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**Friday, May 28, 2021**

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**The Honourable Frederick Blake Jr, Speaker**

# Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

## Members of the Legislative Assembly

### Speaker

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

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**Hon. Diane Archie**

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

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(Deh Cho)

**Ms. Caitlin Cleveland**  
(Kam Lake)

**Hon. Paulie Chinna**  
(Sahtu)

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*Minister responsible for the NWT Housing Corporation*  
*Minister responsible for Homelessness*  
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**Ms. Frieda Martselos**  
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**Ms. Katrina Nokleby**  
(Great Slave)

**Mr. Steve Norn**  
(Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh)

**Mr. Kevin O'Reilly**  
(Frame Lake)

**Ms. Lesa Semmler**  
(Inuvik Twin Lakes)

**Mr. Rocky Simpson**  
(Hay River South)

**Hon. R.J. Simpson**  
(Hay River North)  
*Government House Leader*  
*Minister of Education, Culture & Employment*  
*Minister of Justice*

**Hon. Shane Thompson**  
(Nahendeh)

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

**Hon. Caroline Wawzonek**  
(Yellowknife South)

*Minister of Finance*  
*Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment, including responsibility for the Business Development and Investment Corporation*  
*Minister responsible for the Status of Women*

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Box 1320  
Yellowknife, Northwest Territories  
Tel: (867) 767-9010 Fax: (867) 920-4735 Toll-Free: 1-800-661-0784  
<http://www.assembly.gov.nt.ca>

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**YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES****Friday, May 28, 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. O'Reilly, Ms. Semmler, Hon. R.J. Simpson, Hon. Shane Thompson, Hon. Caroline Wawzonek

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

**Prayer**

--Prayer

**SPEAKER (Hon. Frederick Blake Jr.):** Ministers' statements. Minister responsible for Health and Social Services.

**Ministers' Statements**

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 156-19(2):  
COVID-19 RESPONSE UPDATE

**HON. JULIE GREEN:** Good morning, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the COVID-19 pandemic has presented the Northwest Territories and its residents, communities, and businesses with many challenges. I know all residents are now well into the COVID-19 fatigue stage. We all want to see things back to normal and public health measures lifted.

Mr. Speaker, since the start of the pandemic, protecting NWT residents against COVID-19 has been this government's biggest priority. We have known from the start that vaccines would be an essential part of our strategy and it is one of the most important factors the Chief Public Health Officer is considering in her decision-making about easing restrictions.

Getting vaccinated is the most important thing people can do to protect themselves and their communities from the COVID-19 virus. Many residents across the territory continue to make the choice to get vaccinated to protect their loved ones and I want to thank everyone who has made that decision.

As of May 25th, 60 percent of NWT residents 18 years of age and older are fully vaccinated and 68 percent have received their first dose.

Additionally, since the announcement on May 5th to expand our COVID-19 vaccine program to include the Pfizer-BioNTech product, which is approved for the 12- to 17-year-old age group, almost 1200

young people from Yellowknife, Dettah, Ndilo and Behchoko have already received their first dose. I want to thank all the young people who have come forward to be vaccinated so far.

Not only are you protecting yourselves from COVID-19, but you are adding another layer of protection to your community and the territory. You should be very proud. Thank you, colleagues.

To the youth who are still considering whether the vaccine is right for them, check out the territorial medical director's video which will be coming out shortly. Dr. Pegg answers questions from NWT youth about COVID-19 vaccines to help you make an informed decision.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to thank the parents, guardians, teachers, and health care providers who have taken the time to talk with youth in their lives about the COVID-19 vaccine.

Now that an additional 3,510 doses of Pfizer have arrived in the NWT, we are ready to continue school-based clinics for youth aged 12 to 17 in all other communities. This week, we started with the regional hubs of Hay River, Fort Smith, and Inuvik, and teams will move on to other more remote communities in the following weeks.

The GNWT plans to offer youth in all NWT communities at least one dose of the vaccine before the end of the school year. Details will be updated on the online vaccine schedule on an ongoing basis.

Mr. Speaker, the NWT has just come through a difficult period because of an outbreak declared at a Yellowknife school. This outbreak resulted in schools closing for a short period in Yellowknife, Dettah, Ndilo and Behchoko and the introduction of new measures such as mandatory masking for indoor public spaces in these communities.

The decisive action by the Office of the Chief Public Health Officer contained the outbreak to 71 cases. There was no community spread and all COVID-19 infections from this outbreak occurred in students and staff from the school or their households while they were in isolation.

I would like to express my thanks to our dedicated health care staff for their work in this

outbreak - working long hours to identify contacts of the outbreak and get individuals tested. Thank you, colleagues.

I would also like to express my gratitude to all the support staff, including 8-1-1 staff, communications and policy staff who worked hard to and moved quickly to get the information out to the public. There was a substantial amount of information and it changed quickly. These communications professionals did their best to support the needs of residents during that time.

Finally, I would like to thank the people who were required to isolate during the outbreak. I know this has been very difficult for many of you but without all of you isolating responsibly and doing what was required under difficult circumstances, this outbreak could have turned out much differently. For that, the government and residents thank you.

Mr. Speaker, while this outbreak demanded our focus for the past three weeks, the Office of the Chief Public Health Officer continues to work on updating Emerging Wisely, the plan to ease public health measures gradually and safely.

I know we are all eagerly awaiting the release of this updated plan. The Chief Public Health Officer has said it will be released in June. It will remove the phased approach in the original Emerging Wisely and look at external and internal factors to determine what measures can be eased with an emphasis on personal responsibility for mitigation of an individual or household's risk.

Overall vaccine uptake in the NWT will be a key internal factor to determine what measures can be eased. This is the best measure to ensure residents are protected and we can re-open with confidence.

The updated Emerging Wisely will also look at final travel and border restrictions being lifted once COVID-19 cases decrease in Canada and vaccination rates rise across the country.

Mr. Speaker, I know keeping COVID-19 at bay has been a long and difficult battle and we have asked a lot of residents, communities, and businesses for the past 14 months. I would like to thank them all for stepping up.

With the COVID-19 situation improving beyond our borders and with the updated Emerging Wisely outlining the path forward in the NWT pandemic response, we can look forward to easing public health measures over the coming weeks and months. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you. Ministers' statements. Minister responsible for Environment and Natural Resources.

**MINISTER'S STATEMENT 157-19(2):  
FLOODING IN THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the recent floods have been devastating for many Northerners who have experienced damage to their communities, property, and their livelihoods. I witnessed the anxiety and stress in the voices and faces of people in my own community as water levels rose and homes and businesses were threatened and many were affected.

In the face of this adversity, I also saw firsthand how communities, leaders, Northerners can rise to meet challenges they must overcome. I am very proud of how our communities have met this challenge.

I am very thankful to local leaders like Mayor Whelly, Chief Sanguetz, and Chief Masuzumi who remained focused and provide strong local leadership throughout this crisis. I am awed by the hundreds of volunteers from within our flooded communities and from across the territories who have stepped up to help their neighbours in need.

I also take pride in how all levels of government - municipal, Indigenous, territorial and federal - continue to come together to keep folks safe and to provide assistance. On behalf of Cabinet, I would like to say thank you to everyone. We still have a long road ahead to recovery, but we have proven just how strong we are in the face of adversity. We should all take some comfort in the fact we live in a place where people take care of one another.

Mr. Speaker, I am also proud of the role the Department of Environment and Natural Resources have played in the territorial coordinated emergency response to date. I believe that many ENR staff went above and beyond during this emergency. Department hydrologists have been instrumental in warning the territories of unprecedented high water levels on NWT rivers this year. They have been assessing water levels all year long and snow this past winter.

The team feels it necessary to raise awareness of the potential for floods in November, as well as in March and April, hoping to warn cabin owners, harvesters, and residents most at risk. They continue to analyze radar imagery and real-time data to give regional and local emergency measure management officials the information they need to plan for flooding and to prepare communities about what to expect.

Our regional offices and the staff within them played key roles in regional and local emergency operation centres in every region and community impacted by flooding. Coordinating with local leadership and community emergency management organization, ENR gathered and prioritized the communities' requests, providing relevant assistance and support wherever possible.

As a result, I am proud to say our wildfire crews were immediately redeployed to help with the flood response in Jean Marie River, Fort Simpson, and Fort Good Hope. Fire crews continue to assist clean up in NWT communities where flood risk remains. Local officers, and those redeployed from other region continue to support affected communities and have since the flooding began.

At the request of local EMOs and leadership, ENR officers, fire crews and other staff quickly sprang into action to help out with a range of on-the-ground actions to help people affected by these floods. From the start, they helped folks that had to leave their homes and assisted with any of the community's relevant requests and needs. ENR provided tents, stoves, and other supplies to people in Fort Simpson and Jean Marie, and helped them set up the temporary camps. To help keep residents safe during this time, officers conducted regular bear patrols around emergency camping areas and set up a mobile station in Jean Marie River.

After further assessing the needs of residents on the ground, ENR staff delivered food hampers and fish donated by the community of Deline to evacuees, and helped chop firewood for people's camps while they waited to return to their home. The department also assisted delivering donated supplies to communities of Jean Marie River and Fort Simpson.

When flooding occurred at Little Buffalo River, fire crews and the renewable resource officers ensured residents were safe, and assisted in securing their cabins and retrieving their belongings.

As breakup moves down the Mackenzie, ENR staff continue to support residents and fulfill critical emergency response roles, as part of the broader Government of the Northwest Territories coordinated effort.

I want to thank the staff for their tireless efforts to date, and for the work to come. Mr. Speaker, I also know that this department and our government as a whole will not stop its involvement in this response. As the focus shifts towards rebuilding from these devastating floods the GNWT will continue to play its role by supporting communities and residents in various ways. Mr. Speaker, we know there are harvesters and trappers who have had not only

their home but their livelihoods significantly affected. Their cabins, traplines, and the equipment they rely upon have been damaged.

Indigenous harvesters and trappers who have been impacted by the flooding, please contact your closest regional Environment and Natural Resources officer as compensation may be available.

Mr. Speaker, the floods along the Mackenzie River have been devastating, but they have shown us that the northern spirit is alive and well. We take care of our own and we made things happen where working together for a common cause is needed.

I have witnessed firsthand the amazing resilience of Northerners and our communities. I have seen the sense of empowerment in residents, who know that we can work together to overcome events like this. I know we will continue to come together and rise to the challenge as we rebuild and recover. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 158-19(2):  
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES COMMUNITY  
FLOOD RESPONSE

**HON. PAULIE CHINNA:** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased today to speak today about the collaborative work of the GNWT's Emergency Management Organization and community governments to help ensure the safety and security of residents in the emergency response to the recent flood situation experienced by several of our communities.

These past few weeks have been an incredibly trying time for the residents who have been directly impacted by the flood in their communities. There is never a good time for emergencies involving natural disasters but responding to one during a pandemic has added to a trying and difficult time. The North is a place where residents come together during times of need with offers of help and assistance, and I am pleased to say this was the case during this flood season.

Mr. Speaker, the Emergency Management Organization was active during the spring months and has been and continues to provide assistance to communities as our flood season continues. The Emergency Management Organization is an active part in all emergency responses. In particular, I want to acknowledge the quick and effective response of the communities of Hay River, K'at'l'odeeche First Nations, Jean Marie River, and Fort Simpson. Over the past few weeks, the Emergency Management Organization continues to

monitor and work collaboratively with communities to address emergency needs on an ongoing and real-time basis.

