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The Honourable Frederick Blake Jr, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

Members of the Legislative Assembly

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Ms. Frieda Martselos
(Thebacha)

Ms. Katrina Nokleby
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Mr. Steve Norn
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Mr. Kevin O'Reilly
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YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**Monday, May 31, 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.): Members, the flags at the Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly have been lowered in recognition of the 215 Indigenous children who died at the Kamloops Indian Residential School.

This discovery should not surprise us, but it does. Even with everything we already know about Indian residential schools, we can't help but be shocked by the scale of the horrors that occurred. Residential schools are not just a part of our past; they are a part of our present, and their legacy will be a part of our future.

I ask that all Members join me in a moment of silence in remembrance of the 215 Indigenous children who died at the Kamloops school, all residential schools, and give your thoughts to those who survived.

---Moment of Silence

I remind everyone to take the Government of the Northwest Territories' Living Well Together cultural awareness program. It provides a valuable and much-needed education on the lasting effects of colonialism in the North and the path to reconciliation. Thank you, Members. Please be seated.

Ministers' Statements. Honourable Premier.

Ministers' Statements

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 160-19(2):
INDIAN RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL MASS GRAVE IN
KAMLOOPS

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Mr. Speaker, before I begin my statement today, I want to acknowledge that many people, including those who work in and around this Legislative Assembly and Government, are being re-traumatized by the confirmation of the mass grave of Indigenous children at the Kamloops Indian Residential School. I am providing this notice so that those who are

hurting may choose not to listen if they will be triggered by what I say.

Mr. Speaker, the confirmation of the remains of 215 Indigenous children at the Kamloops Indian Residential School last week is a reminder of a dark chapter of Canadian history rooted in the attempted cultural genocide and assimilation of Indigenous people across the country.

We are all grieving at the confirmation of the mass grave by the Tk'emlups te Secwepemc First Nation. This is a devastating moment for so many, especially Indigenous people who have experienced first-hand the system that tried so hard to destroy them and steal their culture and language from them.

On behalf of the Government of the Northwest Territories, I want to extend our deepest condolences to Chief Roseanne Casimir, the Tk'emlups te Secwepemc First Nation, and to the families of the 215 spirits who can now come home to rest after all these years.

Mr. Speaker, this is not just a dark chapter in Canadian history; it is part of our present day, as it continues to live on through the multi-generational trauma that has impacted Indigenous people for decades. Because of the physical, psychological, spiritual, and sexual abuse experienced by those torn away from their homes by the Government of Canada and the Catholic Church, the impacts continue to live on in Indigenous communities across the Northwest Territories and throughout Canada.

Mr. Speaker, this is a harmful reminder to so many that the history of the residential school system continues to have a long-lasting impact on families and survivors.

In the Northwest Territories, most of us know someone who has attended a residential school, and we have all felt the impact of the legacy it left and will for generations to come. It is important that we all take care of one another during moments like this. Now is the time for us all to check in on the people in our lives who may be having difficulty as a result of this.

I want to say now to anyone who may be struggling, you are not alone. For immediate assistance to those who may need it, the National Indian Residential School Crisis Line is available 24-hours a day at 1-866-925-4419.

Mr. Speaker, we are mourning the many young lives who never made it home from that school, their lives cut short at the hands of colonialism. This is a difficult time for anyone who has experienced the horrors of the residential school system, and the many generations of Indigenous people who have been impacted by it.

Flags are flying at half-mast today. We want to honour the memory of the thousands of children who were sent to residential schools, for those who never returned, and honour the families whose lives were forever changed.

Mr. Speaker, there is a great deal of work that remains to address reconciliation in the Northwest Territories and Canada, and we continue to move forward on that journey. While it may be long and at times difficult, the Government of the Northwest Territories is committed to this journey every step of the way. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Honourable Premier. Ministers' statements. Honourable Premier.

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 161-19(2):
EMERGING STRONGER: COVID-19 SOCIAL AND
ECONOMIC RECOVERY PLAN

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Mr. Speaker, the COVID-19 pandemic has been a challenging time for all of us. Like all jurisdictions, our initial response was focused on public health measures. To date, we have been successful in protecting the health and safety of our residents thanks to the actions we took early and the commitment from residents to follow the public health orders and recommendations in order to limit the spread of COVID-19.

As we continue our efforts to be one of the first jurisdictions in the country to successfully implement a vaccination program, we have also been focused on our social and economic recovery.

Mr. Speaker, at the appropriate time later today, I will be pleased to table Emerging Stronger: a Social and Economic Recovery Plan for the Northwest Territories.

The pandemic has exposed economic and social gaps in our society and has increased the urgency to address these issues. Emerging Stronger complements our mandate by highlighting areas of responsiveness and further growth.

Emerging Stronger identifies the lessons learned from the urgency and intensity of the pandemic and examines these in the context of our Government's existing mandate to present a set of actions the Government of the Northwest Territories will take to support long-term social and economic recovery.

While our government's mandate itself provides a foundational plan for strengthening the economic and social conditions in the Northwest Territories that precedes the pandemic, Emerging Stronger builds on our existing commitments to strengthen the government's vision for social and economic development post-pandemic.

Emerging Stronger includes, for example, commitments to review the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation policies, accelerate work on the Alcohol Strategy, and increase support for addictions programs, as well as efforts to diversify the economy through remediation activities.

Mr. Speaker, our success in social and economic recovery from the pandemic depends on partnerships. Emerging Stronger was shared with Indigenous governments and Indigenous organizations for comments earlier this month, and we have discussed it with community governments and the Business Advisory Council.

