say is that I appreciate that people, that residents in the NWT, the Members of this House, want to return to normal gatherings, normal ways of doing business, and normal ways of visiting family that they knew a year ago. I am keen on that, as well. My hope is that the rationale for easing the restrictions internally and externally will be made known to the public by the end of April. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 682-19(2):
EMERGING STRONGER

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One of the issues with consensus government is that I don't always collaborate with my colleagues. Therefore, my colleague from Kam Lake has asked a few of the same questions, and in her lengthy answers, the Minister has answered them. I am just going to ask to repeat the same concerns that I had as my colleague's. When can businesses expect to receive easy-to-understand information, such as flow charts or if-then scenarios, to allow them to plan for the remainder of 2021, information that contains dates and timelines and key milestones? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am happy to repeat these answers for the Member for Great Slave. What I want to say is that I don't expect the kind of information that she is asking for because the situation with COVID-19, with the vaccine rate, with the rate of variants, and so on, it is so quickly changing that it would soon be obsolete to do the flow chart that she is asking for and then to be able to make sure that it was implemented in exactly that way. It is just too fluid a situation. We do, however, appreciate the need for that kind of information. We are more than happy to work with partners in business, the Chamber of Commerce, the mines, and other business entities to ensure that they have all the information that we have and that they, with that information, can make decisions about what it is they are going to do next

to get their businesses ready for reopening. Thank you.

MS. NOKLEBY: I am really glad to hear the Minister say she is going to work with business because, in business, what we do is called "wargaming." We actually come up with all of the different scenarios in which things might happen, and then we come up with responses to those. It is called a living document. I would suggest that the Minister go and look at that so that we could do some planning with actual times and dates.

Moving on, over the last year since the onset of COVID-19, how much has the GNWT increased our healthcare capacity, such as the purchase of new ventilators or increased staff, other than the COVID Secretariat, in order to work towards lessening the internal restrictions and decreasing mental health impacts? It is one thing to lock us all down, but if you have done nothing to address the situation, we are going to be in this situation in perpetuity.

HON. JULIE GREEN: I think it is really important to note, first of all, that we are not locked down. The borders are open. Hundreds of people cross the borders every single day. We have approved something like 35,000 self-isolation plans. People are not locked in or out of the NWT, but there are some guidelines in place for them coming and going. Since last year, of course, we have made significant increases in the capacity and resourcing of our healthcare system to be in a position to respond to COVID. Although we did not have a lot of hospital cases, we wanted to be ready for that. We have allocated over \$30 million in the health system, and many of these investments will continue to be in place, COVID or not.

We have improved our capacity to acquire PPE into a stockpile and to train staff. We have been able to improve our own testing capacity. Now, rather than sending specimens to the lab in Winnipeg, we are doing those lab tests here in the NWT. We have set up the wastewater surveillance system in quite a number of communities to give us an early warning of COVID signal. We have trained staff to do contact tracing. We have looked at the unintended social consequences of COVID, such as the closure of libraries, which has resulted in a greater need for day shelter supports. We have increased access to mental health supports. We have a managed alcohol program in Yellowknife. We have additional supports within Child and Family Services that mostly have to do with respite. We have, in fact, produced a lot of extra capacity, and it is certainly our intention to continue to offer that to the residents.

MS. NOKLEBY: That's great. I am glad to hear that we have increased capacity. I would argue, though, around the definition of the term "lockdown," only

those who can actually afford to go out, come back, pay isolation costs, et cetera. Being able to leave the territory and come back really does come from a place of privilege. Moving on, when can residents expect a reduction to the isolation time requirements as a result of the vaccination program and utilizing rapid testing?

HON. JULIE GREEN: I am happy to repeat this point. The first restrictions that will be loosened will be those within our border. Those will concern greater capacity within your home, within your community gatherings, and at business locations. Once that happens, and the other data is in place about vaccine uptake, transmissibility, children being vaccinated, and so on, then the Chief Public Health Officer will look at how to modify and when to modify self-isolation requirements.

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

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am just going come back to my earlier question: how have we increased healthcare capacity? Have we purchased any new ventilators and such so that we could actually take on more COVID cases if need be? Thank you.

HON. JULIE GREEN: It's important for the Member to understand that machines don't work without the people to operate them. In this case, you need respiratory technicians to operate ventilators. We have enough supply for the number of emergency beds that we have. We are very fortunate not to have needed that more than a couple of times during this whole outbreak. We are confident that we are securely placed to deal with a COVID outbreak in the event there is one. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 683-19(2): EMERGING WISELY

MR. NORN: Marsi cho, Mr. Speaker. I'll try to tease out the right information after listening to my colleagues from Kam Lake and Great Slave. I'm happy to hear that the Department of Health and Social Services, CPHO is going to review how we are guiding our restrictions. My first question to the Minister is: is the Department of Health and Social Services still using the Emerging Wisely plan to guide decisions around restrictions? Thank you,

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

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Member for that question. Yes, Emerging Wisely is still the guiding document

produced in May of last year. We know that there were a number of exemptions requested where items that were supposed to be loosened in phase 3 were loosened in phase 2, the phase that we are in now. What we're talking about is when we get into phase 3, and that is the work that will go on in April. Thank you.

MR. NORN: Just trying to get going in the right direction here, again listening to my colleagues here. Given everything that we've seen over the last year, does that mean we will have a new, updated Emerging Wisely document with a clear timeline to easing restrictions?

HON. JULIE GREEN: My expectation is that the Emerging Wisely plan will be revised, and as the Member for Great Slave suggested, it will be a living document. There are so many variables that go into the CPHO's decision about risk assessment that it needs to be a living document, and it will be a living document. Putting a firm timeline on when we're going into phase 3 is very difficult to do, especially as the country now looks at locking down in other places because of the emergence of variants. Certainly, the idea of looking at phase 3 is to get ourselves ready for fewer restrictions.

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

QUESTION 684-19(2):
NURSING RETENTION

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the Minister stated, new hospitals and machines only work if we have the people, and the people are healthcare workers that we rely on. I know we have faced a number of retention issues; they're nothing new to the North. My question for the Minister of Health and Social Services is: what is the number one reason that nurses are leaving the Northwest Territories? Thank you.

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

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Exit surveys are not consistently used, so I am unable to answer that question. Thank you.

MR. JOHNSON: That gets to my next question. If we're not tracking why our nurses are leaving, whether that be due to burnout, not getting paid enough, workplace culture, lack of housing, there can be a long list of reasons why a nurse does not leave. I note that the NWTA for teachers tracks this information diligently and in response to each of those concerns when a teacher decides to go down south. Is this part of the work the Department of Health and Social Services is doing in this area, is

to track with exit interviews the reasons nurses leave the Northwest Territories?

HON. JULIE GREEN: The Northwest Territories Health and Social Services system has created a human resource development plan. They've done that with the Department of Finance, and it's my understanding that exit surveys will be reviewed as a potential action item in this area so that we can provide the kind of information that the Member is talking about and gain a greater understanding of why nurses do choose to leave.

MR. JOHNSON: I recognize that is probably a suite of these questions I can also ask to the corresponding Minister for the Department of Finance. In the Department of Health and Social Services business plan, this year, we were supposed to have completed new recruitment and retention strategies to guide that work. Has that work been completed? I heard the Minister say the potential of exit surveys. What I am really looking for is a comprehensive strategy I can sit down and nurses can review to see where we are going. Has that work for new recruitment and retention strategies been completed yet?

HON. JULIE GREEN: I'm happy to report that this work is on track. We've had a total of 14 marketing and advertising campaigns for the hard-to-fill Health and Social Services positions in the last three months, including nine of these campaigns that are specific to nurses. We've expanded the Health and Social Services professions career guide, which provides information for potential candidates about careers in Health and Social Services in the Northwest Territories. We have education, continuing education initiatives for licenced practical nurses and RNs through the targeted academic support program. We also support continuing education initiatives for speciality nursing positions through an extended mentorship program. Finally, we have an activity and programming initiative called reach that involves students and youth in the Health and Social Services area to consider careers serving the public in this way.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm glad to hear that work, and I know that some of the specialization work and the training to get people into nursing is some of the best work we're doing in this area. My concern is also specifically on the retention. I know there is new recruitment unit going out, and I know we are offering signing bonuses. We're attracting locums, and we're getting more people to come here. Previously, in a number of different formats, the department has offered retention benefits. These were service agreements. If you worked one year, you get a bonus at the

conclusion of that year or some sort of benefit to stay longer in the position. The collective agreement allows us to do this. Are service agreements something the department is willing to return to using? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. JULIE GREEN: Just to provide some numbers for turnover, this is for March 31, 2020, the turnover rate at the NWT Health and Social Services Authority was 15 percent. For the GNWT as a whole it was 13.2 percent. Our turnover rate at the health authority is on par with the government as a whole. The NTHSSA does not offer retention bonuses at this point. All the compensation and benefits that nurses and health professionals earn are part of the current collective agreement with the UNW. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 685-19(2):
LONG-TERM CARE COMMUNITY
CONSULTATION

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just sitting here thinking about the previous answers from the Minister of health on the 48 beds in Hay River. I have a problem that the projections were done, the decision was made with no consultation with the community. In Hay River and in other small communities, it's very important to engage the people who are there if we're going to make decisions. I would ask the Minister if she and her department are willing to keep an open mind when she hears from Hay River residents and concerned organizations, as well, with respect to the need for 48 beds in Hay River, or is the consultation process just a moot point? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my understanding that this is a genuine engagement. We do want to verify the numbers with residents of Hay River, and we plan to meet with the town council, the seniors' society, and with the Indigenous organizations. We want to make sure that we haven't overlooked or missed anything that is important to the calculation of these numbers, so I'm going to say this is a genuine way of getting community input into this. I don't know what the end result is, but I also ask the Member to keep an open mind that, in fact, 48 institutional beds may not be the best outcome for the residents of Hay River. Thank you.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: I thank the Minister for that answer, and I will keep an open mind on that as I go around with her and listen to the comments

and concerns from people in Hay River. One thing that she had mentioned previously, as well, is the catchment area. I realize Fort Providence, Kakisa, and Fort Resolution are in different regions, but the reality is that Hay River is a regional centre. It's a regional centre to Fort Providence, it's a regional centre to Kakisa and to Fort Resolution, and people come in from those communities for a number of reasons.