The membership of the Emergency Management Organizations have been working to ensure that activities of services continues, including making accommodations available where possible for those impacted. As communities have seen the water levels drop and it has become safe to do so, staff have traveled to the affected communities to meet the residents to discuss their needs, start to assess damage and mitigate concerns and access for the GNWT to provide support.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the communities of Fort Providence and Fort Smith who have kindly hosted evacuee centres, as well as the Town of Hay River who, after undergoing an evacuation and a flood risk themselves, has opened up their community for evacuees from other communities across the territory. I would like to also show the appreciation for all of the donations that have contributed to communities. The deep connection that we have with one another is evident with these generous actions of Northerners.

Flood response is community driven and supported by the Emergency Management Organization became much of an important work that happens on the ground. Many actions taken within the communities may be overlooked as such. I would also like to recognize the significant contribution of the front-line workers and the hundreds of volunteers that offered their time and effort to assist with the flood response.

To our affected communities and residents, we know this is challenging, and we are working with community governments to ensure that they remain safe and have the support they need from this government. We will continue to work with the communities on an ongoing recovery effort, and again on behalf of Cabinet, I would like to thank everyone that was involved in the flood efforts to date. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister. Ministers' statements. Minister responsible for Education, Culture, and Employment.

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 159-19(2):  
IMPROVING STUDENT EDUCATIONAL  
OUTCOMES

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the health and prosperity of our territory begins with how well we prepare our children and youth to succeed in life. Making sure that every student from every background and region in the Northwest Territories has equitable access to relevant, culturally appropriate, and quality

education will ultimately lead to improved well-being across the North and within all our communities.

The findings from both the Office of the Auditor General and the Education Renewal and Innovation Evaluation in 2020 are clear in outlining the main challenge we face: Key achievement gaps especially for Indigenous students and students in small communities.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to share some of the priority actions that are underway to make the required changes to improve education outcomes for all NWT students to the same level as the rest of Canada.

Since March 2021, the department has been engaging Indigenous government, education leaders, the Northwest Territories Teachers' Association, parents, and the public on what will be one of our government's most significant undertakings to date: Modernizing the NWT Education Act.

The goal of modernizing the Education Act is to ensure that there are system-wide improvements to meet the needs of students across the territory. To date, we have received nearly 600 responses to our surveys, and held more than 25 meetings with Indigenous governments, partners and stakeholders, and held seven public virtual town hall meetings.

I encourage everyone to take part in this engagement, whether by participating in a virtual meeting, taking a survey, providing a written submission, or calling the department before June 30th. Hearing from NWT residents is crucial for ensuring a modernized education system reflects the values, needs, goals and aspirations of all NWT residents.

Another area of active engagement is our discussion regarding Junior Kindergarten to Grade 12 curriculum. Our curriculum needs renewal to ensure that it continues to meet the needs and interests of our Northern students and our communities and aligns with the vision of helping all our students become capable people.

I am happy to share that to date the department has held over 30 engagement sessions, which have included Indigenous governments, education bodies, the NWT Teachers' Association, and the NWT Association of Communities. We have also been collecting input from the public online. All this feedback will be reflected in a "What We Heard Report," which will help inform the decision on how to move forward and meet the expectations of the residents of the NWT.

Mr. Speaker, access to quality early learning and childcare opportunities is crucial to improving

education outcomes for students across the entire education continuum. The department is meeting with licensed early learning and childcare programs, Indigenous governments, and other partners in the development of a 2030 Early Learning and Child Care Strategy for the NWT.

The development of the strategy will focus on improving the availability and affordability of early learning and childcare throughout the NWT, and highlight the elements needed to advance universal childcare in our territory by exploring solutions for reducing the costs while ensuring quality child care for families.

Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to continue my statement. Thank you.

---Unanimous consent granted

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thought I heard a late 'nay' but thankfully it was late.

Mr. Speaker, there is more. In a continued effort to offer high quality high school education to our small communities, the expansion of Northern Distance Learning is almost complete. We are excited to welcome the communities of Gameti, Wekweetii, Norman Wells, and Colville Lake to Northern Distance Learning, bringing the total number of participating small community schools to 19.

As well, the Indigenous Our Languages Curriculum has been approved and is being taught in all NWT schools that offer Indigenous language instruction. Ongoing teacher training is happening remotely, and resources continue to be developed to support this exciting new Indigenous language curriculum with a goal of revitalizing the traditional languages of our NWT residents.

Addressing gaps in student outcomes requires supports beyond the scope of education. Because of this, the department continues to work closely with the Department of Health and Social Services on initiatives that actively support the well-being and mental health of our students and their families. This includes the planning for the final phase of the rollout of the Child and Youth Community Counsellor program into the South Slave Region this upcoming school year.

Mr. Speaker, the Government of the Northwest Territories is committed to improving the education system and the outcomes for all our students. We are committed to effective and collaborative engagement on these critical initiatives so that together we will succeed in revitalizing our education system, achieving equitable access to education, and helping our children and youth gain the knowledge and skills they need to become capable people. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister. Ministers' statements. Members' statements. Member for Great Slave.

### Members' Statements

**MS. NOKLEBY:** I think I am jinxed, Mr. Speaker. Could you please go to someone else.

**MR. SPEAKER:** All right. Members' statements. Member for Hay River South.

#### MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON HAY RIVER SCHOOL BUSSING

**MR. ROCKY SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have been advised that due to inadequate funding, bussing for Hay River students will not be available for the 2021-2022 school year.

Mr. Speaker, the community of Hay River extends from Paradise Valley to the West Channel, a distance in excess of 30 kilometres. It is unrealistic to expect students to walk to school. This becomes an issue of not only student safety but that of access to education. The Indigenous students, and students from lower income families, will be the most affected by the cancellation.

The Hay River District Education Authority has a bussing shortfall of approximately \$70,000 annually. Over the last several years, the bussing shortfall for three schools has been made up by reducing much needed school programming and charging bussing fees. This has resulted in fewer students taking the bus, lower attendance, and some students having dropped out of school altogether.

Mr. Speaker, upon review of the 2019-2020 financial statements of the South Slave Divisional Education Council, it appears there was a surplus of \$3.3 million ending that fiscal year. It is not clear why a surplus of that size exists and why it is not available to cover the bussing shortfall. It begs the question of where the South Slave Divisional Education Council priorities are when programs and services are expected to be reduced when such a large surplus exists.

Mr. Speaker, the South Slave Divisional Education Council's answer to the shortfall is that the department's funding formula is not adequate and that the Hay River District Education Authority should look to further watering down school programs and services. Mr. Speaker, that is no answer. It says nothing about the importance of attending school. It says nothing about the importance of education. It says nothing about the work, effort, dedication, and compassion of teachers in Hay River who have shed tears over

this decision. What it does say is that our children's education is not as important as the bureaucracy that is unwilling to release some of the \$3.3 million surplus.

Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

---Unanimous consent granted

**MR. ROCKY SIMPSON:** Mr. Speaker, it is essential that the Hay River District Education Authority, South Slave Divisional Education Council, and Department of Education come up with a solution to ensure bussing is available at no cost to students in Hay River. The distance students must travel remains the same and that reality must be taken into account when addressing funding for bussing.

Mr. Speaker, if the South Slave Divisional Education Council is not willing to step up, then I would suggest they step down or be removed by the Minister of Education. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON COVID-19 RISK AVERSION

**MS. NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, round 2; I think I figured out my problem.

Risk aversion is the tendency of people to prefer outcomes of low uncertainty to those of higher uncertainty. In the case of COVID, where the end result could be widespread disease and death, it's completely understandable that the aversion to risk would be very high. In the beginning so much was unknown; therefore, the ability to take any risk was non-existent as governments reacted to the onslaught of information that was changing by the minute. As COVID has continued, our knowledge of the disease, its transmission and effects has grown exponentially and as a result one would think the tolerance for risk would be increasing, but I think we all know this isn't the case.

As we go into our second year of lockdowns, travel restrictions, and separation from loved ones, COVID fatigue or burnout has become our reality. People are still worried about their families and friends; however, the worry is now shifting from whether they will contract the disease to concerns over their mental health. With the loss of personal freedoms and a tanking economy, already on the brink before COVID, we are facing increasing mental health issues in the North. Our people were already struggling with poverty and addictions. Now, with the vaccine not leading to the promised reopening everyone was so looking forward to, I am

concerned people are losing hope. Friends I have never known to struggle before are clearly struggling now.

As a Regular Member, I have been very frustrated with trying to navigate the onslaught of information, and misinformation, around the pandemic. Planning has appeared to have been very reactive, not proactive, and clear communications non-existent. My constituents and other residents reach out to me for clarification, and I have no more information than they do. Often they appear to know things long before they are ever sent to me through official channels.

We need proactive planning with clear goals and dates if and when statements, thresholds and criteria with key triggers and subsequent results. We ask questions in this House of the Minister regarding the CPHO only to be told the office is independent of HSS. As a Minister, I worked with the BDIC and WSCC to understand and communicate their work to regular members. Something that is not happening in this case. Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

---Unanimous consent granted.

**MS. NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This Cabinet needs to work on a collaborative relationship with the CPHO where the bigger picture is taken into account. Where proper risk assessments are performed and decisions are made based on facts, not knee-jerk reactions after there was a failure to plan. This partnership is important in order to mitigate the skyrocketing economic, financial, and social losses and challenges our people are facing. Otherwise, we will be paying for the indirect costs of this pandemic long after the disease is eradicated. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON COVID-19 TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS REGARDING YUKON AND NORTHWEST TERRITORIES BORDER

**MS. SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Dempster Highway is the only way in and out of the Beaufort Delta by road. It's our lifeline to the rest of Canada. Yes, we are NWT residents, but there is no way for us to get to the rest of the NWT unless we drive through Yukon, BC, and Alberta at this time. Or if we can afford to pay the high cost of an airline ticket, and many cannot.

As many in this House are aware, the Yukon has opened its borders without isolation restrictions to those who are vaccinated. Everyone at home is waiting patiently for the ferries to go in, Diane, so they can hit the Dempster.

But some still cannot afford this trip because they can't afford to drive because even if they did a weekend trip, they would have to isolate 8 to 14 days when they return. And I know when questioned, the Minister and the Premier have stated in the past, and will continue to state, that it's up to the CPHO to change this order between the Yukon and the NWT.

In the beginning of the pandemic, we did not know anything, nor did we have anything in place, to protect the NWT and the residents but that is not the case now after 14 months of being in a public health emergency state. The NWT and the Yukon have crushed the curve like they were asked to early on by using masks and socially distanced and staying put. We have vaccines in both territories that are leading the country in vaccination rates. We have excellent public health and healthcare staff on the ground to do contact tracing and testing. Residents have shown they can manage an outbreak despite communication confusion. There must be lessons learned if it was to happen again. There was no community spread and we are down to two cases, and I am happy that none of the cases in the YK school outbreak ended up in the hospital, Mr. Speaker.

We have the COVID Secretariat monitoring the borders and we know who is arriving in the NWT and have staff to investigate. We have 8-1-1 and Protect NWT set up for residents to contact and put plans in place. We have testing throughout the Northwest Territories with quick turnaround now. We have medical travel. Patients continuing to go for appointments in Alberta over the past year with no reports of medical travel patients returning with COVID. People are wearing masks in most public indoor spaces in Inuvik and the capital as I am witnessing.

At this point, we need to know what risk measurements are being used to make decisions. When will we have a NWT-Yukon bubble where NWT residents can travel back and forth without isolation when they return. I do not want answers now-- or I do not want stats on COVID. The stats are NWT three, Yukon zero. There are the stats. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON  
FAMILY TREATMENT

**MR. BONNETROUGE:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this time to acknowledge and recognize the importance of encouraging and supporting all NWT residents who have decided on living health lifestyles that relate directly to having positive outcomes for their mental health and healthy families.