I would also like to thank the Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight for their comments on the plan. We have incorporated the Committee's input, and we will be welcoming comments and feedback from the public on the social and economic recovery plan on an ongoing basis to inform our actions as we move forward with recovery efforts.

Mr. Speaker, the pandemic is ongoing, and many jurisdictions in Canada have been hit hard. The Northwest Territories' recovery planning needs to be responsive to changing circumstances. All actions must take into consideration our fiscal situation and the variability and unpredictability of the pandemic's severity and duration in the Northwest Territories, across Canada, and worldwide.

I am hopeful that we can tackle our biggest social and economic challenges with the same urgency we saw in our initial response to the pandemic. That work involves strong partnerships and collaboration with Indigenous governments, communities, and other stakeholders. The plan notes the expectation for on-going engagement, including through the Government of the Northwest Territories' budget dialogues as work to plan recovery efforts together continues over the near, medium, and long-terms.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud of the actions this Government took early in the pandemic to support individuals and businesses, particularly vulnerable populations and sectors hit hardest by the pandemic. I believe that Emerging Stronger will be an important tool for continuing social and economic recovery as we emerge from the impacts of the pandemic. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Honourable Premier. Ministers' statements. Minister for Environment and Natural Resources.

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 162-19(2):
WILDFIRE PREVENTION AND FIRESMART

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, wildfire season is here, and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, or ENR, and our dedicated fire management team are ready.

Today I'd like to provide an update on what ENR has done to get ready for the 2021 fire season and the role residents and communities across the Northwest Territories have in preventing wildfires.

Mr. Speaker, preparation for the wildfire season begins with people. To that end, we have made sure that we have well-trained and well-prepared staff and contractors in place to respond to wildfires across every region and that they are ready to go. We have 37 four-person crews ready to attack early and fast. This includes ten Indigenous-owned companies contracted to provide local fire services. This will serve not only to keep us safe but to build and maintain the skills needed for careers in forest management.

Mr. Speaker, protecting our people and our community is top of our mind as we deliver these essential services in a pandemic. Our wildfire team has maintained strong COVID-19 protocol which the pandemic began in 2020 made some adjustments to how we fight fires to keep people safe.

This year is no different. We continue to have exposure control plans in place designed to protect our staff from the office to the fire line. We have had hired additional staff in smaller communities to make it much less likely we will need to bring in firefighters from other regions or from outside NWT. We have also added two additional air tankers to help us respond quickly when fires are small. We have specific requirements for firefighters if they go to other jurisdictions to help, and we've worked closely with those other jurisdictions to ensure best practices are followed.

Mr. Speaker, our government is targeting significant reduction in human-caused fires in the NWT over

the next five years, and everybody has a role to play. It starts with personal responsibility. It is about taking the extra time to douse your campfires with water. It is about getting a burn permit if you're cleaning up yard waste and following the defined safety requirements. It is about doing your part to stay informed on wildfire dangers in your area and choosing not to have open fires if the fire danger is high or extreme, and it is about understanding that fire restrictions are put in place for reasons and follow them.

Mr. Speaker, our government invested in outreach and education to give folks the tools to prevent wildfires. Our staff worked with schools and community organizations to provide practical advice to those heading out on the land. They work with local governments to give support and advice as they implement community wildfire protection plans.

Mr. Speaker, even with the best efforts towards prevention, there will always be wildfires. That is where FireSmart principles come in. FireSmart is a practical guide to proactively reduce the risk of damage to your home or cabin before a wildfire. Many of the actions can be done easily and do not cost much, and every single one is proven to make a real difference. We are encouraging individuals and communities to step up and do what they can. We are planning events to build FireSmart awareness at the grassroot level. We are getting these principles out online and over the airways. We are ready to work with homes and cabin owners looking for FireSmart advice.

Mr. Speaker, as the ground dries out and fire danger risks rise, I urge everyone to take responsibility for preventing and protecting against wildfires seriously. It is good for our territory. It's good for our firefighters. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MOTION TO REFER
MINISTER'S STATEMENT 161-19(2), EMERGING
STRONGER: PLANNING NWT SOCIAL AND
ECONOMIC RECOVERY TO COMMITTEE OF
THE WHOLE,
CARRIED

MR. O'REILLY: Mahsi, Monsieur le President. I move, seconded by the Member for Kam Lake, that Minister's statement 161-19(2) regarding Emerging Stronger: Planning NWT Social and Economic Recovery be referred to Committee of the Whole for consideration. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. The motion is in order. To the motion? Question has been called. All those

in favour? All those opposed? Any abstentions?
Motion is carried.

---Carried.

Minister's statement will be moved into Committee of the Whole. Members' statements. Member for Monfwi.

Members' Statements

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON REMEMBERING CHILDREN FOUND IN MASS GRAVES AT KAMLOOPS INDIAN RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL

MR. LAFFERTY: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we are still reeling from the devastating findings last week at the site of Kamloops Indian Residential School. Ground penetrated radar revealed the remains of 215 children, some as young as 3 years old, Mr. Speaker. Chief of BC First Nations says there are bound to be more. Perhaps many, many more as they comb the rest of the school's grounds. It's a terrible reminder of the unspoken abuses Indigenous people have historically suffered in Canada, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, those 215 skeletons were somebody's children, somebody's nephew, niece, and they had family, cousins, brothers, sisters, aunts, and uncles.