Right now, I think we have, in our extended facility, four people from Fort Providence and somebody from Fort Smith, Inuvik, and Fort Simpson, as well. We do get people from those areas, so I think that the department has to look at the reality of beyond the Deh Cho region or the South Slave, or whatever, and see what's real; and the real thing out there is that Hay River is a regional centre for the outlying communities. I would ask the Minister: will the Minister look at the reality of the Hay River catchment area, and will they consider that Fort Providence, Kakisa, and Fort Resolution are actually in that area? Because Hay River has doctors. I suspect that, if you have an extended-care facility, it's important to have doctors there. That's the question I have for the Minister.

HON. JULIE GREEN: Of those people who currently live at Woodland Manor, none are from Fort Resolution and none are from Kakisa, but four are from Fort Providence. It turns out that you can be in long-term care in the NWT wherever you want to be in long-term care, so while there are people in Woodland Manor who are not from Hay River, such as the person from Inuvik, and from Fort Smith and from Fort Simpson, likewise, there are people from Hay River who are in long-term care facilities in other parts of the NWT. This is a personal choice that they can make based on where their supports and their families are. Just because you live in Hay River doesn't mean you have to go into long-term care in Hay River. As I say, with respect to the catchment area, the only community that seems to have any residents within the Woodland Manor is Fort Providence, and therefore, four of the 23 are from Fort Providence.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Can the Minister confirm if timely access to a doctor is a consideration when assessing where long-term beds will be located?

HON. JULIE GREEN: The long-term care facilities are located or will be located in hubs where there is a greater medical staff presence and also a greater opportunity to recruit and retain nurses, but a physician is not essential. I think about the long-term care centre in Norman Wells. I don't believe Norman Wells has a doctor, but there is long-term care there. I think it's a nice-to-have rather than a must-have.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Since I'm willing to keep an open mind, I would ask the Minister: what additional resources would be provided to the Hay River Health Authority to make sure that we're providing the homecare services that are required? Are we looking at additional dollars? Are we looking at additional infrastructure? Are we looking at additional funds to help support people who do want to stay in homes? Thank you.

HON. JULIE GREEN: My vision is that more people will live in their own homes with homecare support than live in long-term care, and in order to achieve that, we need to invest in nurses, personal support workers. We have to evaluate the outcome of the paid community caregiver program and see which resources best fit the needs for people who are trying to age in place. The home and community care study that was tabled about 18 months ago has specific numbers of nurses and personal support workers required to make aging in place work, and there is no budget item for them at this point. It certainly is my expectation that there will be a budget item and there will be a specific number of staff hired to take care of the people who want to age in place. I would refer the Member to the home and community care study to find the detail, and if he finds that that's lacking, by all means ask again. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 686-19(2):
ASSISTED LIVING

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The questions, again, are for the Minister of health. I want to talk about: when we talk about extended care, we have a couple of people in there who are probably younger than 50 or younger than 60. In Hay River, we do have an independent or an assisted-living facility there, but the problem is that, to get in there, you have to wait two or three or four years. Has the department, in looking at the needs on the extended-care side, considered the shortcomings on the assisted-living side? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are, according to my notes, two people under 60 who live at Woodland Manor, so it's two out of 23. I don't believe that the people who live in the assisted-living facilities' needs have specifically been taken into account in the long-term care. The long-term care is really about institutional care for

elders who require high levels of nursing care on a day-to-day, 24-7 basis. Having said that, there is now a supported living review going on, the department has an RFP out to choose a contractor to do that, so that we can look at how we can, first of all, repatriate people who are in out-of-territory placements and, secondly, how we can increase capacity in the NWT for people who need assisted living who are not also elderly. Thank you.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: In Hay River, we've got the 10 new beds that they built a few years ago, and we have 15 existing that were in Woodland Manor. My concern is that, by putting in 24 versus 48, I'm not sure what's going to happen to Woodland Manor, and my concern is that they may do what they're doing with the old hospital and knock it down. I haven't really heard of any plans to turn it into anything else at this point. One area that we're really deficient on in our extended care in Woodland Manor is a place for dementia patients. We probably have several there right now, and I don't think they have the support they require. I would ask the Minister: has that been taken into consideration when you looked at the extended-care facility?

HON. JULIE GREEN: According to my information, nine of 23 clients at Woodland Manor have dementia, and I certainly do recognize that residents with dementia need additional care. We don't want them to roam or leave or hurt themselves or be lost. It's my understanding that all of the new builds for long-term care centres take into account dementia as a diagnosis and they are constructed to keep dementia patients safe, so that is a consideration in all of the long-term care builds. As things stand now, we only have a long-term care facility here in Yellowknife. We recognize that, going forward, people want their family members to be at home, so it makes more sense to do it the other way, where all centres are for dementia patients, rather than having only a specialized centre in Yellowknife.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: One of the issues that come up, as well, is that, when you have an elderly couple and one has to go into extended care, the spouse may be required to live elsewhere, and we separate them. Has there been any consideration by the department at looking at putting smaller independent-living units on the site where extended-care Woodland Manor in Hay River currently is, to allow for couples to be together and grow old together? Recently, we had a couple who had to move out-of-territory, someone who was born and raised here, even though they wanted to stay here. It's sad to see that, so I'm just wondering if the department has used that as a consideration, as well.

HON. JULIE GREEN: I'm not sure if the department has specifically considered that scenario. If it's independent living, it sounds like this would be part of the Housing Corporation's offerings for seniors' housing. Obviously, it would be our intention to keep couples together. They should be together at the end of their lives, as they have been through their lives, and so we would want that to happen. However, how that is going to look in long-term care, I'm not really sure how that's going to look, whether there will be suites available to accommodate couples rather than rooms for single people.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would ask the Minister if there have been any preliminary designs for either a 48- or a 24-bed for Hay River, because I look at the cost of a 48-bed, which would probably be less than doing two 24s. This whole exercise is going to end up costing more money to this government if we split that building. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. JULIE GREEN: The issues we're talking about here go beyond budgets and money. Aging in place is what most seniors want for themselves. They want to stay in their home. They want to have services that come to them from the community, whether it's a nurse or a personal support worker or a family member, and they want these people to assist them to remain independent for as long as possible. That's really the future for elders in the Northwest Territories and in the country as a whole. Long-term care has turned out to be a disaster in southern Canada. It has turned out to be a place where way too many people have died because of poor or no standards, poor regulation, issues around having people work in multiple places for very low wages. We are fortunate here in the sense that the government offers long-term care and so there is accountability. There isn't a need to make a profit. We can accommodate people where they are.

What I want to say to the Member is that, if there are sketches and cost assessments, I'm not aware of them, and if there are those, they would be out of date. The costs and estimates would be out of date. I'm not aware of anything new going on here, but I would really like the Member to turn his mind to the benefits of aging in place, which we recognized by putting it into our mandate and which most people prefer to being in an institutional setting. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Colleagues, our time for oral questions has expired. Item 8, written questions. Member for Frame Lake.

Written Questions

WRITTEN QUESTION 26-19(2): SUPPORTING COMMUNITY GOVERNMENTS

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. My questions are for the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs.

Responsibilities established in the mandate letter of the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs include "the development and maintenance of community governments... with sufficient legal authority and resources to carry out community responsibilities." Can the Minister state which NWT communities have been placed under supervision during the past five years and:

1. When and where MACA or other Government of the Northwest Territories staff have been seconded or assigned to community governments to provide support during a vacancy of senior administrative officer or finance officer positions over the last five years;
2. What activities MACA has undertaken to facilitate the staffing of vacant community government senior administrative staff positions;
3. The type, number, and uptake of training opportunities through the School of Community Government or other special training opportunities to build senior administrative positions capacity at the community level; and
4. The type and level of support to the local government administrators of the NWT (LGANT) to expand that organization's activities for senior administrative position recruitment, training, and retention. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. Written questions. Item 9, returns to written questions. Minister responsible for the Public Utilities Board.