My office has been in contact with a few residents of my community who have completed treatment programs offered by the GNWT. What was prevalent was a great sense of happiness and appreciation for having the opportunity to take life changing programs for themselves and their families. When we have ways to help and support healthy lifestyles `all across the territories, then we can see changes in the trends of social issues we face on a daily basis.

Social struggles come at great cost a great cost that negatively affect many aspects of life within our communities, and we need to promote healthy lifestyles. We need the statistics of violence and social issues to decline but of course we're facing a pandemic so we need to build awareness and support our residents more than ever.

We have to have a foundation where we are on a higher alert to accommodate the NWT residents for their health and safety at all costs.

I would like to take this time to recognize a family in Fort Providence for completing a family treatment program in Regina, Saskatchewan. They completed the program this past March. The young family was there for five months, and they expressed that they would have stayed longer if they did not have to return to their work commitments.

They stated the level of support was very encouraging, with weekly schedules of events that were therapeutic and family relationship building. The program focused on family relationships, child management, grieving, and setting boundaries. The underlying reason they chose to attend a family treatment program was that they knew that a change needed to happen within their family as they were heading down a destructive path with alcohol and drugs.

The family is doing well and wants to encourage other families to take the program. Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement. Mahsi.

---Unanimous consent granted

**MR. BONNETROUGE:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. And mahsi, colleagues.

When asked about the followup care, they said they reached out to Social Services and yet, to date, there was no response back to them. They

thankfully have the support of their parents to help guide them on their new journey.

On another note, I would like to take this time to recognize all the participants who completed the 30-day treatment program at the K'atlodeeche First Nation in April. The treatment program was funded by the Deh Cho First Nations, and I would like to applaud them for supporting the Deh Cho residents for the awareness leading to healthy lifestyles. We all have a part in bringing awareness to the treatment programs readily available for the people of the Northwest Territories. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON FORT SIMPSON AND JEAN MARIE RIVER FLOODING COMMUNICATIONS

**MS. MARTSELOS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, yesterday I was contacted by Chief Jerry Antoine of the Fort Smith First Nation regarding the recent flooding in the Deh Cho region. As a friend and former colleague, the Chief wanted me to pass on a message to the Premier of some ideas for how communication with those on the ground can be improved and how restoration can be done as effectively as possible.

Mr. Speaker, the message from the Chief is that the Government of the Northwest Territories needs to establish a single point of contact who will work directly with the community leads on the ground. There needs to be one person or a team of consistent individuals who are on regular and direct contact with the community leads working on the flooding and restoration efforts. It would also be ideal and preferred if this point of contact has authority and direct contact with the Premier's office. This would improve the effectiveness and efficiency of all incoming and outgoing communications by those on the ground and with the Premier.

Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, there is also the restoration component of the situation. Affected residents, whose homes have been damaged or destroyed, need assurances from the Government of the Northwest Territories that the cost that they incurred from this disaster will be recouped.

Chief Antoine has already contacted professional technicians in restoration, but they are waiting on Cabinet confirmation that these costs will be reimbursed.

Mr. Speaker, one good idea suggested by Chief Antoine is for the Premier to consider establishing a

disaster navigator who will be in charge of a small team to oversee all specs of recovery, including the assessment in the best interests of the flood victims. I will have questions for the Premier at the appropriate time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON COVID-19 MENTAL HEALTH

**MR. JACOBSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good morning. I want to talk about COVID-19 mental health impacts across my riding and across the Beaufort-Delta. We're already living in isolated communities living in a harsh environment. You know, thank God right now we have geese hunting and fishing that's been helping us to get people out. It is part of our culture and critical way of life.

Since COVID-19 requirements and social distancing especially impacted our way of mental health in our small communities. It's not known how the limitations on households and community gatherings, as well as on youth activities, will end.

Mr. Speaker, I'm concerned about the impacts this continues to have on our youth, our elders, and our people in our communities at large. Youth in the NWT are five times more likely to be hospitalized for substance abuse or attempted suicide than other kids across Canada. Substance abuse and suicide rates are higher compared to the rest of Canada. Depression and stress have increased for everyone through COVID-19 fatigue, and what happens and we have created a support system, elders and our social youth connection, to ensure that most vulnerable population, Mr. Speaker, especially our social restriction and COVID-19 are isolating our elders from our community and keeping them away from everyone and it's really tough on them.

We need to work towards getting something sorted out on our next steps. We look to actions that government has taken to respond to COVID-19 but there's been no specific funding or special support services responding to the needs of small communities so we can continue to socialize and have physical activities that are critical in the well being of our people.

In the communities, we also lack internet capacity to access government services that are offered during this pandemic. We need help with that too.

There have been a lot of public health orders with little government support. They support but lack of internet service, it just can't be done. The well-being of following the public health orders for all our communities. Mr. Speaker, I'm concerned about the

lack of culturally appropriate funding for program services have been developed through COVID-19 to effectively respond to growing mental health concerns in small communities. I will have questions for the Minister at the appropriate time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON COVID-19 SELF-ISOLATION

**MR. JOHNSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. During the most recent outbreak in Yellowknife, like many members, many of my constituents turned to me for answers. And despite having multiple outbreaks across the NWT at different periods and being in this for a year and a half, it is clear we did not have many of the basic answers.

Mr. Speaker, there are a lot of lessons to learn as we move through this. But I suggest if we have to impose isolation on people, the first thing we do is send a personalized email to those people. I would suggest that email say: "You're receiving this email because you have potentially been exposed to COVID-19. Thank you for your sacrifice for keeping our community safe. If you need support over the course of your isolation, please use the resources listed in this email".

Mr. Speaker, many of my constituents did not receive contact from Public Health throughout their entire isolation unless they made a point of calling. It wasn't until days 10, 11, 12, 13, 14 that people started to hear from Public Health, Mr. Speaker.

Additionally, Mr. Speaker, the first thing that email should do is set out the difference between self-isolation and isolation. Many of my constituents had self-isolated before. They understood what 14 days looked like - being able to go for walks or runs or skis to get outside. Many of them thought we had reduced it to eight days with a negative test. However they were not self-isolating during the outbreak; they were in isolation. Many constituents did not know that we had the power to confine people to their property to 14 days and require them and all of their family members to get multiple tests before they were released. They were operating under the presumption that they were self-isolating.

They understood how self-isolation worked if they were essential workers. How they could go to work if they were essential. How self-isolation worked. Many of us have done self-isolation we've experienced this. But this was not self-isolation. And it wasn't until days 5, 6, 7, that people truly understood what they were in for the multiple

testing requirements they needed and that, in fact, it might go well beyond 14 days depending on test results and the workings of your multiple family members.

Mr. Speaker, in that email, I think a number of resources need to be provided. Telehealth appointments for those experiencing mental health concerns.

Mr. Speaker, a lot more answers to the 'why'. Mr. Speaker, asking someone to be confined to their property for 14 days is one of the most significant infringement of Charter rights we can do. We must at least answer 'why'. Why going for a walk, fully vaccinated without a mask, was such a risk that we had to maintain. I still don't have that answer, Mr. Speaker. I will have questions for the Minister of Health.

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

#### MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON COVID-19 COMMUNICATIONS

**MS. CLEVELAND:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today, I originally wanted to talk about the power and resilience of community. Through floods, the school-based COVID outbreak and the devastating loss of family, this month is a testament to how Northerners support one another through adversity. But what this government needs to hear now is how they COVID outbreak communication jeopardized the contact tracing, testing, containment, and commitment of both staff and NWT residents.

In May, over a thousand people found themselves suddenly self-isolating from potential COVID exposure at schools, restaurants, and children's activities.

First, the good news. Parents of a young child feeling under the weather had their child tested for COVID-19, and we are all thankful to that family. Public Health immediately started contact tracing to stop the spread of what was later learned to be a variant strain of COVID-19. The health authority successfully ramped up testing, secured Pfizer vaccines for teens making them some of the first in the world to be vaccinated. They maintained Moderna vaccine clinics that saw an increase in uptake, brought in departmental staff to help do testing callbacks, and not lost in all of this is the ability of teachers to instantly shift to online learning while many in isolation themselves.

But, Mr. Speaker, the government COVID response has a communication problem. Schools were closed close to midnight Sunday evening leaving many unaware and schools unable to prepare.

Information from Protect NWT was not consistent. Advice given by Protect NWT and Public Health was also inconsistent. Public Health contradicted information published on GNWT's Facebook pages and new information came out every day in piecemeal. Some residents were incorrectly told not to isolate while others who hadn't gone to exposure sites were told they must isolate. Some were told they needed to be tested and then turned away at testing sites. And in some instances, health care staff argued about the rules in front of residents. People want to keep their children safe. They want to keep their neighbors safe and whether or not they agree with the rules, they want to follow them. Sound public health relies on sound decision making but without effective communication, sound decisions are jeopardized.

Mr. Speaker, the communication breakdown of this outbreak jeopardized the safety and well being of NWT residents. This is not our first and quite possibly not our last spread of COVID-19 and next time, this government needs to be ready.

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

#### MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON AIRPORT TAXI FEES

**MR. O'REILLY:** Mahsi, Monsieur le President. Further on the theme of the pandemic, we all know that COVID-19 has had impacts on small businesses and questions persist about how this government can help operators get through the hard times. The taxi industry is a prime example and I have a specific ask for how this government can help.

With the collapse of the tourism industry and discouragement of nonessential travel, the volume of airline traffic has dramatically shrunk. Air Canada is out of Yellowknife market entirely. WestJet is on reduced service passenger volumes and other air carriers are way down as well.

In response to my questions, the Infrastructure Minister has reported that the number of passengers transiting the Yellowknife airport is down a whopping.

73 percent for fiscal year 2020-21 over the previous year or before the pandemic.

The impact on Yellowknife taxi business has been harsh. One operator, Aurora Taxi, reports losing fully half of its drivers since the beginning of the pandemic. It's essential that each of the three taxi companies operating in Yellowknife or it's estimated that each of the three major taxi companies operating in Yellowknife have lost up to 40 percent of their drivers. Some drivers who used to make

their living working only at the airport have left the business entirely.

At the beginning of the pandemic, the Infrastructure Department offered some relief to these operators from the airport taxi stand licence. That's the fee paid by companies for the right to operate regular service from taxi stands at airports. For the first eight months of the pandemic up until the end of 2020, these fees were waived in recognition of the loss of the value of the business.

Although business has not gone back up, the Infrastructure Department reinstated the full \$1,500 per month fee on January 1st, 2021. Those fees need to be rolled back or prorated. With passenger volume down by almost three quarters, it only makes sense that the cost of taxi stand licence be reduced or prorated pending a return to regular business. While we're all looking forward to the release of the updated Emerging Stronger economic recovery plan, some businesses still need immediate relief before they can recover.

I will have questions for the Minister of Infrastructure on how we can adjust our airport taxi stand licence fees to better reflect the current ability for small business, namely taxi operators, to make a living. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Mahsi. Members' Statements. Member for Monfwi

#### MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON COVID-19 ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND DEVELOPMENT OF PLAN

**MR. LAFFERTY:** Masi, Mr. Speaker. Logistical roller coaster ride for the Northwest Territories and also the people of the Northwest Territories. But each challenge has been met with calm determination. And for that, Northerners and their leaders, their frontline workers, and caregivers must be commended.

We have shown one of the best COVID-19 responses in the world and have enjoyed the benefits of that sound, science-based approach.

But, Mr. Speaker, we shouldn't get carried away congratulating ourselves in the Northwest Territories. There are still many threats and challenges out there. And as the MJ MacPherson outbreak shows, even the slightest lapse have massive consequences.