Mr. Speaker, as a residential school survivor myself, this is truly disturbing and traumatizing. I cannot imagine what the families of these children are going through. It is very devastating.

Mr. Speaker, praying is very powerful. Our prayers and thoughts for those 215 children, their families, and for all the Indigenous children and families who have suffered under the Indian Residential School system, we need prayers for the families and our nation for the continued strength and support for continued reconciliation during these very difficult times in Canada's history.

Mr. Speaker, let's never forget this happened. It cannot be hidden. We need everyone in Canada and people throughout the world to know that this history is real. The loss of the children is real. Mr. Speaker, let's remember this day forever. Mahsi.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as a child, my summers were often spent traveling around British Columbia and Alberta with my family in our old Econoline van. Whenever we passed through Kamloops, my mom never failed to point out in a sombre voice the ominous brick building on the river, the residential school. As a child, I had no idea what that meant. My school experience was of an encouraging place full of books and wonder, where my biggest concern was a stolen eraser.

25 years later, after moving north, while I was waiting at the Greenstone building, I started speaking with an elder who was there for his settlement cheque. That, at the age of 29, was the first time I'd spoken to anyone about what had been done to "remove the Indian from the child", the first time I heard directly from a victim about the atrocities committed during the formation of the kind, benevolent Canada I'd grown up with, the first time I was aware of the lie I had been fed since birth.

Residential schools operated in Canada for over 120 years with Indigenous children taken from their families and loved ones, sent hundreds of kilometres away, and beaten and abused in the most horrific ways imaginable.

Last week, the discovery of the remains of 215 children at the Kamloops Indian Residential School was made by the Tk'emlups te Secwepemc First Nation. This discovery has shocked Canadians. However, how could anyone who's been paying attention be shocked?

The NWT had the highest percentage of students in residential schools in Canada. The legacy of this is huge, as many of our current social, health, and educational challenges faced in the Northwest Territories can be traced directly to the effects of over 100 years of residential schools.

Our needs are some of the greatest in Canada, yet our response is sorely lacking. No treatment centres for addictions; children still being taken from their parents by CFS; poverty mistaken for neglect; and systemic racism inherent throughout all our processes.

After hearing of the discovery in Kamloops, I feel we must initiate such an investigation in our own territory. 14 residential schools operated in the Northwest Territories with 14 more in Nunavut. If we truly want to have reconciliation in the North, we must return the stolen children to their homes.

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

---Unanimous consent granted.

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The technology used to find the children in Kamloops is the same as used to measure thickness on the ice roads, ground penetrating radar. Could equipment already in the territory be modified to look at the ground instead?

Alternatively, there are specific units that could be purchased for this work. One of the priorities of the 19th Assembly is to advance the implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples or UNDRIP. How can we begin this work when we haven't made any efforts to return the stolen children home or acknowledge the true extent of our issues? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON HUMAN RESOURCES

MS. MARTSELOS: Mr. Speaker, today I am going to speak further to my statement from last week about human resources and the many structural issues pertaining to barriers for people seeking employment with the Government of the Northwest Territories.

In the four days since I delivered that statement, I was approached by at least ten people in Yellowknife whom I've never met before. These folks were Indigenous, non-Indigenous, and other minority backgrounds.

They all said that I am on the right track and encouraged me to continue with this new level of inquiry regarding human resources.

Mr. Speaker, I am acutely aware of the various human resource hiring barriers faced by people in my region. But if I'm approached by this number of people in Yellowknife alone, then this must indicate much broader issues across the board in human resources' hiring practices.

There are so many qualified and experienced people across the NWT who are routinely overlooked for any advancement in the Government of the Northwest Territories.

The Finance Minister can enlist all the programs she wants for those seeking employment with the Government of the Northwest Territories, but these issues cannot be solved by existing programs alone. How do we solve a problem with our current tools if the tools we're using aren't efficient enough in addressing these issues?

Mr. Speaker, the Finance Minister is unwilling to admit that any issues exist with the hiring practices

in Human Resources. Her reluctance is no surprise, though, as governments are rarely open to admitting a failure, especially one that is ongoing and as wide-spread as this one. There are problems that are hard to measure and quantify, and this is one of those situations.

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

---Unanimous consent granted.

MS. MARTSELOS: Mr. Speaker, there is an unspoken culture embedded within human resources in our government. It can be hard to see and identify if you're not looking in the right places. There seems to be a punitive side of human resources, because when employees try standing up for themselves by speaking out about issues they see or by appealing a job hire by the Government of the Northwest Territories, they get branded and blacklisted. Outspoken people become undervalued, discarded, and frowned upon by hiring personnel and, therefore, shut out from the system itself. It's like an unbreakable cycle or a feedback loop that never ends.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, I believe there is also a lack of interpersonal connection and human compassion that applicants receive from hiring personnel. It's almost like some staff enjoy saying "no" to applicants who aren't chosen for a job. Staff needs to know their hiring decisions impact people's lives, and it usually isn't for the better.

Lastly, there's also an overrepresentation of non-Indigenous people within most senior management positions in the Government of the Northwest Territories. Together, these facts all amount to numerous systemic barriers faced by both applicants and existing public workers alike. I will have questions for the Minister of Finance later today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON MEDICAL TRAVEL ESCORTS

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my constituents travel for medical appointments either from Inuvik into Inuvik. If they can't be serviced in Inuvik, they get sent here to Yellowknife. And if they can't do the treatment here, they'll send them to Edmonton. Sometimes this means multiple trips, usually if they follow up with a follow-up appointment needed in Edmonton.