Returns to Written Questions

RETURN TO WRITTEN QUESTION 23-19(2): PRACTICE OF USING POWER-LIMITING DEVICES IN THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Mr. Speaker, I have a provisional return to written question asked by the Member for Nunakput regarding practice of using power-limiters in the Northwest Territories. I have received the information late and will provide a formal return tomorrow, March 30, 2021. Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. 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 Justice.

Tabling of Documents

TABLED DOCUMENT 359-19(2):
FOLLOW-UP LETTER FOR ORAL QUESTION
597-19(2): A NEW DAY PROGRAM

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following document: "Follow-up Letter for Oral Question 597-19(2): A New Day Program." Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

TABLED DOCUMENT 360-19(2):
FOLLOW-UP LETTER FOR ORAL QUESTION
641-19(2): HARVESTERS DISASTER
COMPENSATION

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table the following document: "Follow-up Letter for Oral Question 641-19(2): Hunters and Trappers Disaster Compensation." Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

TABLED DOCUMENT 361-19(2):
LETTER DATED FEBRUARY 9, 2021, FROM
YWCA NWT ADVOCACY COMMITTEE TO
MINISTER OF EDUCATION, CULTURE AND
EMPLOYMENT REQUESTING CHANGE IN
GARNISHEE INTERPRETATION

TABLED DOCUMENT 362-19(2):
LETTER DATED MARCH 8, 2021, FROM
MINISTER OF EDUCATION, CULTURE AND
EMPLOYMENT TO YWCA NWT ADVOCACY
COMMITTEE REGARDING RECOVERY OF THE
CANADA EMERGENCY RESPONSE BENEFIT
AND THE INCOME ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. I wish to table the following two documents, a letter dated February 9, 2021, from the YWCA to the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment regarding a request for change in garnishee interpretation; and a letter dated March 8, 2021, from the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment to the YWCA on the same topic. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

TABLED DOCUMENT 363-19(2):
LETTER DATED MARCH 24, 2021 FROM
YELLOWKNIFE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE TO
PREMIER REGARDING TRANSPARENT
PROCESS FOR EASING RESTRICTIONS WITHIN
THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table a letter from the Yellowknife Chamber of Commerce, "Transparent Process for easing Restrictions within the Northwest Territories." Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Kam Lake. Tabling of documents.

TABLED DOCUMENT 364-19(2):
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES LEGISLATIVE
ASSEMBLY ANNUAL REPORT 2018-2020

Members, I hereby table the 2018-2020 Annual Report of the Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories. Members, I am pleased to note that the report's message from the Speaker is included in English, French, and Gwich'in. Mahsi. Tabling of documents. Item 15, notices of motion. Member for Yellowknife North.

Notices of Motion

MOTION 32-19(2):
EXTENDED ADJOURNMENT OF THE HOUSE TO
MAY 27, 2021

MR. JOHNSON: Mr. Speaker, I give notice that, on Wednesday, March 31, 2021, I will move the following motion: I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Hay River North, that, notwithstanding Rule 4, when this House adjourns on Wednesday, March 31, 2021, it shall be adjourned until Thursday, May 27, 2021. And further, that any time prior to May 27, 2021, if the Speaker is satisfied, after consultation with the Executive Council and Members of the Legislative Assembly, that the public interest requires that the House should meet at an earlier time during the adjournment or at a time later than the scheduled resumption of the House, the Speaker may give notice and thereupon the House shall meet at the time stated in such notice and shall transact its business as if it had been duly adjourned to that time.

Mr. Speaker, at the appropriate time, I will be seeking unanimous consent to deal with this motion. Mr. Speaker, I will not be seeking

unanimous consent, and I will give this motion on Wednesday, March 31st. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Yellowknife North. Notices of motion. Member for Kam Lake.

MOTION 33-19(2):
APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS TO THE HUMAN RIGHTS ADJUDICATION PANEL

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that, on Wednesday, March 31, 2021, I will move the following motion: Now therefore I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Sahtu, that Mr. Sheldon Toner of Yellowknife, Northwest Territories, be recommended to the Commissioner of the Northwest Territories for appointment as a member of the Human Rights Adjudication Panel, effective immediately for a term of four years; and further, that Lou Sebert of Fort Smith, Northwest Territories, and Jay Sengupta of Hamilton, Ontario, be recommended to the Commissioner of the Northwest Territories for appointment as members of the Human Rights Adjudication Panel, effective immediately for a term of four years. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Kam Lake. Notices of motion. Item 16, motions. Item 17, notices of motion for first reading of bills. Item 16, first reading of bills. Minister of Infrastructure.

First Reading of Bills

BILL 24:
AN ACT TO AMEND THE REVOLVING FUNDS ACT

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Nahendeh, that Bill 24, An Act to Amend the Revolving Fund Act, be read for the first time. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. The motion is in order. The motion is not debatable. All those in favour? All those opposed? Any abstentions? The motion is carried.

---Carried

Thank you, Minister of Infrastructure. Bill 24 has had first reading. First reading of bills. Minister of Education, Culture and Employment.

BILL 25:
AN ACT TO AMEND THE EDUCATION ACT

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Range Lake, that Bill 25, An Act to Amend the Education

Act, be read for the first time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. The motion is in order. The motion is not debatable. All those in favour? All those opposed? Any abstentions? The motion is carried.

---Carried

Thank you, Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. Bill 25 has had first reading. First reading of bills. Minister of Finance.

BILL 26:
SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION ACT
(OPERATIONS EXPENDITURES), NO. 3, 2020-2021

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Yellowknife Centre, that Bill 26, Supplementary Appropriation Act (Operations Expenditures), No. 3, 2020-2021, be read for the first time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. The motion is in order. The motion is not debatable. All those in favour? All those opposed? Any abstentions? The motion is carried.

---Carried

Thank you, Minister of Finance. Bill 26 has had first reading. First reading of bills. Minister of Finance.

BILL 27:
SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION ACT
(INFRASTRUCTURE EXPENDITURES), NO. 3,
2020-2021

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Inuvik Boot Lake, that Bill 27, Supplementary Appropriation Act (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 3, 2020-2021, be read for the first time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. The motion is in order. The motion is not debatable. All those in favour? All those opposed? Any abstentions? The motion is carried.

---Carried

Thank you, Minister of Finance. Bill 27 has had first reading. First reading of bills. Item 19, second reading of bills. Minister of Finance.

Second Reading of Bills

BILL 26:

SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION ACT
(OPERATIONS EXPENDITURES), NO. 3, 2020-
2021

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Yellowknife Centre, that Bill 26, Supplementary Appropriation Act (Operations Expenditures), No. 3, 2020-2021, be read for the second time. This bill makes supplementary appropriations for operations expenditures of the Government of the Northwest Territories for the 2020-2021 fiscal year. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. The motion is in order. To the principle of the bill.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

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

---Carried

Bill 26 has had second reading. Second reading of bills. Minister of Finance.

BILL 27:

SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION ACT
(INFRASTRUCTURE EXPENDITURES), NO. 3,
2020-2021

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Inuvik Boot Lake, that Bill 27, Supplementary Appropriation Act (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 3, 2020-2021, be read for the second time. This bill makes supplementary appropriations for infrastructure expenditures of the Government of the Northwest Territories for the 2020-2021 fiscal year. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. The motion is in order. To the principle of the bill.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

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

---Carried

Bill 27 has had second reading. Second reading of bills. Item 20, consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters: Committee Report 8-19(2), Standing Committee on Rules and Procedures Report on Motion 5-19(2), Referral of Point of Privilege Raised by Member for Monfwi on

March 10, 2020; Committee Report 9-19(2), Standing Committee on Rules and Procedures Report on the Chief Electoral Officer's Report on the Administration of the 2019 Territorial General Election; Tabled Document 286-19(2), Main Estimates 2021-2022, and by the authority given to me as speaker by Motion 1-19(2), I hereby authorize the House to sit beyond the daily hours of adjournment to consider the business before the House, with the Member for Hay River South in the chair. Thank you.

Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters

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

MR. NORN: Marsi cho, Mr. Chair. Committee wishes to consider the following documents: Tabled Document 286-19(2), Main Estimates 2021-2022, and Committee Report 8-19(2), Standing Committee on Rules and Procedures Report on Motion 5-19(2), Referral of Point of Privilege Raised by Member for Monfwi on March 10, 2020. Marsi cho, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you. Committee, we will take a short recess and resume with the first item. Thank you.

---SHORT RECESS

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): I will now call Committee of the Whole to order. Committee, we have agreed to consider Tabled Document 286-19(2) Main Estimates 2021-2022. Does the Minister of Finance have any opening remarks?

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Yes, Mr. Chair. I believe I do have some opening remarks. Mr. Chair, over the past few weeks, the Legislative Assembly has been considering the 2021-2022 Main Estimates. In our system of consensus government, Cabinet does not pass the main estimates without at least three supporting votes from Regular Members of the Legislative Assembly. I know there is, at times, a perception that getting these votes would involve deals made one-by-one with individual MLAs rather than through a process that considers the collective priorities of the Northwest Territories.