For this reason, Mr. Speaker, I want to point out a number of areas that needs attention. First, Mr. Speaker, has to do with ongoing challenge of vaccine hesitancy. Our vaccination uptake has been good so far with 60 percent fully vaccinated and almost 70 percent partially vaccinated. But

uptake has been uneven in two regions, my region, as Tlicho, and Sahtu region. Less than 50 percent fully vaccinated. Males trail significantly behind females.

Mr. Speaker, some jurisdictions have resorted to non-medical incentives to convince vaccine-hesitant people to come forward. Those incentives include cash lotteries and offer special privileges.

Mr. Speaker, herd immunity is achievable but only if we are prepared to think outside of the box with incentives such as these. I call this government to study such initiatives.

Mr. Speaker, I see there are a number of precautionary COVID measures the Government needs to consider. The second one has to do with making our schools and seniors homes less vulnerable. Mr. Speaker, we can do that by upgrading our heating and ventilation system to hospital standards, because, Mr. Speaker, we can see what happens with COVID once it's unleashed in such buildings. It's worse it's worth the investment because COVID and variants are here to stay forever, Mr. Speaker.

The government needs to look into virus prevent assistance for seniors homes and also schools. If its already not looked into such investment, it should start that exercise immediately. Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement. Mahsi.

---Unanimous Consent Granted

**MR. LAFFERTY:** Masi, Mr. Speaker. Masi, Colleagues. Mr. Speaker, we can't risk on our lowers. COVID and its variants are with us here and forever. This Government has an obligation. That obligation is to ensure we're ready for the new challenges that the new normal are present now and also in the future. I call on the Government to set up a standard task force to anticipate those challenges and ensure the government is ready for them.

I have suggested just a few challenges in need of some actions. Rest assured, there are many more that don't have time to deal with today, Mr. Speaker. Mahsi.

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

#### MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON FLOODING IN NAHENDEH

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, please be advised this will be the first of five Members' statements I will be doing about the flood situation in the Nahendeh. I

can only speak about my experience and what I saw. Please note, there were a lot of moving parts, and I could not see them all.

As people are aware, both communities were in charge. They were the ones that declared the state of local emergency and are working with the Government of the Northwest Territories and the Federal Government, including MP McLeod. From what I have witnessed and been part of, it is sometimes hourly contacts on top of their regular scheduled daily EMO meetings.

With all my heart and soul, I would like to thank the people of Jean Marie River First Nation, Chief, Council and Staff; the Village of Fort Simpson, Mayor, Council, and staff; and the huge number of volunteers and the regional EMO staff for doing an amazing job during the flood. Both communities and the regional EMO staff worked on their plan since January.

Unfortunately, what we witnessed was the worst flooding in recorded history from what I understand. There were things that we did not foresee, but thanks to these great teams, they were able to adapt.

I would like to thank the Town of Fort Smith, Hay River, Fort Providence, and Norman Wells for opening their homes and communities for our evacuees. They treated our residents with great respect, and they were being well taken care of.

To the residents of both communities, I hope you are safe and secure wherever you are. I know it's been a stressful time, but together we will get through this.

To the residents of the Northwest Territories and business, thank you, thank you for all your kindness, donations, and support. This is why I am proud to be from the Northwest Territories.

As the GNWT involvement, I can say that various Ministers have discussions about the situation and being updated on regularly. I know I have been on several calls with my colleagues to discuss the situation. I can tell you from my witness, when the community had a request, the GNWT was very responsive. I know every request I received from the communities, that the appropriate Minister made it a priority to deal with.

Again, I would like to stress the leadership, staff, and volunteers in both communities did an amazing job during this difficult time. I know on the ground level, the GNWT, as a whole, stepped up and helped residents of these two communities during the flood.

In closing, please remember good leadership sometimes means stepping back and let the

professionals and volunteers do their job with your support. Thank you Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Nahendeh. Members' statements. Returns to oral questions. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Acknowledgements. Oral questions. Member for Hay River South.

### Oral Questions

#### ORAL QUESTION 715-19(2): HAY RIVER SCHOOL BUSSING

**MR. ROCKY SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I ask this Assembly, what is an elementary, junior, senior high student's life worth? Well, Mr. Speaker, the South Slave Divisional Education Council answered that question and put that value at \$70,000. It is that number that forced the Hay River District Education Council to make the decision to suspend all bussing services for all schools in Hay River for the 2021-2022 school year.

This government expects students to attend school. For those that come from affluent families, it may not be a challenge. But for many in Hay River, it will require a 40-kilometre return walk home. This issue and this matter is everyone's responsibility.

So, Mr. Speaker, I would ask the Minister of Education if his department finds this commute which will require one to make the choice of walking 40 kilometres or dropping out of school acceptable in a community that stretches 30-plus kilometres where there will be no bussing for 21-22 school year. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Hay River South. Minister responsible for Education, Culture, and Employment.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. No, I don't find it acceptable, and the department doesn't find it acceptable either. That's why I've been working on this issue for more years than I would care to admit. If this was an issue where I could write a cheque, and problem solved, then we wouldn't be talking about it. As a Regular Member, I worked with the Hay River DEA because they require new buses, and as Minister, I was able to sign off on their purchase of new buses. And now we have a situation where they can't afford to use those buses. So perhaps I can take this opportunity to let people know how the funding works for education bodies.

So in Yellowknife, we have DEAs. It's a single body. And funding flows from ECE directly to those bodies. The Tlicho Region, we have the TCSA. Funding flows to that body, and then they disburse it. And in other regions, we have district education

councils. The way that it works, according to the Education Act, is that ECE provides funding to the education councils, and they divide it as they see fit. There's very few restrictions on how that money is to be spent. It's similar to the Government of the Northwest Territories. We receive money from the Government of Canada. We spend it on what the Members of this Assembly deem necessary. It's the same thing. We provide the district education council in the South Slave with funding, and they distribute it among the various communities. And they make that determination. And so it's a political decision made by the DEC. And this isn't a money issue. There's money there. There's money in the bank.

The Member referenced that in the last annual report, there's \$3.2 million. I'm sure that's gone down because of the costs associated with COVID. But nonetheless, this isn't a case where the money doesn't exist; it's a case where a decision has been made to not allocate that money. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. ROCKY SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, current legislation states that an education body may provide transportations to students for them to have access to the education programming. It is interesting that this government is pushing to have student grades comparable to the rest of Canada at the same time allowing barriers to exist that removes the child's access to learning. I would ask the Minister if he is prepared to have his department review the legislation and propose a change that would make bussing mandatory and fully funded in communities such as Hay River where the commute becomes a safety issue and impacts access to education. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, that's the plan. The reason I was so quick to move on modernizing the Education Act and updating our funding framework is because of my experience with the bussing issue in Hay River. I saw that the system as it was designed wasn't working, and we need to ensure that kids can get to school. I've been involved in a number of different engagements across the territories on education, and I think at almost every engagement, if not every engagement, people make the comment that kids need to be in school to learn. We can do everything else, but if the kids aren't there, they're obviously not learning. So this issue is vitally important. And I want to ensure that by the time we have the renewed the Education Act and the funding formula, that this will no longer be a problem. In the couple years, few years, until then he have to come up with a solution, though. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. ROCKY SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have read correspondence between

the Hay River District Education Authority and the South Slave Divisional Educational Council. I have read correspondence addressed to the Minister from the Hay River Metis Government Council, West Point First Nation, and Soaring Eagle Friendship Centre. What I found interesting is that the South Slave Divisional Educational Council is all about having the Hay River District Education Authority cut deeper into education programs and services while they're unwilling to look at their own budget. The teachers, the Hay River District Education Authority, and the Indigenous peoples see the benefit of bussing as it relates to advancing education and the safety of their students and children.

So I ask, will the Minister reach out to the organizations that have concerns and confirm with them that the access to education will include bussing and that the safety of their children is paramount? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to speak with those organizations. They are in my community and many in my constituency, and some I've already discussed this very issue with. Can I confirm that there will be bussing? I can't at this point because, like I said, this is a decision of the South Slave District Education Council and the Hay River DEA. And if I could just write a cheque and make this go away, that's what I would do. But the fact is that the education system as it is very decentralized, and that decision-making authority lies with those bodies. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. ROCKY SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I ask that you bear with me. Mr. Speaker, current legislations limits the Minister only direct the South Slave Divisional Education Council. There is no requirement for the South Slave Divisional Education Council to provide bussing or to follow any direction coming from the department, which is very evident by their refusal to fund the bussing shortfall in Hay River when they were sitting on the \$3.3 million surplus at the end of 2020. Mr. Speaker, I ask the Minister if he will meet with the South Slave Divisional Education Council and the Hay River District Educational Authority, something that the South Slave Divisional Education Council has already refused to do. We are talking about children's education, safety, and it is our responsibility to come up with a workable solution to cover the bussing shortfall for the next two years.

Mr. Speaker, failing that, I would ask the Minister if he is willing to consider directing the South Slave Divisional Education Council to fund the 70,000 bussing shortfall or find the funds from within the

department and provide direct payment by cutting a cheque to the Hay River District Education Authority for bussing; failing that, or dissolve the South Slave Divisional Education Council and appoint a public administrator or commence discussions with the Hay River District Education Authority to provide the opportunity to remove itself from the South Slave Divisional Education Council and be an independent divisional educational council on its own? Mr. Speaker this is our children's future we are talking about. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I appreciate the Member bringing forward solutions. Often all we hear is complaints with no way to address them. So I want to thank the Member for that.

There are some authorities for the Minister in the Education Act. I can direct the education council; they don't have to follow that direction. If they don't, I could dissolve the board. But this is something that is within their authority under the act. So it's not you know, I wouldn't have very solid ground for just dissolving this authority or dissolving the Education Council.

The other comment was about commencing discussions with the Hay River DEA to remove them from the DEC, and in our Education Act engagements, that's one of the issues that we discussed, is what's the structure of the education system going to look like in the territory. And it very well could be that Hay River winds up on its own given the you know, these continuing situations that they seem to have with the education council. But, ultimately, what I want to do is I want to meet with the parties involved. I met with the DEA a number of times, and I'd like to meet with the chair of the DEC as well to have a discussion about this, because, ultimately, the education council, the education bodies are distinct in the GNWT. They're distinct bodies. And this is about relationships. We need to ensure that we have good relationships and that we're all working to the same end, which is the education of our youth. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

ORAL QUESTION 716-19(2):  
COVID-19 RESTRICTIONS AND YUKON-  
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES BORDER

**MS. SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Minister of Health and Social Services. As I mentioned in my statement, the importance of the Beaufort Delta-Yukon connection and that we want clear answers, not statistics. I would like to ask the Minister what risk measurements are being used to

make decisions around border restrictions and movement of people of the NWT. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**HON. JULIE GREEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, under the Public Health Act, the Chief public health officer has the authority to make recommendations to me about travel, and they are then written into public health orders and enforced at this point by the COVID Secretariat. So it's a process that begins with the Chief Public Health Officer and ends up with me signing off.

The issue about the travel exemption with the Yukon doesn't have to do with risk assessment. It has to do with verification of people being vaccinated. So the Yukon and BC have a common medical record system, but ours is different than theirs. And so there's been some negotiations underway about how to share information between the NWT and the Yukon to verify that people have, in fact, been vaccinated. Thank you.

**MS. SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just, maybe a offer some advice. Would it be easier for the person who's travelling in to have a copy of their record and would that be sufficient, as right now if we don't have an agreement? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. JULIE GREEN:** Yes, thank you. I'm sure that that would be useful to if you had a copy of your own if you had your own immunization. But the information sharing would open it up to everyone without them having to obtain paper that indicates that they have been vaccinated.