My constituents fly all the way home. They isolate, wait for their next appointment, especially for cancer treatment, MRI, surgeries that can't be done

here at Stanton. This means our residents rely by smooth operation by the health authority to ensure that the treatment they get and get it done as needed as quick as possible, and we're thankful for that. But the means of the appointments that are booked by the right doctors at the right hospitals and the appointment's information shared, the patient is so likely to know what's happening. This means that the travel dates, the right places for the patients make their appointments on time.

Mr. Speaker, we've been having problems in my riding for that. We have been getting people travelling that are either booked for the appointment but no ticket at the airport. This means escorts are booked when they're needed so the patient can have assistance at their need, whether they're to move around or to get information translated into their language or someone can support through treatments. It's hard on their body, and the stress level for elders travelling is stressful.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, sometimes things get missed or appointments don't get booked, forget to book the travel. This means sometimes residents need treatment that don't get it at the right time. And that's got to stop, Mr. Speaker.

We need a patients' advocate. We need somebody to help the patient in the communities. I know the nursing station are doing the best that they can, but they need help too, because they're overworked. A lot of our nursing station staff, our frontline staff, are overworked. We've got four nurses in Tuk that are really overworked. I get yellow notes saying disruption in service provided to our community.

So that being said, we need to help our frontline staff, our health centres. There should be somebody for medical travel in regards to helping them to get proper service. We're thankful for the service that they do provide. I'm not knocking that. But they need help to get people seen. Because when you're getting messages at 2, 3 in the morning, people are supposed to be traveling at 9, 'I can't wake Julie up, you know, or the Minister, say, Hey, I need this to get done.

But first thing in the morning, she replies to her emails, and she wants to help and do good. But we really need to get the Inuvik Health Authority on board to work together for the people of the Delta to get the medical escort travel sorted out for one and to get it sorted out and fixed, Mr. Speaker. I will have questions for the Minister at the appropriate time. Thank you.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS

MS. SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have had a bit of time to reflect on my feelings on the news of finding of the 215 Indigenous children buried in unmarked graves at the Kamloops Indian Residential School grounds. It's heartbreaking to hear, but it's not shocking because as an Indigenous person, many of us have heard stories of what our parents, grandparents, great-grandparents have told us and what they've had to endure.

It was the Canadian government who created these policies to try to eradicate Indigenous people, to take over their land, and they continue to try and control them through legislation like the Indian Act.

Mr. Speaker, we are left with the horrific history of residential school and the impacts of our people, the lack of respect for our women and girls, which is now a national crisis; Indigenous men, who are overrepresented in jails throughout Canada; our children are apprehended and continue to be removed from their homes and families in large numbers today.

Mr. Speaker, when the final report of the MMIWG was released, it was debated as to the use of the word "genocide". It insulted me that someone could question this, but because we are Indigenous, we are considered less-than. We are not.

Mr. Speaker, genocide is defined as a deliberate and systemic destruction of a group of people because of their ethnicity, nationality, religion, or race. I don't know what else this policy could be considered as. But, Mr. Speaker, we are still here today. We are strong and resilient and will remain here in our home on our land and continue to combat the racism, to teach those who are unaware of our history so that this is never forgotten and never repeated.

May God rest their little souls. Quyananni, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON LAND USE PLANNING

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. I believe in land use planning. That's what I studied at university in the early 1980s and what brought me to the Northwest Territories in 1985. If you want to create sustainability and certainly over the future of land and water, meaningful and legally binding land use planning is required. While our

government agreed to legally binding land use planning in the Gwichin and Sahtu settlement areas as part of those land rights agreements, progress on other land use planning has been slow, if not glacial.

Deh Cho land use planning has been going on for many than 20 years, and from what I've heard, GNWT is now the obstacle to completion. Provisions are found in the Tlicho Agreement for land use planning, but progress there, too, has been slow without much public input.

As I understand it, GNWT has also spent our own funds to support land use planning in the Wek'eezhii management area without securing similar support from the federal government that is actually responsible for the costs of implementing the Tlicho Agreement.

I contrast this with the approach this government has taken with the NWT Surface Rights Board. I tried to remove the funding for this board from this year's budget for a variety of reasons. Those reasons included the fact no disputes have ever been heard, that it is really unnecessary, and not a co-management body by any stretch of the imagination.

This government goes to extraordinary lengths to protect mining and mining rights but has little to show for protecting the land itself. Our government is opposed to permanent protection of Edezhie and had to be dragged into Thaidene Nene.

I'll have questions later today for the Minister of Lands and why our government has made so little progress on land use planning and continues to be an obstacle in protecting our lands and waters. Merci, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. Members' Statements. Member for Yellowknife North.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON COMMUNITY-DRIVEN CHILDCARE

MR. JOHNSON: Mr. Speaker, last week I wrote a Member's Statement for today on the importance of high quality childcare. But as the remains of 215 children were found by the Tk'emlups te Secwepemc First Nation at a former residential school site, I reconsidered my approach. We can't stand in this House and talk about high quality childcare and act like the legacy of residential schools does not impact this conversation.

Mr. Speaker, there is still mistrust in the school system in the NWT, and the institutionalization of childcare is not supported by all. I have often advocated for universal daycare as I see its

economic and social benefits. But without it being led by our Indigenous communities, it cannot happen, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, ECE is currently in discussions with various Indigenous governments about a 2030 early learning and childcare strategy, which I hope will promote programming informed by Indigenous practices and values.