Mr. Speaker, it is to the credit of every Member of this Assembly, this was not how we have arrived at a point in the consideration of the 2021-2022 Main Estimates where I now offer several commitments in response to negotiations. The last few weeks have involved several conversations between myself and the chair and deputy chair of the Standing Committee on Accountability and

Oversight, to which all of the non-Cabinet MLAs belong. Several areas were identified where more work needed to be done for the good of the people of the Northwest Territories. In some cases, that work is policy-based, such as seeing the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation go through the government renewal process as soon as possible and confirming that targets will be part of the Department of Finance's Indigenous Recruitment and Retention Framework.

Discussions of policy do not necessarily require financial additions to the main estimates, but they are key to the work of government and were a very positive addition to these discussions. In other cases, issues or challenges were identified on behalf of committee, but it was helpful that committee members allowed departments to explain what tools are, in fact, available, rather than insist on solutions that might not be a best fit. As a result, the investments I am committing to can be more strategic. Finally, this process was aimed at remaining fiscally responsible, so that, with these increases, we are also looking for decreases, rather than simply continuing to grow expenses without significant new revenues.

Mr. Chair, I want to thank every Member of the 19th Legislative Assembly for making this a consensus process that was not only possible but, indeed, productive. With that, Mr. Chair, I have several commitments that I would like to go through. We have arrived at the following:

- With respect to midwifery, there will be a \$600,000 addition to the Department of Health and Social Services to enable their commitment to move the Northwest Territories midwifery program into phase 2 of its implementation, further to the 2017 Midwifery Stakeholders Report.
- With respect to after-care facilities, there will be \$1.4 million for the Department of Health and Social Services to support after-care and community-based addictions programs and services by, first, establishing a \$750,000 community-based addictions and after-care fund for external organizations to access funding to hire counsellors, both traditional wellness and community counsellors, in support of specific community needs, and second, \$650,000 to fund community development resources as follows: \$150,000 to fund the senior advisor for Indigenous knowledge and wellness coordinator and \$500,000 to additional community development activities, including the development of standards and a toolkit to help communities work through policy decisions to determine what will work best in their communities, help adapt program parameters to reflect community needs, and help guide the

selection of appropriate infrastructure or programming for each community.

- With respect to the anti-poverty fund, there will be \$935,000 for the Department of Health and Social Services to support efforts towards reducing poverty in the Northwest Territories. This funding includes \$750,000 to the anti-poverty fund, \$110,000 to increase funding for the roundtable advisory council, and \$75,000 to increase core funding to the Hay River shelter.
- With respect to Indigenous patient advocates, there will be \$743,000 for the Department of Health and Social Services for four positions to pilot a new approach to assisting with improving cultural safety and patient experience; supporting Indigenous patients in having their concerns, complaints, and questions resolved; and bridging cultural and language barriers. The Indigenous patient advocates located in the NWT's acute care facilities would work to ensure patients receive culturally safe care and also help deal with the impact of illness and hospitalization; provide cultural, spiritual, and emotional support; and help make connections with family members, elders, and community organizations. Four Indigenous patient navigators will be staffed by the health authorities and located in Inuvik, Hay River, Fort Smith, and Yellowknife. Indigenous cultural awareness is an important criterion for these positions. Job descriptions will, therefore, include consideration in equivalencies so that the focus will be on navigation rather than counselling.
- With respect to travel reductions, the Department of Finance will be working with departments to implement reductions to travel budgets totalling \$4.03 million. We will ensure that nondiscretionary travel that varies by department will not be adversely affected.

There are several other commitments, Mr. Chair.

- \$500,000 for the Department of Education, Culture and Employment to increase the childcare infrastructure fund
- \$100,000 for the Department of Health and Social Services to increase the Child and Family Services contribution
- The Department of Justice agrees to maintain the court clerk position in Hay River.
- The Northwest Territories Housing Corporation has funding available in 2021-2022 to provide resources to the Hay River homeless shelter to support its operating costs. The Housing Corporation will bring forward a funding request

during the 2022-2023 business planning process for ongoing funding for both the shelter in Hay River and in Fort Simpson.

- The Department of Environment and Natural Resources commits to completing the caribou survey work that was not completed in 2020-2021 in 2021-2022. The department will commit to bringing forward a supplementary appropriation to re-establish the cash flow that would have been lapsed from 2020-2021 and which will be required to complete this work in the fiscal year.
- The Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment will continue to support the town of Fort Smith with its tourism priorities to a total of \$130,000 over two years. In addition, the department will commit to support seven community tourism coordinator positions, each at a value of \$50,000 annually in 2021-2022 and 2022-2023. This increases the number of funded community tourism coordinator positions up from four.
- In addition, the Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment will reach out to the community of Fort Providence regarding their interest in and readiness for a community tourism coordinator position for the community for 2021-2022 and 2022-2023. If the community applies for this funding, the department will provide \$50,000 from within existing resources for 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 so that the CTC positions can include Fort Providence.
- The department does not have dedicated funding for a visitor information centre, but the department further commits to consulting with all Northwest Territories visitor information centres on their future priorities and projects.
- The Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment will continue to fund the hamlet of Tuktoyaktuk with funding to retain the economic development officer position in the community. The department will fund this support in 2021-2022 with existing funding and bring forward future requirements through the business planning process.
- The Department of Finance will commit to providing standing committee an options paper that discusses the review process for the Affirmative Action Policy by March of 2022 and the Indigenous Recruitment and Retention Framework prior to the start of the 2022-2023 business plan review process.
- The Northwest Territories Housing Corporation's mandate review will examine the corporation's strategic objectives to ensure the organization is

meeting the requirements of its establishment policy and the priorities of the Legislative Assembly. This work is planned in 2021-2022. In addition, I will commit that the Department of Finance's government renewal process on the corporation will examine and measure the effectiveness of specific program delivery in meeting the corporation's mandate objectives.

- I will commit to including the additional funding and the reduction to departmental travel budgets in 2021-2022 Supplementary Appropriation, No. 1, Operations Expenditures, to be considered during the June 2022 sitting of the Legislative Assembly.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you. I will now open the floor for general comments. Do any Members have any general comments before we begin the departmental summaries? Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

MR. NORN: Marsi cho, Mr. Chair. There was a lot of work that went into this. A lot of staff put a lot of time into this, and as the Minister mentioned, it was a collaborative effort, a lot of moving parts. Like I said, it wasn't just any one Member. It was all of us working together. I am very, very proud that we moved forward with this. Again, you always hear the media say things about backroom deals. There was nothing like that done here. It was all very open. We had a certain amount of commitment. Of course, there is always going to be compromise. Not everybody is going to get what they want. This job is very difficult. You can't make everybody happy. We're not dry meat. Going back, it was a collaborative effort. I am very proud. I don't have much else to say. I don't have anything prepared. I am speaking from the heart here. I am really, really proud of the work that we have done as a whole. Marsi cho, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you. Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. I, too, want to extend a lot of thanks to my colleagues on this side of the House for the work that we did together looking at the main estimates. People often just don't know how much work goes on behind the scenes here. We don't really do a very good job explaining this, but we met and reviewed the main estimates department by department with Ministers and their staff over a period of a couple of weeks. Then we had to work together as regular MLAs to figure out what we thought was missing or could be improved in the budget. There is an immense amount of work that goes on behind the scenes. I want to compliment my colleagues for us working together on our side of the House.

As much as it takes this side of the House to get its act together, we also have to thank our colleagues on the Cabinet side and particularly the Minister of Finance for the leadership and the negotiations to achieve these gains for all our residents. I know often the Minister said that she was the messenger on behalf of her Cabinet colleagues, but there was a lot of effort behind the scenes to work with the Minister of Finance to try to get a better understanding on some of these issues like midwifery or Indigenous patient advocates, what was going on already within the departments, and whether we needed to push a little bit harder to perhaps get a resolution on some of these issues. Once again, my sincere thanks to the Minister of Finance and all our colleagues on the Cabinet side.

Look, I sat through the last Assembly. This did not happen in the last Assembly. I want to give you every bit of assurance that this is a different way of doing business and a much-improved way of doing business. This is really how consensus government can and should work. I really want to compliment my colleagues on the other side for their efforts in doing this collectively. I think we achieved a lot in terms of the capital budget, as well, in the previous main estimates. This one, I think, was a really extraordinary effort on everybody's part to try to work together. I hope the media is listening and they do pick up on this, that there have been extraordinary gains for all of our residents with the additions that we've worked together on. Of course, we'll be back in May-June to formalize all that. Once again, thanks to our side of the House, colleagues working together and with our Cabinet colleagues to get this important set of results for our citizens. Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you. Member for Great Slave.