These discussions are well along, and I heard the Chief Public Health Officer say on the radio yesterday that she expected them to conclude shortly.

I just want to add one more thing, and that is that the situation between ourselves and Yukon is what the whole world is now grappling with, with immunization records, how do we create a system that is private but effective and indicating immunization to other countries when we decide to travel internationally again.

So this is a live issue at the moment, and we are seeing it right here with the travel exemption to Yukon. Thank you.

**MS. SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, I mean, we've been travelling all over the world before COVID, and there are vaccinations that we need to have in order to enter some countries. And we as a past public health nurse,

I've provided these vaccines and given them their records, and they've been able to enter these countries. I don't understand why we can't go from Yukon to the Northwest Territories or vice versa.

So I'm just going to move on. And what you know, has there been any discussion about a temporary absence right now that could provide Beaufort Delta residents to go into the Yukon for at least maybe 72 hours without having to isolate on coming home.

We have no road access into Yellowknife. So those people that are not from the region may not realize that. And there's no possible way we can go anywhere else in 72 hours if we have to be back across the border. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. JULIE GREEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's my understanding that the CPHO is working on a travel exemption which would provide access to the Yukon that would be not time limited. I'm not aware of any work being done on a time-limited option. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you. Final Supplementary. Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes.

**MS. SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The only reason I'm asking for the time limit is there's ongoing work and if maybe if this discussion could happen that some of our residents could travel and get what they need to do, pick up vehicles that have been there since November, months ago, because, like I said, it's our lifeline. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. JULIE GREEN:** Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I certainly will make sure that the CPHO hears that suggestion. And, of course, we appreciate the fact that people would like to get to Whitehorse and go shopping, pick up their vehicles and so on. And we look forward to making that happen as soon as possible. Thank you.

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

ORAL QUESTION 717-19(2):  
DISASTER NAVIGATOR RECOMMENDED FOR  
FLOODED COMMUNITIES

**MS. MARTSELOS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, would the Premier consider a more personal and compassionate approach to helping the communities of Fort Simpson and Jean Marie River with appointing a disaster navigator with a team to help both communities for a positive recovery. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I hear the MLA talking about we need to be more compassionate and personal with people, and I heard the MLA say that as well during the presentation the other day, that, when we were looking at the flooding. And I agree. And, Mr. Speaker and the Minister agrees as well, the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs. She has already said that we need to humanize our services there. So I do think that we need to have a more compassionate way of working with people. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MS. MARTSELOS:** Mr. Speaker, in my discussions with Chief Jerry Antoine, he said the Government of the Northwest Territories needs to establish a singular point of contact between Fort Simpson and the Premier's office to ensure better communications are established immediately, and he wants this contact to be someone in a position of authority. Will the Premier establish that point of contact? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, I do know Chief Antoine does have my number, and any chief can actually call me at any time. They also know that it's difficult to reach me during the days, and I think that's what the issue might be more so.

But, again, I did hear them. And I did have conversations with the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs, and both of us agree that we need to be more concerned about the people on the ground. So we did have conversations, and we are looking. Actually, we will be bringing in either -- I'm not sure what the term is, a pathfinder, a system's navigator, somebody on the ground, Mr. Speaker, that actually can help people navigate the systems.

It's horrible what they must be going through, and it's horrible to lose your home, and then have to figure out the bureaucracy is not acceptable. So we've had those discussions and we will be bringing that forward. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MS. MARTSELOS:** Mr. Speaker, Chief Antoine said that this is a very simple request, but it is urgent. He also said they already have professional technicians on restoration ready to go. They need the guarantee to recoup the costs.

Will the Premier guarantee that the Government of the Northwest Territories will help the affected communities recoup all costs, such as labour, material, equipment, et cetera pertaining to flood restoration? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That's a little bit harder of an answer to give. There's all kinds of factors that need to be taken into consideration when looking at costs. There's amounts the federal government will cover. There's also some people in communities do have insurance, and some people don't. Those things have to be taken into consideration as well.

What I can say, Mr. Speaker, is that the officials are meeting this weekend, and also Cabinet is going to meet this weekend to discuss about the flooding and what we can do to support as well.

So I'm looking forward to figuring out what we can do, but, again, it's not so easy just to say that we'll cover everything when there may be other factors, such as insurance agencies that might be able to take account, and Federal Government, in some communities, some of those housings are Band housing versus -- or Federal housing versus GNWT housing. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MS. MARTSELOS:** Mr. Speaker, Chief Antoine's concluding remark was, mahsi, and thank you for being there. Premier, the ball is now in your court. I told Chief Antoine that I would request you call him after session today about these matters. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That's an easy commitment. Absolutely, I can. All chiefs out there know that they can reach me. My life is pretty basic, go to work and go home. So they can reach me any evening and every weekend.

And I will make the commitment that I will call Chief Antoine this evening. If not Chief Antoine, I don't know what will happen, but tomorrow at the latest. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### ORAL QUESTION 718-19(2): COVID-19 TRAVEL

**MS. NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, while I have the Premier committing to things, I am going to ask her some questions. I have to say I'm a little bit distressed to hear my colleague get a response that risk assessments are not part of the discussion on whether or not we are going to go into inter-territorial bubble travels.

So I am going to reiterate the question here: Can the Premier tell us where her discussions are at with the other two territories and their Premiers on inter-territorial bilateral travel agreements and can

she roughly estimate when she can expect this to happen.

And I do expect that the Premier is talking with the other Premiers, not just leaving it to the department. Thank you.

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

**HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Actually, yes, we do have a lot of conversations with the Premiers, Premiers across Canada. We usually meet on a biweekly basis, if not weekly, depending on the situations. The Northern Premiers also meet regularly as well.

Those relationships are important. And we're in a special situation. The three territories actually were the first in Canada actually to get the vaccinations. Thank you to all Premiers across of Canada for that consultation. But we also realized that we are exceptional in that we're a little bit isolated; there's not as many entrances and exits outside, et cetera.

So we have made exemptions. We looked at the Nunavut that we have done. However, what I have to say is exemptions change. As soon as Nunavut had the outbreak, things changed.

So we were looking at one with Yukon, and then Yukon opened up, and things changed. Now Yukon is again back to the table. We're at the process, like the Minister said, that we're looking at agreements.

What I have to say, though, is anybody now has the same opportunity as people as anywhere in the NWT. People can go to the Yukon. They just have to come back and isolate. If they've got double vaccinations of vaccinations, they can get 8 days. If they don't, they have to do 14 days. That is the same privilege as every single resident in the NWT.

Now, recognizing that the Beaufort Delta is a little bit different, a little bit more isolated, we are looking at a special agreement. But at this time, people that are vaccinated can go in and stay the 8 days when they return. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MS. NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm glad the Premier used the word "privileged" because it takes privilege and money to leave the territory and come back and isolate for 8 days or 14 or 30, as I've been hearing from some of my constituents.

Next, will the Premier commit to instructing her Cabinet to work with any northern airlines ahead of any agreements being made with inter-territorial or inter-provincial travel in order to gain their input and update any safety or screening requirements that

I'm asking that the Premier instruct Cabinet and the rest of the Ministers to do so. Thank you.

**HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's nice to say that the Premier has privilege. A lot of people have privilege, and a lot of people don't.

Mr. Speaker, our intention when people come back and have to isolate is not about privilege. It's about accessibility. Anyone in the Northwest Territories that is going for medical or emergency or grievance, exceptional situations, will be covered by our isolation centres if they have no other safe place to isolate.

Everyone across the territories, people are privileged, people are not. At this point, we are not paying for the isolation centres for people that are traveling for leisure. That's about our safety things, Mr. Speaker. So every single individual is accounted in that, and I'm hoping that people who can't have safe place to isolate will contact us because that's what we're there for.

As for the airlines, it's not every Minister, Mr. Speaker, that would have that direction. It's the Finance Minister that has those conversations with airlines. But she doesn't. They're federally regulated.

So we did give some contribution because of COVID to Canadian North, and we're looking at an arrangement with them. I believe that going into the Yukon, it's a different airline, though. It's not even ours. It's Air North. So we can't tell Air North what to do. But what I can commit is that we will have discussions with them to see what they're willing to do, such as the discussions we've had with Canadian North. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MS. NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Without getting into too much of an argument with the Premier, I would argue that mental health travel that many people are suffering from now, including Members of her own Cabinet from what I've heard, would say that if they couldn't afford to come back or didn't have a job like ours where we can work from home, that it is a form of privilege. So the private sector would probably disagree with you, Premier.

Will the Premier advocate that "staycations" qualify as a travel benefit under our Northern Residents Deduction and make that retroactive to 2020-2021 fiscal year.

And I do understand that might take some pressuring of the federal government; however, if we want to see people moving around this winter -- or sorry -- this summer and dealing with some of these mental health burnout and fatigue

I'm talking about, then I think this is a good move for our people. Thank you.

**HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, mental health is important. Never assume that somebody comes because they have a good job, that they come from a place of privilege. Sometimes people with good jobs have exceptional costs as well that are taking care of families. So I never go that way.

As for taxes, absolutely, Mr. Speaker. Actually, it's already covered. I'm just trying to look for that, yes.

So you can actually -- within our taxes at this point, you can actually use staycations for a tax exemption in the NWT. You can claim the lowest of the three following amounts: You can claim the value of the taxable travel benefit received from your employer; you can claim the actual amount that you spent on your trip; keep all your receipts and your supporting documents; and you can claim the lowest return airfare available at the time of the trip between the airport closest to your residence and the nearest designated city to that airport. For example, in Yellowknife, it might be Edmonton. So that's already in place. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MS. NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I guess that comes back to those awesome communications, since I didn't realize that.

My last question is around communications. Will the Premier direct her Ministers to improve their communication in collaboration with any third-party entities that they may be responsible for.

We as Regular Members must have the ability to look at all areas of the government in order to ensure the voice of the people is represented properly. Always deferring and deflecting and saying you can't speak or even relay information is frustrating for the rest of us as Members, and I'd ask that the Premier start to work on that. Thank you.

**HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm a bit confused on that question. I would ask that the Member actually meet with me in person later if she's willing to do that. My direction has been to Ministers since the beginning of this government has been that work with MLAs, work with stakeholders as much as possible. There will come times that we may have to fight. And ask any of the Ministers here. I can see the Member's shaking her head.

But you can ask any Minister here, that the direction has been work with people as much as possible. Pick your fights that you need to. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Honourable Premier. Oral Questions. Member for Deh Cho.

ORAL QUESTION 719-19(2):  
ADDICTIONS AFTERCARE

**MR. BONNETROUGE:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is related to my Member's statement recognizing a young family who had taken the necessary steps to improve their lifestyle without alcohol and drugs.

I also note that two young men have also taken the steps to stay away from alcohol and drugs. That's in my community of Fort Providence. And it's probably during this time of COVID that there's lots of reflection, and some of this is happening.

What I do note is that there's no campaign within my community regarding aftercare services. My question to the Minister of Health and Social Services: Can she provide an update on the aftercare strategy from the department? Mahsi.

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

**HON. JULIE GREEN:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm always glad to hear that people have taken advantage of the treatment options that the department provides and that they have been successful. That is obviously great news for them and great news for the community as well.

We don't have an aftercare strategy, per se, but recently, we asked community governments to apply for peer support funding which would enable them to design their own program to assist people to maintain their sobriety.

So I hope that your community has applied for that money and that they will be able to provide that specific approach in addition to all the other mental health and supports that the Department offers. Thank you.

**MR. BONNETROUGE:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. And I thank the Minister for that reply. I note she did say that the communities have to apply for the funding to provide aftercare services. I'm just not sure if there's enough funding within that program for the community to hire a counsellor, a wellness counsellor.