Mr. Speaker, a society is measured by how it cares for its children. To date, we have failed that measurement. And if we implement childcare that is faceless and institutionalized that does not give our communities dignity and cultural revitalization, we will have failed again, Mr. Speaker.

Community-driven programming is the language used by ECE in its discussion papers, and they must follow up on that. We can't make the mistake of believing we know what is best for Indigenous communities.

Mr. Speaker, reconciliation is not just about making up for the past; it is about ensuring that every Indigenous child has a real shot at moving forward in their life on their own terms. We have to get to this right, Mr. Speaker. I hope we can find a path to high quality early childhood education, though we must always remember it must be in collaboration with Indigenous communities, not oppressed on them. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON HUMAN RESOURCES AND SUMMER STUDENTS

MS. CLEVELAND: Mr. Speaker, succession planning within the GNWT is important. A key part of the Government's succession planning is their summer student internship programs. Growing up in the NWT, not once did I every kick back and think, Wow, one day I want to work for the government. But, as a summer student, I was exposed to a multitude of unique positions that I never knew existed within our government, the GNWT's staff's graphic designers, biologists, and heavy duty mechanics. Some public servants work in an office, others in classrooms, and some spend their days in the bush.

The GNWT website says this government recognizes the value of summer student employment. Hiring students support and post-secondary pursuits of Northerners with wages that help offset the high cost of university and also help the NWT retain skilled northern graduates. Essentially, Mr. Speaker, we all want our university

students to come home, and that's where our internship program steps in. In 2018-19, the GNWT employed 371 and 41 interns, and in 2019-20, 351 summer students and 34 interns.

But, Mr. Speaker, as I understand it, summer student hiring has significantly dropped again this year. Many of our COVID decisions have the potential to have unintended negative effects into the future. As parents, how we react and process COVID anxieties affects our children. And as schools, how students are treated and then tested when they show symptoms of COVID, affects a child's relationship with their school, and as employers, how we support our future workforce affects our succession planning.

While hiring summer students absolutely gives the government a capacity bump, more importantly, it gives students an opportunity to gain that work experience, form community connections for post-graduation, and pay for university. So whether or not our future Northern post-secondary graduates are working for the GNWT or the NWT private sector, non-government agencies, or Indigenous or municipal governments, the GNWT still accomplishes its end goal of supporting students while retaining graduates for the NWT's future workforce.

Today, as NWT businesses work hard to stay afloat through the pandemic with reduced capacities, increased restrictions, and zero tourism, we can't also depend on the private sector to employ our post-secondary students. The budgets for hiring summer students still sit within GNWT departments. These students need to be working within our communities to ensure our next workforce generation gains the experience needed and the dollars required to complete their studies. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Kam Lake. Members' Statements. Member for Deh Cho.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
RECOGNIZING FORT PROVIDENCE
VOLUNTEERS FOR JEAN MARIE RIVER
EVACUATION

MR. BONNETROUGE: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to acknowledge my home community of Fort Providence for their ongoing efforts to help the evacuees of Jean Marie River. As we all know, JMR was flooded in early May due to high waters. Homes were damaged by water, and there was also contamination from fuel. I would like to commend the coordinators and volunteers who stepped up to assisting our neighbouring community and made them feel safe and secure during their time of need.

The Deh Gah Got'ie First Nation's wellness centre was open for cookouts for traditional foods on the fire. They also delivered food and snacks to the residents at the motel. There were haircuts sponsored by the Dene Nation over two days. The services were provided by Sarah Gargan and her son Kevin Gargan. Various community members brought, cooked, or provided traditional foods to the people at the motel.

The two main coordinators were Shirley Gargan, designated spokesperson for Fort Providence, and Snookie Catholique from the Dene Nation office. The two ladies did daily updates between one another and made sure provisions and any arrangements required were looked after for the evacuees.

The first initial meeting took place with MACA and the hamlet before evacuees arrived in our community. The emergencies measures coordinator from MACA gave direction and coordination on how to assess the situation on accommodating the JMR people.

Updates are ongoing between all parties. So it's good that everyone is being updated daily and assessing the situation as time goes. The Fort Providence Housing Association provided the storage trailer to help store all of the nations that were coming in. Housing also offered the use of the seniors home for any of the seniors, if needed.

The Parish Council opened the Blue House which serves as a thrift store to the JMR residents free of charge to get any clothing or amenities they needed.

Evergreen Forestry firefighting crews provided wood for the cooks at the wellness centre. The Deh Gah Got'ie First Nation Chief and Council were offering their programs and buildings. The employment office were offering their building to accommodate residents if needed.

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

---Unanimous consent granted

Mahsi, Mr. Speaker and Mahsi, colleagues. The Dene-Metis Resource Management Office, who organized the hunters to go to gather and disperse traditional food as needed, the two grocery stores, Northern and M&R Grocery, who donated and contributed food and supplies for the evacuees. Local people also offered to open their homes if needed.

A big shout out to MACA for accommodating the JMR residents at the Snowshoe Inn Motel, the Snowshoe Inn staff who made JMR residents feel at home away from home, the Tlicho region for

deliveries of food, which included caribou, moose, and geese. They also provided camping gear, clothing, and goods.

The Sahtu region delivered two freezers that were also full of traditionally harvested food, such as meat and fish. The Deh Gah School students also held a big sale to raise money for the evacuees of JMR.