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's a bit of a hard act to follow when my colleague is getting thumps from the Cabinet side. I do agree that, being on this side of the House now, it's an interesting process to go through. I have to admit to not paying so much attention to it as a Minister because the lovely Minister of Finance would take care of that generally. I'm really happy to see that we have been listened to. We've been able to get some concessions around some things around social supports and such, and I believe the Cabinet really listened to us there. My only comment that I want to make further is that it's great to say we're going to put money somewhere but now it's the execution of getting that money out the door. While it's great that we can say we've got so many dollars here and there, if we don't spend it, it's just lip service. I commit to working with my colleagues there on the other side to get that money spent, and I'm sure we know we'll hold them accountable if they don't. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you, Member. Member for Thebacha.

MS. MARTSELOS: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I, too, would like to thank the Members from Cabinet and especially the Minister of Finance for listening to the colleagues on this side of the House. I appreciate the phase 2 of the midwifery program. I think that's a very important part of our traditional way because everyone was born at home in the early years, and now, that hasn't been happening to a great extent. I really appreciate that, and I, too, want to thank everybody for working together because I think that's what consensus government is all about. The relationship that we have with Cabinet as ordinary Members is also extremely important, and it shows that consensus government can work. With that, I want to just say thank you to my colleagues and to all Members of Cabinet and the Premier. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you, Member. Any further comments? Not seeing any, does the Minister of Finance wish to bring witnesses into the House?

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: [Microphoned turned off]

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you. Sergeant-at-Arms, please escort the witnesses into the Chamber. Would the Minister please introduce the witness?

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I have Sandy Kalgutkar, deputy minister of Finance.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you. Committee, we have previously deferred the matter of consideration of the departmental summaries. Members, please turn to page 21 of the tabled document. Education, Culture and Employment, operations expenditures, total department, 2021-2022 Main Estimates, \$353,599,000 Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you, committee. We will continue with the departmental summary for Environment and Natural Resources on page 69. Environment and Natural Resources, operations expenditures, total department, 2021-2022 Main Estimates, \$97,874,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you. Committee, we will continue with the departmental summary for Executive and Indigenous Affairs on page 109. Executive and

Indigenous Affairs, operations expenditures, total department, 2021-2022 Main Estimates, \$22,428,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you. Committee, we will continue with the departmental summary for Finance on page 137. Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. Now that I got all that nice stuff off my chest, I have a few tougher questions for the Minister of Finance. I'm looking at page 135, it's the revenue summary. When I look down at taxation, there is the listing for corporate income tax for 2021-2022 seems to be a negative \$8.4 million. Does that mean we are shelling out \$8.4 million, we're giving it back to corporations? What does this figure really mean? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you, Member. Minister.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. These numbers, all of the numbers with respect to taxes, are generated by the Canada Revenue Agency, so this is a reflection of the fact that as corporate income taxpayers would be paying incrementally over the course of the year based on estimates that are generated often from the year before and not necessarily on what their final actuals for the year might be. When the final numbers come in, the CRA then will, perhaps after the fact, determine what they have been remitting to the GNWT maybe beyond or above what, in fact, will be paid in by the corporations. That's what this is a reflection of. It's money that we will now be owing back to the Department of Finance Canada for overpayment in light of the estimates that were given being above what the actuals turned out to be. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you. Member.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. If I wasn't confused before. Are we getting any corporate taxes then in 2021-2022, or are we giving a whole bunch of money back to corporations? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you. Minister.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. If I might turn this one over to the deputy minister, please.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Deputy Minister.

MR. KALGUTKAR: [Microphone turned off] ...Mr. Chair. We are, in fact, getting corporate income tax revenues as we always do from Finance Canada. The 2021 estimate that just happens to be less than the amount the Finance Cabinet is clawing back due to overpayments from previous fiscal years. That's what is showing up as negative. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you. Member.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. What I'm trying to reconcile is: clearly corporate income tax is not a great way to try to finance a government, especially when it's bouncing up and down. Look at what was predicted main estimates in the current year, \$25 million, and then we're only going to get \$1.9 million in the current year? I know the pandemic and so on is going on, but this just doesn't seem to be a very reliable way to, or a completely unpredictable way to get revenues for the government. What is the Minister doing to try to stabilize the revenue side of the equation in some kind of predictable way? I want to give the Minister credit for the Government Renewal Initiative as a way to try to better manage our expenditures moving forward, but what are we doing to try to stabilize the revenues? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you, Member. Minister.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Certainly, given on the corporate side, there are three large pairs that make up a high proportion of the total corporate income taxes that are coming in to the GNWT. When that particular industry, when the diamond industry suffers a significant loss, that is going to have a significant impact on this line item, even though it is only, as I say, a handful of businesses and all in one sector. Arguably, one solution to that would be is to have greater diversity in the economy so that we're not so reliant on one particular sector and even a sector within that sector, and secondarily would be to expand the number of those companies that are paying. Again, having growth not only in diversity but simply a growth in a number of companies and corporations that are, in fact, paying the corporate income tax now.

All that said, it's much more easily said than done to actually expand an economy. It's not necessarily something that the Government of the Northwest Territories or any government itself it can do on its own. It depends very much on factors outside, but what we can try to do is create conditions and create an environment that supports and contributes and inspires diversification of the economy and supports the establishment of more small businesses that can hopefully grow into

medium-sized businesses and also encourage investment so that, by doing those things, we then get diversification that will help stabilize overall revenues. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you. Member.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair, and thanks for that. There're a few options there. I think I've got a few other options that the Minister should consider, as well, like a resource tax or a production-based royalty. If we turn over to ITI, of course, further into the budget, and I'm not going to ask questions on that one because I've already exhausted those before, but we do know that this year, we're going to get zero royalties from diamond mining. Next year, I think it's predicted at \$1.5 million. We've got to find a way to stabilize these revenues and make them more based on production rather than when they decide to sell them and so on because two of the three diamond mines remained opened during the pandemic and so on. In any event, my suggestion to the Minister is that we find ways to stabilize these revenues in ways that are based more on production than on profit and sales. That's what I would do if I was the Finance Minister.

I have one last question for the Minister which is: are these sorts of issues going to be part of the discussion for the next budget in the revenue options paper that the Minister has committed to make public and the kind of discussions she intends to have as part of the preparation of the next budget. Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you. Minister.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just today, started having conversations with communications around the setup for this spring and summer's budget dialogues or budget engagements. Yes, there will be more. Again, revenue options will form part of that. It was tremendous to me the benefit that we had last summer of doing the budget dialogues and hearing directly from different industries and those who are experts in their own industries about what they were hoping to see, and what would work or not work.

The simple answer is to say, yes. We will have the revenue options portion to add to the dialogues, to the engagement, and we'll need to hear back from those who are both in the industry but also in the non-for-profit sector in the city, in municipal governments, different spectrums across the Northwest Territories, and can hear more at that point where the people of the Northwest Territories would like to see themselves falling in terms of possibilities for revenue options and revenue

generation. Certainly, Mr. Chair, the committee will see that presentation before it becomes finalized. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you. Member.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair, and thanks to the Minister for that. I appreciate it, and I look forward to hearing what the public has to say in terms of the revenue side of the equation because I just don't think we've paid enough attention to it. I did neglect to mention one other thing. We need a new arrangement with the federal government where we get to keep more of our source revenues. We've got to start to cut those apron strings from Ottawa and find ways to become more self-sufficient, and that, as I said, means a new fiscal arrangement with Ottawa where we get to keep all or a greater portion of our own source revenue. I think that needs to be something that I would want my Cabinet colleagues to focus on, as well, moving forward. I will certainly be pushing in that direction. That's all I've got. Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you, Member. Minister.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. A note of caution that, of course, 85 percent of our budget comes from the federal government, so while I'm certainly always going to look for ways to better streamline what money we get and how we can spend it so that we have the flexibility to do things according to our priorities, that, at the same time, the deal that we have, just to be cautious that we aren't looking for greener grass that might not actually be so green. That said, we can't figure out these ideas without having the conversations, and so point taken that those conversations continue to be had. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you. Seeing no further questions, Finance, operations expenditures, total department 2021-2022, \$301,826,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you. Committee, we will continue with the departmental summary for Health and Social Services on page 169. Health and Social Services, operation expenditures, total department 2021-2022 Main Estimates, \$596,784,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you. Committee, we will continue with the departmental summary for Industry, Tourism and Investment on page 203. Industry, Tourism and

Investment, operation expenditures, total department, 2021-2022 Main Estimates, \$59,989,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you. Committee, we will continue with the departmental summary for Infrastructure on page 231. Infrastructure, operation expenditures, total department, 2021-2022 Main Estimates, \$278,894,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you. Committee, we will continue with the departmental summary for Justice on page 271. Justice, operations expenditures, total department, 2021-2022 Main Estimates, \$133,753,000. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you. Committee, we will continue with the departmental summary for Lands on page 307. Lands, operation expenditures, total department, 2021-2022 Main Estimates, \$22,425,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you. Committee, we will continue with the departmental summary for Municipal and Community Affairs on page 327. Municipal and Community Affairs, operation expenditures, total department, 2021-2022 Main Estimates \$121,132,000. Does the committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you. Committee, we will continue with the departmental summary for the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation on page 369. Please note, the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation is an information item and will not be voted on. Does committee agree that this concludes our consideration of the NWT Housing Corporation?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Does committee agree that this concludes consideration of Tabled Document 286-19(2)?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Mr. Norn.