I'm just wondering, I also note that they do have a mental health worker within the community, and I wonder if these professional services could be

provided to the First Nations, should they choose to pursue an aftercare program. Mahsi.

**HON. JULIE GREEN:** Yes, thank you. The Member is correct, that there is one counsellor resident in the community and one child and youth care counsellor. These services are available to the public regardless of what their need is, what their age is, where they were born.

And I know that the community counsellor provides the Matrix Program, which is a form of aftercare, and he does that every Wednesday from 4:30 until 6:00, and I understand it's very well attended.

So by all means, I would encourage the Member to make that known to the people who have recently returned to the community. Thank you.

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

ORAL QUESTION 720-19(2):  
AIRPORT TAXI FEES

**MR. O'REILLY:** Merci, Monsieur le President. My question is for the Minister of Infrastructure. Yellowknife taxi companies are looking for relief from airport taxi stand licence fees to get through the hard times. Can the Minister tell us what analysis, if any, was done on passenger traffic volumes before the decision was made to rescind the waiver on these fees as of January 1st, 2021. Merci, Mr. Speaker,.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. Minister responsible for Infrastructure.

**HON. DIANE ARCHIE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Yellowknife airport continues to collect and maintain passenger traffic volumes on a monthly basis. The Yellowknife airport terminal passenger traffic is already seeing an increase over the year. Total passengers for the movement for the period of April 2021 for the air terminal building has increased 237 percent over the past year. The total number of aircraft movements for the fiscal 2020-2021 has increased 60 percent over last April. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Merci, Monsieur le President. That's great to hear the passenger traffic is increasing, but I didn't actually get a response to my question, as usual, Mr. Speaker. I asked for what kind of analysis was done before the waivers were rescinded as of January 1st.

But while these fees are significant for taxi drivers and their companies, I'm not sure that they're a vital revenue source for this Government.

Can the Minister tell us how many dollars were collected by charging the airport taxi stand licence fees at the Yellowknife airport and at all airports across the NWT in the last year and then the year before the pandemic. And I gave the Minister these questions before we got into the House today. Merci.

**HON. DIANE ARCHIE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The annual rate for a taxi stand licence is \$15,000, and it's payable in monthly installments of 1,250. There are currently three taxi operators at the Yellowknife airport making a total annual payment of \$45,000. The taxi stand licence fees has not seen an increase since 2019. There are no other airports currently charging fees for taxi to be able to operate at the airports. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Merci, Monsieur le President. I want to thank the Minister for that information. It's interesting that these fees were only charged in Yellowknife, and it's only \$45,000. I don't know why we can't do something about this. But, of course, we all look forward to the day when the pandemic restrictions are lifted and that we can get tourism going again. But if we don't have a taxi industry, how are they going to be able to serve the tourists that arrive here.

So will the Minister give that service sector the relief that it needs now and reinstitute the waiver on or at least prorate the taxi stand licence fees until we see the return of carriers and revival of passenger numbers to pre-pandemic levels? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. DIANE ARCHIE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the economic stimulus measures were initially introduced at the onset of COVID as a means to support small and local businesses. The relief was in place since April 1st, 2020, until December 31st, 2020.

I appreciate the Member providing me with his questions this morning, and I will review with the taxi licensing fees, and provide a written response to the Member within two weeks. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** Merci, Monsieur le President. Now, I'm getting somewhere. This is great. No, seriously, though, I do appreciate that the Minister's willing to review the situation and she's going to get back to me in writing. So I appreciate that very much.

When I had an earlier exchange with her on this issue and I was told that, quote, from the Minister,

"The YZF regional airport manager is continuing discussions in an effort to find a solution to alleviate the apparent challenge with these lease payments", that's great. But I'm not sure what else we can do besides prorated or reduce the fees.

But can the Minister tell us what other measures or supports might be provided in addition to the continued airport taxi stand licence fees. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. DIANE ARCHIE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we are seeing, like I mentioned, an increase in air passenger traffic at the Yellowknife airport. I understand that the federal government has introduced various target programs for businesses that are impacted by COVID-19, which may be able to provide some support. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

ORAL QUESTION 721-19(2):  
COVID-19 COMMUNICATIONS

**MS. CLEVELAND:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I want to start off by reiterating my thanks to public servants who worked very hard during the outbreak here in Yellowknife.

During the outbreak, even constituents who were isolating and were confused were very -- you know, the very first thing that they always said was how thankful that they were because everybody had a friend who was working long hours, everybody knew somebody who was directly working with the outbreak. So our thanks for that.

My first question for the Minister of Health and Social Services today is who is responsible for COVID communication, and what is the approval process that takes place? Thank you.

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

**HON. JULIE GREEN:** Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the COVID Secretariat has a small communication staff that provides material to do with the public health orders. And on the other side, the NTHSSA provides communications and materials on the operational side of things, like testing and vaccinations. Thank you.

**MS. CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it appeared that during the pandemic that there was a large requirement on those two entities to come together and do communication together. There was a lot of influx of calls to Protect NWT, to Public Health, and to the CPHO's office, and there was a need for those to come together and to work in unison.

So how does Health and Social Services or the office of the CPHO ensure that those communicating bodies are able to work together and pass the same and consistent information on to residents. Thank you.

**HON. JULIE GREEN:** Yes, thank you. These two branches are not in silos. They do speak to one another. The work they're doing is connected.

The perceived lack of consistency is actually because not everyone got the same advice about how long to isolate or how many tests they needed and so on. I found that there's been some confusion between the general advice given to the public and the specific advice given to individuals. And there's been a mixup of those two, and the result is that it looks confusing. And I understand that people did experience it as confusing.

And so I think that there are lessons to be learned going forward about how we can try to make that distinction between individual advice and general advice clearer and sooner. Thank you.

**MS. CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm glad that the Minister mentioned "lessons learned" because my next question is about lessons learned and how does the Minister intend to ensure that lessons learned are captured from this outbreak so that we can better prepare how we will communicate future ones. Thank you.

**HON. JULIE GREEN:** Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's standard for the department, the Health Authority, and the Secretariat to do a debrief after an outbreak is over.

The outbreak at MJ McPherson is not yet over. But when it is, those three entities will meet and will go over what they've learned and what they could do differently next time. Thank you.

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

**MS. CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to hear that and also happy to participate in any way that might be useful to the department as well if any feedback is useful.

Mr. Speaker, the World Health Organization publishes simple clear documents titled "I just found out I tested positive for 19" and "I just found out I am a contact of positive 19". Straightforward guiding documents like these would have been useful during the Yellowknife outbreak and especially where the Minister did acknowledge that there was some confusion over what category people fell into.

So I'm wondering will Health and Social Services commit to creating guiding documents for residents

based on lessons learned from the Yellowknife outbreak that they could use in future ones. Thank you.

**HON. JULIE GREEN:** Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Since the pandemic began, the COVID Secretariat and NTHSSA have created videos, social media material, news releases, FAQs, a range of different kinds of documents that are available on the GNWT COVID-19 site. It covers things like self-isolation, testing, vaccination, and so on.

So I wonder if some of the things the Member is looking for is already in place. I'm not familiar with the World Health Organization material.

What we do know is that in the course of the pandemic, information has changed. We've learned so much more, for example, about variants and how infectious they are, that we have been updating our guidance documents to reflect that. Thank you.

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

ORAL QUESTION 722-19(2):  
COVID-19

**MR. JOHNSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The current public health order which restricts many of the NWT's activities was drafted one year ago. That's the order that prohibits having five people in your home. It prohibits singing. It prohibits indoor funerals. And, in fact, many of the things it prohibits in that order are no longer relevant, as we've since allowed exceptions and variances of that order that was drafted one year ago.

Mr. Speaker, when that order was drafted, the context and the justification for those impositions were that our health care system had this risk of being overwhelmed. There was talks of waves. There was talks of ICU beds, ventilators. And given we are now at a 60 percent vaccination target, much of that language has disappeared. And so I'm confused as to what the main goal we are trying to mitigate is.

And I would like to being with having the Minister explain to me is there still a risk, given our vaccination targets, given that I believe 100 percent of people over 80 are now vaccinated, of filling up our ICU beds in the NWT, or have we now moved beyond a risk of overwhelming the health care system. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**HON. JULIE GREEN:** Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Public Health Act provides

detailed guidance on the powers of the Chief Public Health Officer. And it is her role to evaluate risks. She has disclosed the documents that she uses. One particular one is from Johns Hopkins University. Another is from the National Chief Public Health Officers Committee that meets fairly regularly that she uses to consider what the risks are.

She is instructed in the legislation to balance the risks with personal freedoms, that the measures that she recommends need to be commensurate to the risk and not to necessarily restrict people from their daily business.

That said, risk assessments are completed by the CPHO. She tells me what she is recommending. We discuss it. She makes the public health order, and it is enforced by the COVID Secretariat at this point, and that is reinforced -- I've got these steps jumbled up.

She makes the advice. She makes a public health order. I sign the state of emergency. And we go on from there.

It's true that the Emerging Wisely Plan is now over a year old, and it is due for an update. And we can say what the Chief Public Health Officer has said, that she is working on it, and it will be available to the public the first week of June. Thank you.

**MR. JOHNSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I recognize that. But I'm trying to get a risk assessment based on our specific situation. And it is my understanding -- and I recognize I can barely read a report from the Johns Hopkins, let alone make a decision on it -- that given our vaccination rate and what we know about the effectiveness in vaccination in reducing hospitalizations, that there's actually no path forward right now where COVID would fill up our ICU beds.

That's my understanding. But I am not an expert here. So I'm looking for clarification of whether there is actually a risk to the health care system or whether we have pivoted to a COVID-zero approach. I'm trying to understand whether there is actually a path where we could fill up ICU beds due to COVID cases given our vaccination rate. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. JULIE GREEN:** Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, next Thursday evening at 7:00 p.m., the Chief Public Health Officer, myself, the Premier and others will be giving a briefing on the Emerging Wisely Plan to the Regular Members. And I invite the Member for Yellowknife North to ask his question at that time so the CPHO can give him a well-defined answer. Thank you.

**MR. JOHNSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Previously the Minister drew into question the 75

percent vaccination target. This was kind of a light at the end of the tunnel for many people, and I recognize at that time there was some changing signs with variants. But I believe people now need a vaccination target. I think getting over this hurdle of 60 percent vaccination, people want to know if we get here, it will actually encourage more people to get vaccinated.

So my question for the Minister of Health is what is our current vaccination target. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**HON. JULIE GREEN:** Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we do not at this point have a specific number. We've been saying to people that they should get vaccinated if at all possible. The higher the vaccination rate, the better off we all are.

I think one of the lessons from the MJ outbreak is how vulnerable unvaccinated people are. Almost all of the cases there were children. The median age of those children was 8 and a half years old. So they're not eligible for vaccines at this point. And so having a vaccination rate is fine, but there are these pockets of people who are not vaccinated who we have to take into consideration as well. So we're saying to people, if you have the opportunity to get vaccinated.

The other thing I'll say is that it's not only the vaccination rate that the CPHO will be looking at. What the situation is in the provinces in terms of case counts and whether those counts come from variants are very important to her calculations. So vaccines are one very important part of the picture, but there are other parts as well. Thank you.

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

**MR. JOHNSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The last restriction which is a recommendation, actually, that there be no nonessential travel -- and a number of jurisdictions have now published what their summers look like, what their summers look like based on vaccine descriptions. We're talking about a travel bubble. And I know that this is a problem for our senior management who have been directed not to travel. It's a problem for many teachers and nurses who want to be role models but are struggling that they have not seen family members in almost two years now, Mr. Speaker.