Fort Providence coordinator Shirley Gargan expressed it as sure heartfelt and great gratitude how the help and donations that came in for the people of JMR from all over.

It is during these times when we see the true spirit of the people here in the North. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON EULOGY FOR SONNY MACDONALD

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it is important that as Northerners, we recognize those NWT elders that we have looked up to for many years and that have passed on.

Mr. Speaker, Sonny James MacDonald, someone who I considered a friend, was born in Fort Chipewyan on May 26, 1939, and passed away quietly on April 20th, 2021, at his home in Okotoks, Alberta. At the time of his passing, he was surrounded by family and much love. Sonny is survived by his wife of nearly 56 years, Helen Hudson MacDonald, and by his three children, sons James (Toko) MacDonald and Thomas James (TJ) MacDonald, and his daughter, Marcy Blayne DeMond.

Sonny was the son of Germain and Harriet MacDonald. He grew up in a large family consisting of three brothers, Ted, Danny and Freddie, and three sisters, Helen, Rita and Anita.

He leaves behind seven grandchildren, five great-grandchildren, and many cousins, nieces, nephews, and in-laws. The cornerstone of Sonny's life was that of family and friends.

Mr. Speaker, over his lifetime, Sonny lived and worked in Uranium City, Inuvik, Rae-Edzo, Prince Albert, Hinton, Fort Simpson, Hay River, and Fort Smith. Earlier in Sonny's life, his work helped bring the electrical grid to all points of the NWT. He was so committed to his job; he even kept working after he survived a helicopter crash in 1971.

Mr. Speaker, Sonny was an artist. His carving of loons sits next to you in this Chamber and reflects

his passion and love for the arts and wildlife. Sonny's art is well-known throughout Canada and the world. He travelled to places that included Japan, Germany, France, and the United States, and he always had his art with him.

He met many dignitaries and many received his art as gifts. The list includes Queen Elizabeth II, Prince Phillip, Pope Jean-Paul II, Pierre Trudeau, John Diefenbaker, Stephen Harper, and Jean Chretien, just to name a few.

Sonny was passionate about art and served as a president of the NWT Arts Council for ten years and also served on the Canadian National Arts Council. Mr. Speaker, a significant life accomplishment for Sonny was being a signatory to Salt River First Nation's land claim settlement with the federal government in 2001.

Another great moment was being honoured and receiving the Inaugural Order of the NWT from his lifelong friend and NWT Commissioner, George Tuccaro.

Mr. Speaker, there are many interesting stories of Sonny. One was while camping, he had a very close encounter with a bear and survived the attack. Another one recalling the time, in only his underwear, he was chasing a porcupine with the butt end of a rifle, most likely looking for quills for an art project.

His greatest joys were his family, friends, children, and grandchildren. He loved art, camping, hunting, cooking, fishing, bonfires, and laughter. There was always a lot of laughter when Sonny was around. I know that he will be missed by his friends down at the wharf and his crew at the Wok in Hay River, places he loved to visit.

Mr. Speaker, Sonny will be truly missed by his wife, Helen, family, and friends; however, his memory and his booming laughter and infectious smile will not be forgotten. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Hay River South. Our thoughts and prayers are with the family and friends and also his fellow carvers and artists. Mahsi. Members' Statements. Member for Nahendeh.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON JEAN MARIE FLOOD RESPONSE

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, on Friday, May 7th, residents in Jean Marie were watching the river rise as Chief and Council initiated their Local Emergency. At 6:30 p.m., the first siren sounded advising the residents to start moving to higher ground. As residents rushed home to finish packing

up the necessaries and getting ready to leave their home, the second siren sounded. This happened very quickly, and residents witnessed the water steadily climb and flow over the road that leads out of town.

In speaking with some residents afterwards, they said it was very scary because they did not know if they could make it across safely. As one elder told me, I told my family member, Do not stop. Just keep on going until you get through the water.

At around 8:30 p.m., I spoke to Chief Sanguetz, and he advised me that most of the community was under water, including the airport, but they were all safe by the Arbor.

At 11:00 p.m., the water had receded a bit. Unfortunately, this did not last long. By about 3:00 a.m., the water had passed the arbor, and people were being evacuated to Ekali Lake to higher ground, and others had already been sent to Fort Providence to stay at the Snowshoe Inn.

With the flood waters causing numerous challenges for communication, the SAO and others took turns to go to Check Point to get hold of Government officials and myself.

The community would like to thank Lynn and Wayne McKay for opening their home and businesses to them during this difficult time. It was greatly appreciated. I would like to thank the SAO, Municipal Staff, local volunteers, and Chief and Council for the amazing work they did during this very trying time.

As I said Friday, this flood was the worst that it has been in recorded time. The community and the regional EMO team did an amazing job, and I'm very proud of the work they were able to achieve.

On Sunday, May 16th, I had the opportunity to visit residents of Jean Marie at Ek'aki Lake in the communities camps along the road, in the community, and it was sad to see what happened to the community but a great opportunity to speak with various members about previous floods and next steps moving forward.

They were very happy with the generosity of all Northerners shown to them during this difficult time. I have attached an appendix which I would like to be deemed as read. I apologize if I miss anybody, as the list is not all inclusive.

On Monday, May 17th, I stopped in Fort Providence to chat with a few of the evacuees. They were very thankful to the community of Fort Providence and the Snowshoe Inn for their kindness and support during this time. But they also want to get back to Jean Marie to see their home, family, and start rebuilding their community.