COMMITTEE MOTION 94-19(2):
CONCURRENCE MOTION Tabled DOCUMENT
286-19(2): MAIN ESTIMATES 2021-2022,
CARRIED

MR. NORN: Marsi cho, Mr. Chair. I move that consideration of Tabled Document 286-19(2), Main Estimates 2021-2022, be now concluded, and that Tabled Document 286-19(2) be reported and recommended as ready for further consideration in formal session through the form of an appropriation bill. Marsi cho, Mr. Chair.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

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

---Carried

Tabled Document 286-19(2) will be reported as ready for consideration in formal session through the form of an appropriation bill. We will have a five-minute break.

---SHORT RECESS

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): I call committee back to order. Committee, we have agreed to consider Committee Report 8-19(2), Report on Motion 5-19(2): Referral of Point of Privilege Raised by Member for Monfwi on March 10, 2020. I will go to the chair of the Standing Committee on Rules and Procedures for any opening comments. Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The Legislative Assembly makes interpreters available in most official languages when Members are sitting in the Chamber. On March 10, 2020, a Tlicho interpreter was not available due to a last-minute cancellation. The interpreter scheduled but had to cancel for personal reasons. The Member for Monfwi, Mr. Lafferty, rose on a point of privilege. He said the lack of interpretation impeded or prevented him from performing his parliamentary functions as a Member and asked the Speaker to adjourn the proceedings. The Speaker took the matter under advisement and the proceedings continued.

On March 11, 2020, when a Tlicho interpreter was available, the Speaker heard debate on the matter of privilege. Following debate, the Speaker ruled that the matter did raise a question of privilege. He entertained motions on the ruling and Motion 5-19(2) was referred to the Standing Committee on Rules and Procedures for consideration.

On October 15, 2020, committee sought and received an extension of the review period for an additional 120 days. The purpose of the extension was to allow committee to engage with residents on the use of official languages in this Legislative Assembly. After several in-camera meetings on the topic, committee held a public hearing on November 17, 2020. Committee received a presentation from M. Batiste Foisy at this hearing. In addition, committee received written submissions from Mr. Jackson Lafferty, the Member for Monfwi; the Dene Nation; the Gwich'in Tribal Council; the Yellowknives Dene First Nation; and Ms. Marie Rose Sundberg. [English translation not available.] Mahsi, Mr. Chair. That's the report from the committee.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you. I will now open the floor to general comments on Committee Report 8-19(2), Report on Motion 5-19(2): Referral of Point of Privilege Raised by Member for Monfwi on March 10, 2020. Do any Members have general comments? Mr. Norn.

MR. NORN: Marsi cho, Mr. Chair. I remember saying, when we first got elected about a year and a half ago, you try to figure out what our record, our proceedings, are going to look like way down the road when people look back through our archives and whatnot, what languages are being used. I am hoping down the road that our elders tell us to think ahead several generations. I think this is one of those things, as well. When we speak our language in here, we want to hear that echoed in history, no matter what language we speak in here. It could be French, English, Tlicho, Dene Suline, and so on. I think it is important that we always try to accommodate our listeners out there who don't have English as their first language.

I am hoping that we could move forward with this in a positive manner and really promote our languages. Our languages are powerful medicine. My great-grandmother, Setsune, she used to tell me [English translation not available]. It's like strong medicine. It echoes in history. I am hoping that, like I said before, we get some support here and support our interpreters. Kudos to all of our interpreters here in the booths right now doing this really, really important work. We can't function without them. I am hoping we can give them all the support that we can and give support to those who follow in their footsteps. That is all I have to say for now. I would love to open comments. Marsi cho.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you, Mr. Norn. Any further comments? Mr. Lafferty.

MR. LAFFERTY: Masi, Mr. Chair. [Translation] I will be speaking my language. Today, what we are talking about is that, whenever the Legislative Assembly has a meeting, we have the interpreters

available when we are speaking our language. There are 11 official languages here in the Northwest Territories. One of the languages that I am speaking is Tlicho. Whenever we have a meeting, I always speak my language. That is why today, when I sit here, I would like to say thank you to the rules and procedures committee for what we talked about. Even though we sometimes may be a little upset, we show respect to each other.

That is one of the reasons why, at that time, I didn't speak. When the Speaker made the ruling, I could have spoken further, but I knew that, if I had continued to speak at that time, nobody would have understood what I was saying. I wanted to show respect. I know that they were going to postpone it. I knew at that time, but then, Mr. Chair, when we look at this, at how to go forward after this, we always have a word upfront whenever we talk about those kinds of things. Sometimes, there can be some incidents.

I would like to thank all of the interpreters who are here, who are hanging onto their languages. If it weren't for them, there could have been a misinterpretation whenever there are no interpreters available. If the Speaker knows that there are no interpreters available, they should stop the meeting. I wanted to speak at that time, but it is like I was cut off because there were no interpreters.

Our language should be number one. Our language should be there. At that time, it wasn't like that for me. At that time, when I was speaking Tlicho, it was like I was cut off. I was so upset that I walked out of here that time. Mr. Chair, I'm saying: don't let this happen again. With this motion that is here now, we will talk about this motion, but once the chair speaks on it, the motion will be there. We should put something very powerful in place, so whenever, in the future, any interpreters are unavailable, this needs to seriously be taken into consideration, not only for me, but in the future here, when we look around the table, I want each and every one of us to speak our language.

There are 19 official languages that we have here. At times, I am the only one, but my friend here, Steve Norn, speaks his language once in a while. Sometimes, Mr. O'Reilly speaks the French language. Most of the time, every day, whenever we have a meeting, I always try to speak my language. At that time, even though some Members didn't like, I would like to see these committee report recommendations that are put in place for how we are going to go forward.

Mr. Chair, that is all I may have for now. Let's just try to make what we have stronger. Whoever speaks their language, let's encourage them to do so. It will be up to the speaker. The motion that is

there now, I will talk to the motion later. That is all I have for now. For the committee report that has been done, I would like to say thank you for how we are going to go forward. Masi. [Translation ends]

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you. Are there any further general comments? Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Mahsi, Mr. Chair. Just a couple of things. I neglected to thank the interpreters who do such tremendous work for us here in the Assembly. I have known some of them for many years and have great confidence in their ability to help us understand each other a lot better. I neglected to thank them. I also wanted to thank the Member for Monfwi for bringing this matter forward because I think it is going to push us to the next level in terms of making sure that we properly recognize and implement use of official languages in this Assembly. I think that we have come up with a variety of recommendations here that will help us do that, right from how we can improve our operations today to policy moving forward. We are not going to be where we may need to be after another couple of years, but this is going to head us in a much better direction.

COMMITTEE MOTION 95-19(2):
COMMITTEE REPORT 8-19(2) – STANDING
COMMITTEE ON RULES AND PROCEDURES
REPORT ON MOTION 5-19(2): POINT OF
PRIVILEGE RAISED BY MEMBER FOR MONFWI
ON MARCH 10, 2020 – AMEND RULES OF THE
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY – RIGHT TO USE
OFFICIAL LANGUAGES, CARRIED

MR. O'REILLY: With that, Mr. Chair, I move that this committee recommends that the rules of the Legislative Assembly be amended to clearly state the right to use any official language when speaking in the Assembly; and further, that this right necessarily implies the right to be understood by those Members who do not speak that language; and furthermore, that the rules of the Legislative Assembly be amended to reflect the right of Members to receive interpretation in any official language. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. Just very briefly, it is hard to believe that Members have the right to use any official language in the House as a result of the Official Languages Act but it is not actually recognized or incorporated into our rules. This will make sure that the rules reflect the law. It is an important motion, and I expect that everybody is going to vote in favour of this. Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Question has been called. All those in favour? Opposed? Abstentions? The motion is carried.

---Carried

Member for Frame Lake.

COMMITTEE MOTION 96-19(2):
COMMITTEE REPORT 8-19(2) – STANDING
COMMITTEE ON RULES AND PROCEDURES
REPORT ON MOTION 5-19(2): POINT OF
PRIVILEGE RAISED BY MEMBER FOR MONFWI
ON MARCH 10, 2020 – AMEND RULES OF THE
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY ON TABLING OF
DOCUMENTS IN OFFICIAL LANGUAGES,
CARRIED

MR. O'REILLY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I move that this committee recommends that the rules of the Legislative Assembly be amended to clearly state that documents in any official language may be tabled in the Assembly. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you. The motion is in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Question has been called. All those in favour? Opposed? Abstentions? The motion is carried.

---Carried

Member for Frame Lake.