So my question is does the Minister of Health expect there to be any change to the recommendation that people do not take nonessential travel. Perhaps if they're fully

vaccinated, they could return, but take a nonessential trip. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. JULIE GREEN:** Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the fact is we're not locked down here. Members of this House have travelled during the time that nonessential travel has not been recommended.

Just for your information, 48,183 self-isolation plans have been approved. So it's not really true to say that people are stuck here. People have made the choice to travel. And as of April 21st, the isolation time has been reduced.

So I can say that I cannot say when the Chief Public Health Officer will consider that conditions are right to lift her -- both restrictions, actually, or guidance. The one is travel inside and outside of Yellowknife is not recommended at this time, and the second one is inter-provincial travel is not recommended at this time. Thank you.

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

ORAL QUESTION 723-19(2):  
COVID-19 MENTAL HEALTH AND FATIGUE

**MR. JACOBSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I've been talking about mental health and COVID fatigue in our -- up back home in the Delta and my riding in Nunakput. Mr. Speaker, what funding and available support do we have for our local community governments that are able to provide with gatherings organized for youth, and is there any funding available, and is there a list that the senior administrative officer or the hamlets could get sent to them for the communities to access funding under the COVID-19 fatigue in that community. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Nunakput. Minister responsible for Health and Social Services.

**HON. JULIE GREEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we do not have a pot of funding that is designated to COVID fatigue, but we do offer a suite of funds to deal with health and wellness, including on-the-land funding, peer support, suicide prevention. We have counsellors who are resident in Tuktoyaktuk, and they are able to offer same-day appointments. We have apps for people to use who are experiencing anxiety and depression, parenting problems, and so on.

I realize that may not be very helpful in communities with slow internet connections. But we do have this range of funding available. And it's my

understanding as well that there was funding provided by the federal government to Indigenous governments related to COVID.

So I can certainly find out or create a list for the Member to share with his SAOs, that there is quite a range of things that are available. Thank you.

**MR. JACOBSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for that, Madam Minister. What support services we have been made available to support mental health to our elders in our communities, I have one -- she says I have one in Tuk, but I think he was -- he left Tuk, and he's in Behchoko now, serving there.

But the biggest thing is the small communities, Sachs Harbour, Paulatuk, and Ulu. We have -- the services that are required there need internet. If you're using the apps and stuff like that, it's slow service. What's being made available, I guess, for in-person? Like I asked earlier this year, if teams could go in, help teams.

The biggest thing I think what we're looking for too is a community navigator appointed by the COVID Secretariat to see if we could use somebody in that position to help assist the communities and the people. Is that available? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. JULIE GREEN:** Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, when the Member for Nunakput previously asked for a mental health team to go to his community, it went to his community in the last week of March, the last week that we were sitting prior to this sitting. So, certainly, the department is able to provide in-person mental health supports.

I'm not sure if they can do that again. It's something that I can request. I can say in the meantime, as long as people have a phone, they can get telephone counselling, which is not the same as person-to-person but is better than nothing by a long shot. You still have a professional on the other end of the phone.

So if the person doesn't have a phone in their house, they can go to the health centre and request the use of the phone for a counselling appointment, and the health centre will accommodate people in that service. Thank you.

**MR. JACOBSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the Minister for that. Again, I mean we're really thankful when we're getting help sent in, and that is so much required. But we do need a community navigator to work with our communities to help community's residents navigate public health orders to uncover funding, the funding programs that will ensure the small communities can have as much

social activity and gatherings as possible during this pandemic.

So is there any availability to have, like, a community public navigator appointed like we have sitting in Inuvik with the COVID police or COVID Secretariat? So is there somebody available that we could appoint to Tuk maybe working with the department working with the Premier that could do something like that? Is that available for the outlying communities as well? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. JULIE GREEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't think there is a position that is specifically about navigating public health orders. Although, of course, people who work in public health in Tuk and in Inuvik would be able to talk to the public health orders, what they mean, and answer questions about them. So that certainly is possible. In terms of appointing someone brand new to a position in Tuktoyaktuk, that would really need to be a budget consideration. And so I invite the Member to forward that when the time comes. Thank you.

**MR. JACOBSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, will the GNWT, through the resources on COVID Secretariat, identify staff persons and appoint existing staff, I guess in the community, that are going into Tuk and doing their jobs and appoint somebody from there to assist the SAO and just on the public health orders to access funding services to ensure all small communities can have the social gatherings and social activities that are so desperately required for health and well being of the people. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. JULIE GREEN:** Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I hear the Member's desire to have more social activity in his community, and I appreciate that people are feeling cooped up, and they're ready to move on from this experience.

I can certainly ask the department if there is someone there or somebody in the health authority who can reach out to the SAO and go over what the possibilities are for funding in the area that the Member has indicated. So I'll make sure that that happens. Thank you.

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

ORAL QUESTION 724-19(2):  
FLOOD ASSISTANCE

**MR. ROCKY SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Questions for the Minister of MACA. Can the Minister confirm how much financial assistance in terms of a cheque or cash has been paid out to individuals that have been impacted by the flooding. As it's been almost two weeks now, and I'm just

wondering, you know, how much action with respect to payments that we have seen. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Hay River South. Minister responsible for Municipal and Community Affairs.

**HON. PAULIE CHINNA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know the Territory is quite anxious to see, you know, the response of what the department has been providing to the community of Fort Simpson. The Housing Corporation and Municipal and Community Affairs have just returned back from the community. We have followed up on a conversation this morning, and we are further to determine that about 43 houses have been affected in the community as well.

And looking at financial supports for that community, we have been working very closely as well and taking care of the hotel financial obligation for that community. MACA is taking care of those residents there.

And also looking at further assistance as well, we are really heavily dependent on the assessment that's going to be able to determine what needs are going to be provided for that community.

As of today, the only financial assistance that has been provided to the community is the support from the Department, both MACA and Housing, and also providing the accommodations for the residents that have been affected by the flood. The residents are currently now still in the hotels in Fort Providence and in Fort Simpson. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. ROCKY SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Can the Minister confirm how much money her department has set aside or identified to assist immediately with financial support to the victims that are in dire need of it. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. PAULIE CHINNA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Like I had said, we are waiting on the assessment to be completed. But in the meantime, we are providing that support to the communities and looking at their home and their housing repair, which is the priority right now. We will be keeping the Members and my colleagues updated as we go forward. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. ROCKY SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, I thank the Minister for that response, you know, and I guess what I'm after is I want to know, you know, if that the people are being looked after for immediate needs right now, because I know that many of them have probably, you know, used up whatever funds they had just, you know, leaving their home. There's always a cost associated with it.

I'd also ask the Minister if she can confirm how long her department is with assessments or has it even started on the buildings. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. PAULIE CHINNA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have a lot of I guess maybe a conversation about the assessment, who conducts the assessment, who is going to be responsible for the assessment. The communities have reached out as well in wanting to conduct their own.

Right now, MACA has hired a northern company that will be getting into Fort Simpson on Wednesday and Thursday, both Simpson and Jean Marie River, of this week. And once I'm provided those further details, I will follow up with the Member and with my colleagues as well. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. ROCKY SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There's been a number of organizations raising money for the victims of the flooding. I think we've had Red Cross and United Way and individuals as well through GoFundMe pages.

Has the Minister been in contact with any of these groups or individuals to confirm, you know, how much money has been raised and how it will be dispersed and just to coordinate with what her department's doing. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. PAULIE CHINNA:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Member is correct that there has been a lot of donations that have been provided to the community. We have not tallied up those numbers yet and outreaching to the organizations that are helping to support the community. I will have to get back to the Member. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister. Colleagues, our time for oral questions has expired. Written questions. Member for Kam Lake.

### Written Questions

WRITTEN QUESTION 30-19(2):  
SELF-ISOLATION EXEMPTIONS

**MS. CLEVELAND:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health and Social Services. As we are over one calendar year into the COVID-19 pandemic, can the Minister provide a copy of the exemption policy document used to guide self-isolation exemption decisions, and the number of exemptions per week for the last three months, the category for grounds for exemptions, the percentage breakdown between exemptions granted to residents versus non-residents, and the percentage of exemptions

granted for personal versus essential versus commercial purposes. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Kam Lake. Written questions. Returns to written questions. Replies to Commissioner's address. Petitions. Reports of Committees on the review of bills. Reports of Standing and Special Committees. Member for Thebacha.

### Reports of Standing and Special Committee

#### COMMITTEE REPORT 13-19(2): REPORT ON THE REVIEW OF THE 2019-2020 NORTHWEST TERRITORIES OMBUD ANNUAL REPORT

**MS. MARTSELOS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Standing Committee on Government Operations report on the review of the 2019-2020 Northwest Territories Ombud Annual Report.

#### Introduction

The Standing Committee on Government Operations has reviewed the 2019-2020 Annual Report of the Northwest Territories Ombud. The committee thanks Ms. Colette Langlois, Northwest Territories' Ombud, for her appearance before the Committee on December the 9th, 2020.

The Ombud is a statutory officer of the Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly under the Ombud Act. The Ombud investigates complaints from people who feel they have been treated unfairly by territorial authorities. The Ombud's role is to find fair solutions and improve the delivery of government services.

The Ombud Act requires the Ombud to prepare annual reports on the activities of the Ombud's office. This includes the number of inquiries and complaints received. The Speaker tables the report in the Legislative Assembly. Once tabled, Committee reviews the report. The 2019-2020 annual report is the first report since the appointment of the Northwest Territories' first Ombud in April 2019.

In her report, the Ombud highlights the activities of setting up a new Ombud office in Hay River, informs on investigations and public outreach, and makes recommendations. In this review, Committee discusses and responds to the Ombud's recommendations.

I will now turn it over to MLA Johnson to further carry on the report.

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

#### MR. JOHNSON:

#### Jurisdictional Issues

The Ombud recommends expanding the current schedule of authorities over which the Ombud has power to investigate. The Ombud specifically draws the committee's attention to the wording found in Yukon Ombudsman Act. In a previous discussion with the Ombud, it was noticed that while she has the power to investigate housing authorities, this does not include housing associations. The committee looked at other Ombud legislation in other jurisdictions. The committee agrees that the NWT Ombud should have power to look into more authorities.

Therefore, the Committee recommends:

#### Recommendation 1

The Standing Committee on Government Operations recommends that the definition of "authorities" and the schedule to be amended to use language similar to that found in the Ombudsman Act (Yukon) and that a further subclauses expressly include Housing Associations as established under their Societies Act.

The Ombud recommends that the Human Rights Commission and its agencies should fall under her jurisdiction to investigate complaints. The Law Clerk advised that the wording proposed in Recommendation 1 would include the Human Rights Commission. No further action is needed to advance this recommendation.

The Ombud recommends that the reference to "judicial review" be removed from Section 17 of the Act. She considers the term confusing in the current context. Her concern is that the section could be interpreted to mean that the Ombud always must wait 30 days before being allowed to investigate and that any administrative decision, action, or omission is subject to a potential judicial review.

The other is to remove from Section 17(2) of the Act. This section allows the Ombud to use her discretion to investigate, if she finds it unreasonable to expect the complainant to pursue any of the other available options.

The committee sought the advice of the Law Clerk. The Law Clerk advised that the Ombud is considered an office of last resort, and this section is likely to prevent the Ombud from investigating where other avenues of appeal have not been used. However, Section 17(2) provides the Ombud the ability to waive this requirement, if in her judgement, it would be unreasonable. The

committee feels that it is important for the Ombud to have this discretion, even if it would be rarely used.

The Ombud states that she was unable to look into a small number of cases because they predate the beginning of the Ombud's authority on January 1, 2016. The Committee agrees that the Ombud shouldn't have to decline complaints from 6 years ago, while being able to investigate complaints from 5 years ago. The Committee discussed how to address this, and was advised by the Law Clerk that the *Act* should specify a date on which the Ombud's powers begin.