Mr. Speaker, the flood was very difficult for the residents, but we now face the rebuilding phase and work to get their lives back together. I know in speaking with several residents, they look forward to meeting with Cabinet and other government officials on the next steps.

In closing, I would like to thank the community, their staff, leadership, the regional EMO team on the work they have done to this point and look forward to getting residents back into their homes safely. 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 Nunakput.

Oral Questions

ORAL QUESTION 725-19(2): MEDICAL TRAVEL ADVOCATE

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today my questions are for the health Minister in regards to medical travel. And I'm wondering if the Minister would work with me in regards to having a dedicated person in our region as a travel advocate. We asked for that in our last budget, but it was not in the line item.

So I'm wondering if the Minister would commit to working with us Regular Members to get a line item in there for a travel advocate for the Beaufort Delta so that people will not miss their appointments, and there will be no more mix-ups, and people will be seen when needed. 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, I recognize that medical travel can be a stressful time for the patients themselves and for their family members as well. What we did agree to in the budget negotiations is a patient navigator for each region of the NWT.

And so it's my expectation that when we're creating the job description for this new position, that it will include travel navigation and have special attention on people who are doing medical travel. Thank you.

MR. JACOBSON: Mr. Speaker, that's better than a "yes". So I'm just wondering now, with our patient navigators now, what time will they be hired and staffed in the communities or in Inuvik, I guess, where it would be, and what time would that take effect. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. JULIE GREEN: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I know the Member would like to hear "tomorrow", but the fact is this is a brand new program with brand new positions, and so the department is developing that program and job descriptions and so on. And those will be part of the next business planning process, although the money is already dedicated to the positions. Thank you.

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the Minister for that. The department, if they're starting to do that, I guess that would be September. Before September, I hope. We have a lot of issues in my riding. Everything. Like, my riding, you have to travel. Sachs Harbour, you have to fly in from Sachs, Ulu, Paulatuk, or close to communities that people are really affected. When you go for one appointment, it takes four or five days to get there.

I really want to make sure this is done and done as soon as possible, like the Minister said, and working together with us regular Members and trying to get it done sooner than later.

But this is a question I do have, is that with all the appointments that are, you know, being missed and stuff like that, what are the time lines in getting them rebooked and -- rebooked either from travel or booking with the doctors in Edmonton. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. JULIE GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I can't imagine really what it would be like to come in from Ulukhaktok and have to go through to Edmonton for an appointment. The culture change would be very extreme.

I'm not aware of the issue that the Member is speaking of, a number of cancelled appointments and the need to rebook them. So I will commit to finding out more about that and responding to him. Thank you.

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

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll forward her my text messages I got 3 o'clock in the morning in regards to booking their missed travel. It's not only that one person. I think I got four or five people, four or five individuals in that one complaint that I do have. I'm working towards it with them because they're not wanting to sign yet. So the biggest thing is getting this patient navigator done, and sooner the better. And I look forward to having that in our riding over Delta and the Delta itself. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. JULIE GREEN: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I look forward to having this program

in place for the benefit of people throughout the NWT but particularly those who are travelling from remote locations. Thank you.

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

ORAL QUESTION 726-19(2):
HUMAN RESOURCES

MS. MARTSELOS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, can the Minister tell us if she is aware of the unspoken practice in culture within human resources wherein hiring staff will brand and blacklist potential applicants and existing employees from advancing within the Government of the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Thebacha. Minister responsible for Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there is not a practice within human resources of branding or blacklisting applicants on mass. That is not how the Human Resources process works. GNWT hiring must comply with various pieces of legislation, including the Public Service Act, The Human Resources Manual, Staffing Appeal Regulations, and The Collective Agreement. And it is certainly the responsibility of everyone who is tasked from the Department of Human Resources to do those things.

Department of Finance does have to work, of course, with all GNWT departments with all of the hiring managers across all of the -- across departments in order to ensure that they understand all of those laws, all of those rules, and all of those processes. And it's my belief that, indeed, the human resources is making every effort to ensure that those processes are, in fact, applied across the board. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. MARTSELOS: Mr. Speaker, does the Minister recognize that hiring staff have sometimes retaliated against certain individuals based on the applicant and employee's association with certain people whom hiring staff doesn't know or like personally? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, human resources have representatives who act as facilitators on hiring committees with whatever department they might be working with. The point of doing that, the point of having human resources present, is, in fact, to ensure, again, that the hiring process remains fair, follows all of the regulations, rules, The Collective Agreement, policy, et cetera. Selection committee members then, of course, if they are in a conflict,

are to remove themselves. If there's any relationship to a candidate or any potential for bias, they are not to take part in that committee.

Mr. Speaker, does that mean, of course, that there's not occasions that people come to my office and bring forward concerns related to hiring? Absolutely. Mr. Speaker, those concerns come to the Department or come through my office all the time and come through regularly. I look at every one of them. There are often occasions where we can go back and say, What more could we be doing to educate about the process, what more could we do to support different departments in the application of the process.

And we're going to continue to do that work so that, in fact, again, every department, as they employee, of the tools that are available to them and all of the rules and regulations that they must apply continue to do that at the front end at the first time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. MARTSELOS: Mr. Speaker, can the Minister tell whether staff incompetence or employee insubordination may be part of the problems related to broader human resource issues in the Government of the Northwest Territories? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have only myself been a public servant for not even about a year and a half now. I will say that it has been my experience that I am deeply impressed by the work, by the skill, and by the care that I've seen, in general, by public servants across the Northwest Territories and across different departments and divisions.