COMMITTEE MOTION 97-19(2):
COMMITTEE REPORT 8-19(2) – STANDING
COMMITTEE ON RULES AND PROCEDURES
REPORT ON MOTION 5-19(2): POINT OF
PRIVILEGE RAISED BY MEMBER FOR MONFWI
ON MARCH 10, 2020 - SIMULTANEOUS
INTERPRETATION OF COMMITTEE
PROCEEDINGS,
CARRIED

MR. O'REILLY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I move that this committee recommends that simultaneous interpretation of committee proceedings into any official language should be made available to Members or witnesses appearing before committee, with a one-week notice; and further, that the availability of this service should be communicated clearly with Members and any witnesses. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. Just very quickly: we do a lot of committee work behind the scenes here, and we take bills on the road and so on. Certainly, it was a practice in the last Assembly and I expect it's going to be the practice in this Assembly that whenever we go outside of Yellowknife, particularly to the smaller communities, we make it clear that anyone who wants to speak to committee can use any of the official languages. The one-week notice that we suggested here is just to make sure that we are prepared and can offer that service when we go outside of Yellowknife and even in Yellowknife, if someone requires interpretation. This is about changing the way we start to do some of our business a little bit and making it clear that we are going to offer this on an ongoing basis moving forward. Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you. To the motion. Mr. Lafferty.

MR. LAFFERTY: Masi, Mr. Speaker. I just want to thank the committee for highlighting this, a week's notice. As Members of the Legislative Assembly, there are various committee meetings. To some degree, it's expected that you speak the English language in these meetings, but there are times when an individual speaks their language. This clearly lays out the groundwork. If we give a week's notice, we can speak our language in the committee meetings, teleconference meetings. I am not sure how that is going to work, but I am just glad to see that it is part of the policy now. Masi.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Question has been called. All those in favour? Opposed? Abstentions? Motion carried.

---Carried

Member for Frame Lake.

COMMITTEE MOTION 98-19(2):
COMMITTEE REPORT 8-19(2) – STANDING
COMMITTEE ON RULES AND PROCEDURES
REPORT ON MOTION 5-19(2): POINT OF
PRIVILEGE RAISED BY MEMBER FOR MONFWI
ON MARCH 10, 2020 - INTERPRETATION IN
OFFICIAL LANGUAGES AT PUBLIC MEETINGS,
CARRIED

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. I move that this committee recommends that the Legislative Assembly increase efforts to provide interpretation

into regionally appropriate official languages when standing and special committees hold public meetings in communities outside of the capital. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you. The motion is in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Question has been called. All those in favour? Opposed? Abstentions? Motion is carried.

---Carried

Member for Frame Lake.

COMMITTEE MOTION 99-19(2):
COMMITTEE REPORT 8-19(2) – STANDING
COMMITTEE ON RULES AND PROCEDURES
REPORT ON MOTION 5-19(2): POINT OF
PRIVILEGE RAISED BY MEMBER FOR MONFWI
ON MARCH 10, 2020 - RECESSING OR
ADJOURNING PROCEEDINGS IN ABSENCE OF
INTERPRETATION, CARRIED

MR. O'REILLY: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I move that this committee recommends, should a situation arise in the future where interpretation is not available for a language being spoken in the Assembly, that the Speaker give strong consideration to a recess in or adjournment of proceedings until such a time as adequate interpretation can be provided. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you. The motion is in order. To the motion. Mr. Norn.

MR. NORN: Marsi cho, Mr. Chair. When we did some of our committee deliberations and we heard some of the feedback from the public, one thing that was brought up was having some on-call interpreters. I think it's really important that we have a good pool to draw from and also make sure that the right training is provided, have those supports in place. I just thought I would speak to that. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Question has been called. All those in favour? Opposed? Abstentions? Motion is carried.

---Carried

Member for Frame Lake.

COMMITTEE MOTION 100-19(2):
COMMITTEE REPORT 8-19(2) – STANDING
COMMITTEE ON RULES AND PROCEDURES
REPORT ON MOTION 5-19(2): POINT OF
PRIVILEGE RAISED BY MEMBER FOR MONFWI
ON MARCH 10, 2020 - RIGHTS-BASED OFFICIAL
LANGUAGES POLICY, CARRIED

MR. O'REILLY: Mr. Chair, I move that this committee recommends that the Speaker and Board of Management develop a rights-based official languages policy for the Legislative Assembly and that the policy come into effect prior to the end of this Assembly. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. The idea behind this motion is that we do need to have a policy moving forward that better recognizes and incorporates the use of all of the official languages in the way that we conduct our work and business here in the Assembly. There are a number of suggestions in the report itself, and I am not going to go over those, but it does involve things like making sure that we have backup interpreters on call and that there is basically a plan, step-wise, for improvement of the use of official languages across all of the work that we do here at the Legislative Assembly. I think that is a really key thing. I hate to put all of this on the Board of Management. They have got a lot of other work on their plates, of course, but we do need to develop a policy in this area. I think what we have also recommended is that this come back to us before the end of this Assembly so that we can keep moving this in the right direction. Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Question has been called. All those in favour? Opposed? Abstentions? The motion is carried.

---Carried

Member for Frame Lake.

COMMITTEE MOTION 101-19(2):
COMMITTEE REPORT 8-19(2) – STANDING
COMMITTEE ON RULES AND PROCEDURES
REPORT ON MOTION 5-19(2): POINT OF
PRIVILEGE RAISED BY MEMBER FOR MONFWI
ON MARCH 10, 2020 - IMPROVEMENTS IN THE
PROVISION OF OFFICIAL LANGUAGES
SERVICES, CARRIED

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. I move that this committee recommends that the suggestions made on pages 10 and 11 of Committee Report 8-19(2) be investigated by the Office of the Speaker, the Board of Management, and the Office of the Clerk in an effort to make immediate improvements in the provision of official languages services; and further, if any of these suggestions are found to not be feasible at present, a plan to realize these outcomes be included in the official languages policy. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. I am not going to read what is on pages 10 and 11, but just to refresh Members' memory and for those who may be listening, there are some immediate changes that we can make. We have started to do some of this, where we try to make sure that we have interpretation available for the entire sitting day, that there are at least a couple of interpreters available; we are going to look at including statistics around use of official languages in the House in future annual reports from the Legislative Assembly, making sure that some of our basic documents are made available in all of the official languages, things like the votes and proceedings, the orders of the day, that kind of thing, and that we also consider upgrading our audio and video equipment to make sure that we can broadcast and stream all of the official languages on an ongoing basis. Those are the sorts of things that this recommendation is really aimed at improving, some immediate operational changes to help us improve the use of official languages right away. Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Question has been called. All those in favour? Opposed? Abstentions? Motion is carried.

---Carried

Member for Frame Lake.

COMMITTEE MOTION 102-19(2):
COMMITTEE REPORT 8-19(2) – STANDING
COMMITTEE ON RULES AND PROCEDURES
REPORT ON MOTION 5-19(2): POINT OF
PRIVILEGE RAISED BY MEMBER FOR MONFWI
ON MARCH 10, 2020 - INTERPRETER AND
TRANSLATOR TRAINING AND ACCREDITATION,
CARRIED

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. I move that this committee recommends that the Standing Committee on Government Operations consider the issues of interpreter and translator training and accreditation and the possibility of a future Government of the Northwest Territories languages bureau in the context of its review of the Official Languages Act. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Mr. Chair. Those of us who have been around for a while may remember when we used to have a languages bureau. It was quite an operation. There were probably 40, 50 staff there who were available and doing work in all of the official languages and developing curriculum, all kinds of great work. Unfortunately, we do not have that capacity anymore, or it's still there perhaps in different forms. However, that issue was raised with us as well as the need for better interpreter training and accreditation. That was raised to us in the written submissions, verbal submissions, and it was really something kind of beyond the scope of the work of the rules and procedures committee, but certainly perfectly within the purview of the government operations committee when they conduct their review of the Official Languages Act.

We felt it important that we don't lose those issues, concerns, that were raised with us. They are captured in the report, and what this motion will do is make sure that they are given to the government operations committee to carefully consider. People, of course, will be welcome to make their own presentations to that committee at the appropriate time. Thanks, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you. To the motion. Mr. Lafferty.

MR. LAFFERTY: Masi, Mr. Chair. I, too, would like to emphasize the importance of having translator training and accreditation for up-and-coming future governments. The committee has heard from various stakeholders, interpreters, and language specialists. Even in this House, on numerous occasions, I have raised the importance of having qualified people to be trained, similar to the language bureau that Mr. O'Reilly was referring to. It was a big machine back then. We don't have that right now, unfortunately, but as we move forward, I would like to see more interpreters qualified that we can pick from, as Mr. Norn alluded to, a list of interpreters lined up. I would like to, again, re-emphasize the high importance of having trained interpreters and translators so that we can have qualified people in this building in as many official languages as possible.

Mr. Chair, in closing, this is one of the recommendations that was brought forward by some of the interpreters, as well. I attended last week's language training, as well. There, again, it was stressed by language specialists that we need qualified, trained language interpreters and translators. The message is out there. It's real. Government needs to start listening. This is a real issue. We are losing our language. The Gwich'in are losing our language. Inuvialuktun are losing their language, big time. Fortunately, the Tlicho language is strong, but we have a young generation who do not speak our language. Now is the time to get our act together as government and reinforce the importance of investing in our languages. This will be a continuation of our push, and I am glad that the report reflects that. Masi, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Question has been called. All those in favour? Opposed? Abstentions? The motion is carried.