The Committee finds that April 1, 1999, is an appropriate date as it is also the date on which the modern Northwest Territories came into being. Further, the Committee also identifies the need for a provision allowing the Ombud to investigate fully any complaint that may have files prior to that date.

Consequently, the committee recommends:

### **Recommendation 2**

The Standing Committee on Government Operations recommends that section 17(3) be amended to April 1, 1999, and further that a new subclause be included that notwithstanding the temporal restriction, if a complaint has records prior to this date, the Ombud has the discretion to investigate the complaint in full.

Mr. Speaker, I'll now pass this over to MLA Cleveland.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Yellowknife North. Member for Kam Lake.

**MS. CLEVELAND:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Ombud's sixth recommendation is to remove the restriction to investigate the director of Human Rights Commission under Section 23. The Committee agrees.

### **Recommendation 3**

The Standing Committee on Government Operations recommends that Section 23 be amended to remove the reference to the Director of Human Rights, and further that the reference to the Conflict of Interest Commissioner be amended to Integrity Commissioner.

### **Procedural Issues**

In the 2019-2020 annual report, the Ombud makes several recommendations to address procedural issues around the Ombud's jurisdiction to investigate complaints.

Currently, the Ombud is allowed to stop investigating a complaint if an alternate remedy or

appeal is available. The Ombud recommends broadening this authority so that it applies also before an investigation begins. Making this change would allow the Ombud to refuse to start an investigation if she becomes aware of an adequate alternate remedy or right of appeal.

I'm on page 4 of 7. I'm reading my highlighted portion. Would you like me to continue, Mr. Speaker? Okay.

The Ombud recommends broadening this authority so that it also applies before an investigation begins. Making this change would allow the Ombud to refuse to start an investigation if she becomes aware of an adequate alternate remedy or right of appeal.

The committee had the Law Clerk review this recommendation. Because the Ombud is an office of last resort, a complainant must use all other remedies available before going to the Ombud. As noted earlier in this report, the Ombud has the discretion to investigate if she determines that it would be unreasonable for a complainant to use those remedies.

The committee notes that such a decision is proactive, and it is unlikely that there would be a case where the Ombud would not know about available remedies prior to opening an investigation. This clause is to allow the Ombud to close an investigation if it is found during the investigation that an available remedy wasn't pursued and should have been. The Committee feels that this clause should remain as it is.

In recommendation 8, the Ombud suggests to remove requirement of notification. She notes that the wording of Clause 22(2) may be interpreted to require notification to an authority whenever the Ombud refuses to investigate a complaint. The Ombud noted that this would be time-consuming and generally inappropriate, as many issues are resolved before needing to contact an authority in the first place. The committee agrees, and therefore recommends

### **Recommendation 4**

The Standing Committee on Government Operations recommends that Section 22(2) be amended to only require notice to an authority of a refusal to investigate in the event that notice had already been provided to that authority that an investigation will take place under Section 24.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I would like it pass it off to MLA Bonnetrouge.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Kam Lake. Member for Deh Cho.

**MR. BONNETROUGE:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

The Ombud's ninth recommendation proposes to remove potential barriers to investigating complaints where written consent to disclose personal information is required under other legislation.

The Ombud highlights the wording in Saskatchewan's Ombudsman Act as an example of what could address this potential barrier. The Law Clerk advised that the Saskatchewan act gives their Ombud extremely broad powers to compel information and would allow Child and Family Services information to be released without consent.

The committee has concerns about information being released without consent and is not prepared to make a recommendation at this time. The committee invites the Ombud to provide additional information in the next annual report for consideration on this issue.

The next recommendation of the Ombud deals with public servants providing information to the Ombud voluntarily. The Ombud states: Section 30 of the act provides that no person is liable for prosecution for an offence for complying with a requirement of the Ombud. While this protects authorities and public servants who are required to provide information in the course of an investigation, it would not protect authorities and public servants who are requested to provide information in the course of an early resolution process.

The Ombud flags that on a few occasions a formal investigation was started where an informal process may have resolved the issue to ensure that Section 30 applied.

The committee asked the Law Clerk for advice. The legal advice provided to committee indicates that Section 30 is not limited to formal investigations. Section 15.4 of the act says the Ombud may try to resolve any problem raised in a complaint through the use of negotiation, conciliation, mediation, or any non-adversarial approaches. Section 30 protects public servants from liability when complying with any requirement of the Ombud under this act.

The committee interprets this to mean any formal or informal process as initiated by the Ombud. The committee invites the Ombud to report in this area again if the early resolution process is being hindered by the public servants being reluctant to comply with requests for information prior to the formal investigation stage. Mr. Speaker, I will now turn this over to MLA Semmler. Mahsi.

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

**MS. SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### **Administrative issues**

The Ombud has flagged a potential gap where information provided by the Ombud to a department or agency as part of an investigation could be disclosed by that department. The Ombud has recommended that any information originated with the Office of the Ombud must be kept confidential.

The committee agrees that information from the Ombud should remain confidential, and therefore recommends:

### **Recommendation 5**

The Standing Committee on Government Operations recommends that Section 25 be amended to specifically impose an obligation on anyone receiving confidential information from the Office of the Ombud to maintain the privacy of that information, notwithstanding any other legislation.

The Ombud's twelfth recommendation centers on the requirement for the Ombud to follow administrative policies of the Clerk when making policies and procedures for handling the complaint received in the Ombud Office. The Ombud states that this requirement is inconsistent with the independence of her office.

The committee reviewed the Hansard debate on the Ombud Act and notes that this section was included to address concerns raised by the Tlicho Government that they should be notified in the event of any investigation involving the Tlicho Community Service Agency. The House passed a motion calling on the Office of the Clerk to work with the Ombud to establish appropriate procedures to advise the Tlicho Government in the event that an investigation on the Tlicho Community Service Agency.

The committee appreciates the Ombud's concerns over the wording of the clause, and therefore recommends

### **Recommendation 6**

The Standing Committee on Government Operations recommends that Clause 24(1) be amended to explicitly provide for notice to be provided to the Tlicho Government or any equivalent agency established by an Indigenous Government, further, that Section 33(1) be amended to include a reference to, where applicable, the Indigenous Government referenced in Section 24(1).

The Ombud next recommended that the term "authority" be changed to something more recognizable to the public. The committee notes

that the legal terminology is often not in plain language; however, there are usually specific reasons for the use of the specific term.

The committee encourages the Ombud to continue her commendable public education efforts on the role of her office and which departments and agency her office can investigate.

The Ombud's final recommendation is to address awkward wording in Clause 15(1). The committee notes that this clause was the source of considerable debate in the act -- was being debated, with all parties acknowledging that the wording was problematic. However, no agreement could be reached on how best to fix it.

I'd like to hand it over to Ms. Martselos.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes. Member for Thebacha.

**MS. MARTSELOS:** The committee carefully reviewed each motion that was introduced in the 18th Assembly and has decided that the motion moved by the then Committee Chair is the preferable one and therefore makes the following recommendation,

#### **Recommendation 7**

The Standing Committee on Government Operation recommends that Clause 15(1) be amended to read: 15(1): The mandate of the Ombud is to investigate any decision, recommendation made, or any act done or omitted by an authority or by any officer, employee or a member of an authority in the exercise of any power or duty conferred on that person or body by any enactment that (a) relates to a matter or administration or the implementation of a policy; and (b) aggrieves or may aggrieve any person or body of persons in the person's or in its personal capacity.

#### **Conclusion**

This concludes the Standing Committee on Government Operations Report on the Review of the NWT Ombud 2019-2020 Annual Report.

#### **Recommendation 8**

The Standing Committee on Government Operations recommends that the Government of the Northwest Territories provide a response to the recommendations contained in this report within 120 days.

MOTION TO RECEIVE COMMITTEE REPORT 13-19(2) AND MOVE INTO COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE,  
CARRIED

Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Member for Deh Cho, that the full Standing Committee on Government Operations Report on their review of the 2019-2020 Northwest Territories Ombud Annual Report be deemed read and received by the Assembly and moved into Committee of the whole for further consideration. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Thebacha. Motions in order to the motion. Question has been called. All those in favour. All those opposed. Any abstentions. The motion is carried.

---Carried

**MR. SPEAKER:** The report will be moved into the Committee of the Whole.

Reports of standing and special committees. Tabling of documents. Minister responsible for Industry, Tourism, and Investment.

#### **Tabling of Documents**

TABLED DOCUMENT 408-19(2):  
2020-2021 ANNUAL REPORT OROGO - NWT  
OFFICE OF THE REGULATOR FOR OIL AND  
GAS OPERATIONS

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following document: Office of the Regulator for Oil and Gas Operations 2020-2021 Annual Report. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

TABLED DOCUMENT 409-19(2):  
ENVIRONMENTAL RIGHTS ACT ANNUAL  
REPORT 2020-2021

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the follow document entitled, Environmental Rights Act Annual Report 2020-2021. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister. Tabling of documents. Minister Responsible Municipal and Community Affairs.

TABLED DOCUMENT 410-19(2):  
FOLLOW-UP LETTER FOR ORAL QUESTION  
702-19(2):  
FLOODING IN HAY RIVER

**HON. PAULIE CHINNA:** Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following document: Follow-up Letter for Oral Questions 702-19(2) Flooding in Hay River. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister. Tabling of documents. Notices of motion. Motions. Notices of motion for the first reading of bills. Minister responsible for Education, Culture, and Employment.

### Notices of Motion for the First Reading of Bills

BILL 30:

#### AN ACT TO AMEND THE AURORA COLLEGE ACT

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Mr. Speaker, I give notice that on Tuesday, June 1st, 2021, I will move that Bill 30, an act to amend the Aurora College Act, be read for the first time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister. Notices of motion for the first reading of bills. Minister responsible for Health and Social Services.

BILL 31:

#### AN ACT TO AMEND THE PHARMACY ACT

**HON. JULIE GREEN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I give notice that on Tuesday, June 1st, 2021, Bill 31, an act to amend the Pharmacy Act, be read for the first time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister. Notices of Motion for the first reading of bills. Minister responsible for Finance.

BILL 32:

#### AN ACT TO AMEND THE NORTHERN EMPLOYEES BENEFITS SERVICES PENSION PLAN ACT

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Mr. Speaker, I give notice that on Tuesday, June 1st, 2021, I will move the Bill 32, an act to amend the Northern Employees Benefits Services Pension Plan Act, be read for the first time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister. Notices of motion for the first reading of bills. First reading of bills. Second reading of bills. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters. Report of committee of the whole. Third reading of bills.

Mr. Clerk, orders of the day.

### Orders of the Day

**DEPUTY CLERK OF THE HOUSE (MR. RUTLAND):** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Orders of the day for Monday, May 31st, 1:30 p.m.:

1. Prayer
2. Ministers Statements
3. Members' Statements
4. Returns to Oral Questions
5. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery
6. Acknowledgements
7. Oral Questions
8. Written Questions
9. Returns to Written Questions
10. Replies to the Commissioner's Address
11. Petitions
12. Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills
13. Reports of Standing and Special Committees
14. Tabling of Documents
15. Notices of Motion
16. Motions
17. Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills
18. First Reading of Bills
  - Bill 29, Resource Royalty Information Disclosure Statute Amendment Act
19. Second Reading of Bills
20. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters
21. Report of Committee of the Whole
22. Third Reading of Bills
23. Orders of the Day

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Clerk. This House stands adjourned until Monday, May 31st, 2021, at 1:30 p.m. Enjoy your weekend.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 12:21 p.m.