---Carried

Thank you, committee. Do you agree that you have concluded consideration of Committee Report 8-19(2)?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): Thank you, committee. We have concluded consideration of Committee Report 8-19(2), Standing Committee on Rules and Procedures Report on Motion 5-19(2), Referral of Point of Privilege Raised by Member for Monfwi on March 10, 2020. Mr. Norn.

MR. NORN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I move that the chair rise and report progress.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson): There is a motion on the floor to report progress. The motion is in order and non-debatable. All those in favour? Opposed? Abstentions? The motion is carried.

---Carried

I will now rise and report progress.

MR. SPEAKER: May I have the report of Committee of the Whole? Member for Hay River South.

Report of Committee of the Whole

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Mr. Speaker, your committee has been considering Tabled Document 286-19(2), Main Estimates 2021-2022, and

Committee Report 8-19(2), Standing Committee on Rules and Procedures Report on Motion 5-19(2), Referral of Point of Privilege Raised by Member for Monfwi on March 10, 2020, and would like to report progress with nine motions carried, that consideration of Committee Report 8-19(2) is concluded, that consideration of Tabled Document 286-19(2) is concluded, and that the House concur those estimates and that an appropriation bill based thereon be introduced without delay, and Mr. Speaker, I move that the report of the Committee of the Whole be concurred with. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Hay River South. Do we have a seconder? Member for Nunakput. All those in favour? All those opposed? Any abstentions? The motion is carried.

---Carried

Thank you. Item 22, third reading of bills. Minister of Education, Culture and Employment.

Third Reading of Bills

BILL 20: AN ACT TO AMEND THE EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS ACT

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Inuvik Boot Lake, that Bill 20, An Act to Amend the Employment Standards Act, be read for the third time, and Mr. Speaker, I request a recorded vote. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. The motion is in order. To the motion. Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. I do have some remarks to make on this bill. It proposes two sets of changes to the Employment Standards Act: unpaid emergency leave is created, and then there are waivers for group termination advance notice requirements. The Employment Standards Act is a significant legislation that tries to balance workers' rights versus employers' interests. I want to thank the Standing Committee on Social Development for their work. They found a better balance by clarifying the process for employers to seek waivers from group termination notice requirements. They also clarified the process that will be used. The notice of decision to reduce or eliminate group termination notice now has to be posted in a workplace and given to each employee.

I still have major concerns, though, with this bill. In terms of the timing, I suggested to the former Minister of Justice an omnibus, a COVID bill, to deal with issues such as these, and I did that back in April of 2020, but it never really happened. This bill only came forward in November of 2020, only

after a federal requirement for emergency leave as part of the Safe Restart Agreement, and on March 12, the Minister said that the bill, I'll just use his words, followed correspondence from "an industry lobbyist group." This bill, in my view, took too long to be developed and was not really, perhaps, at our own initiative. The Minister admitted that there was no public consultation in creating this bill, which I and others expect when making changes to the Employment Standards Act.

The substantive problems with the bill, I want to speak to those, Mr. Speaker. The emergency leave is unpaid. I don't think this creates an incentive to encourage self-isolation. We heard in debate that some other jurisdictions actually even have more generous sick leave provisions in their Employment Standards Act, like the Yukon. I think that there should have been more effort to look at how to make emergency leave paid. That could have been done through some sort of arrangement or split among the federal government, perhaps, GNWT, employers, and even employees, but I don't think that work was done, either.

I want to speak now to the waivers from group termination notice requirements. I think the way that it has been presented in the bill is quite problematic. I couldn't even get the Minister to admit a couple of weeks ago that workers will potentially lose weeks of paid employment if this bill passes, and I certainly expect that it will. This really shifts the burden from employers to employees, and I don't think that that's fair when it comes to group terminations. There may be some situations where this may be warranted, but this bill doesn't provide enough guidance or even strike the right kind of balance between employees' and employers' interests. These changes are not the same as some other jurisdictions, how they have decided to try to handle group termination notices. In the federal legislation, there's a mediated process where people try to sit down and look at ways of avoiding group terminations. We don't have that with this legislation.

The process for waivers is still not clear. The onus should be on the employer, and I think that should be done through a simple application process. As the bill stands now, the onus is on the employment standards officer. We downloaded that responsibility onto the employment standards officer. Number one, they have to figure out whether an employer is actually providing proper notice, and if not, then they have to figure out whether the employer meets the requirements for a waiver. I believe that this will cause unnecessary delays.

For all these reasons, this bill does not provide for adequate protection of workers' rights and the public interest, the balance is tipped too far in

favour of employers, and I will not be supporting it. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. The motion is in order. To the motion. Member for Great Slave.

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would just like to suggest that, if anyone would like to know how the proceedings on this bill went, they check back through the record. I do not agree with my colleague's statements, and I will be supporting this bill. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Great Slave. The motion is in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. The Minister has requested a recorded vote. All those in favour, please rise.

RECORDED VOTE

DEPUTY CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Rutland): The Member for Hay River North; the Member for Great Slave; the Member for Kam Lake; the Member for Deh Cho; the Member for Yellowknife North; the Member for Monfwi; the Member for Nahendeh; the Member for Sahtu; the Member for Inuvik Boot Lake; the Member for Hay River South; the Member for Thebacha; the Member for Nunakput; the Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh; the Member for Yellowknife South; the Member for Range Lake; the Member for Yellowknife Centre.

MR. SPEAKER: All those opposed, please rise.

DEPUTY CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Rutland): The Member for Frame Lake.

MR. SPEAKER: All those abstaining, please rise. The results of the recorded vote: 16 in favour, one opposed, zero abstentions. The motion is carried.

---Carried

Bill 20 has had third reading. Third reading of bills. Minister of Finance.

BILL 26: SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION ACT (OPERATIONS EXPENDITURES), NO. 3, 2020- 2021

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Yellowknife Centre, that Bill 26, Supplementary Appropriation Act (Operations Expenditures), No. 3, 2020-2021, be read for the third time, and, Mr. Speaker, I would request a recorded vote.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. The motion is in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. The Minister has requested a recorded vote. All those in favour, please rise.

RECORDED VOTE

DEPUTY CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Rutland): The Member for Yellowknife South; the Member for Range Lake; the Member for Yellowknife Centre; the Member for Hay River South; the Member for Thebacha; the Member for Nunakput; the Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh; the Member for Nahendeh; the Member for Sahtu; the Member for Inuvik Boot Lake; the Member for Hay River North; the Member for Great Slave; the Member for Kam Lake; the Member for Frame Lake; the Member for Deh Cho; the Member for Yellowknife North; the Member for Monfwi.

MR. SPEAKER: All those opposed, please rise. All those abstaining, please rise. Thank you. The results of the recorded vote: 17 in favour, zero opposed, zero abstentions. The motion is carried.

---Carried

Bill 26 has had third reading. Third reading of bills. Minister of Finance.

BILL 27: SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION ACT (INFRASTRUCTURE EXPENDITURES), NO. 3, 2020-2021

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Inuvik Boot Lake, that Bill 27, Supplementary Appropriation Act (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 3, 2020-2021, be read for the third time, and, Mr. Speaker, I would request a recorded vote. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. The motion is in order. To the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. The Minister has requested a recorded vote. All those in favour, please rise.

RECORDED VOTE

DEPUTY CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Rutland): The Member for Yellowknife South; the Member for Range Lake; the Member for Yellowknife Centre; the Member for Hay River South; the Member for Thebacha; the Member for Nunakput; the Member

for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh; the Member for Nahendeh; the Member for Sahtu; the Member for Inuvik Boot Lake; the Member for Hay River North; the Member for Great Slave; the Member for Kam Lake; the Member for Frame Lake; the Member for Deh Cho; the Member for Yellowknife North; the Member for Monfwi.

MR. SPEAKER: All those opposed, please rise. All those abstaining, please rise. The results of the recorded vote: 17 in favour, zero opposed, zero abstentions. The motion is carried.

---Carried

Bill 27 has had third reading. Third reading of bills. Mr. Clerk, orders of the day.

Orders of the Day

DEPUTY CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Rutland): Orders of the day for Tuesday, March 30, 2021, at 1:30 p.m.:

1. Prayer
2. Ministers' Statements
3. Members' Statements
4. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery
5. Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills
6. Reports of Standing and Special Committees
7. Returns to Oral Questions
 - Oral Question 638-19(2), Medevac Services
8. Acknowledgements
9. Oral Questions
10. Written Questions
11. Returns to Written Questions
12. Replies to Commissioner's Address
13. Petitions
14. Tabling of Documents
15. Notices of Motion
16. Motions
17. Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills
18. First Reading of Bills
19. Second Reading of Bills
 - Bill 24, An Act to Amend the Revolving Funds Act

- Bill 25, An Act to Amend the Education Act

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

- Committee Report 9-19(2), Standing Committee on Rules and Procedures Report on the Chief Electoral Officer's Report on the Administration of the 2019 Territorial General Election

21. Report of Committee of the Whole

22. Third Reading of Bills

23. Orders of the Day

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. This House stands adjourned until Tuesday, March 30, 2021, at 1:30 p.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 5:16 p.m.