When concerns are brought forward through the Department of Finance, Human Resources headquarters does look at each and every one and does do their best to investigate them, to work to resolve personnel issues. And, indeed, there are interpersonal issues in departments, in divisions across the territories in different communities, and Human Resources undertakes the time and effort to investigate them, whether it's through a formal workplace assessment, a less formal internal assessment that's done, or simply working through the process with the support of Human Resources to ensure that all of the employees have access to a workplace that is harassment free and that is inclusive.

Last note, Mr. Speaker, every manager before they become a manager, when they become a supervisor, must enroll in human resources training, including in staffing, so that they, again, understand what that vision is of having a human resource -- or in having a public service that is inclusive and representative. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MS. MARTSELOS: Mr. Speaker, between 2016 and 2020, there was a total of 303 appeals to Human Resources hiring decisions; however, only 17 of those appeals were upheld, and all appeals all together were denied in 2019-2020. Does the Minister believe these statistics are fair and are not indicative of broader issues with the appeal process in Human Resources? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the appeal process provides an opportunity for someone who's an unsuccessful candidate to review a procedural error. So, in other words, that there was something that was not applied correctly in terms of applying with certain rules, certain element of The Collective Agreement, the Affirmative Action Policy. It's not a do-over on an application, and it's not an opportunity to question a job description or to question the qualifications or equivalencies, which, again, Mr. Speaker, those qualifications and equivalencies are set up before the screening gets done. So as far as those processes, the fact that the appeals aren't successful suggests that the processes are, in fact, being applied correctly.

I would also note, Mr. Speaker, that the appeal process is designed in a way as much as possible to be impartial, because when there is an appeal, it goes to a third party. It goes outside of the hiring committee that was involved and goes to a staffing review officer. That individual then reviews all of the information. And that is how the determination is made. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

ORAL QUESTION 727-19(2):
RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL BURIAL SITES

MS. NOKLEBY: Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Premier as the Minister in charge of Executive and Indigenous Affairs. Can the Premier commit to forming a special commission or committee to determine the location of any grave sites of residential school students in the NWT. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Mr. Speaker, the deaths of these children and the findings that was found has impacted a lot of us, especially Indigenous people throughout the world and throughout Canada and for other people as well. Any mother, parent, grandparent, I'm sure is feeling some of this. And I would love to say yes. I'd love to

say yes. I'm going to do this right now and take control and be a leader and do it. But that is not the right way.

I've checked into it. That was my first thing, is we need to find these children in ours. But the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, Mr. Speaker, under their section on missing children and burial information, which is the Action 72 to 76, it talks about the development of strategies and research projects that document and protect residential school cemeteries and unmarked burial locations.

But the big thing for me is 76(1): The Aboriginal community most affected shall lead the development of such strategies.

So in acknowledgement that I see myself as equal partners with Indigenous governments, my commitment will not be that I will take the horse and run and say this is what we shall do. My commitment is that I shall bring it forward at our multilateral table and take the guidance of the Indigenous governments of the NWT. That is my commitment, Mr. Speaker.

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That's great. That's exactly what I was hoping for. I never anticipated that we would lead it as the Government of the Northwest Territories. So I look forward to hearing more about that.

Number two, then, sort of a little bit along line -- that same line is will the Premier commit to acquiring ground penetrating radar equipment and working with the -- I can't talk today. Sorry, Mr. Speaker. Working with the appropriate Indigenous organizations to identify those graves at the former residential school sites?

And this could be done through contracts with specialized businesses or through the creation of an Indigenous led NWT unit. So I think I'm just asking for the Premier to speak a little bit further to that. Thank you.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I said in my earlier question, absolutely I want to. As soon as I seen the news and it was saying they found these children, I wanted to do the same, and I want to talk to our Prime Minister, and I am going to talk to our Prime Minister, Mr. Speaker. I am going to bring it up because I do think there is a Federal component in this as well.

But, Mr. Speaker, again, I have to be respectful of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and our Indigenous governments. The Truth and Reconciliation Act Action No. 76(3) says: Aboriginal protocols shall be respected before any

potentially invasive technical inspection and investigation of a cemetery site.

So because of this action in the Truth and Reconciliation, again, Mr. Speaker, my commitment is I shall bring it forward to the Indigenous governments and shall take direction from them on how we shall move forward. This is not okay, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to slide one in here that the Premier's not aware of, then. Does the Premier commit to funding Indigenous organizations in order that they can start this work looking for grave sites of Aboriginal students. Thank you.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. She's absolutely right. It wasn't a question I thought about, the funding. However, Mr. Speaker, I was already thinking the reason I am going to be talking to the Prime Minister of Canada is not so that the Prime Minister of Canada can take the lead. It's that the Prime Minister of Canada also has an obligation, in my opinion, because it was the Government of Canada and the Catholic churches that did this to our children, and they have an obligation, and I shall bring forward my opinion of the obligation. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I think the Premier will have a lot of support on this side for pushing Canada to make what's right. It's my understanding the cost was \$1.5 million, and it was denied at the time that Canada made the decision. So I think she would have a lot of support from this side of the House.

My last question is can the Premier provide a quick update on the implementation of UNDRIP in the Northwest Territories and what she is doing to ensure that true engagement is occurring.

How has she been thinking of side box to the speak, as we all heard during our campaigns, that this was an area that needed a lot of improvement. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Mr. Speaker, the Member knows me, and so she kind of put a trick question and said, Will you make it quick. That might be a little bit harder. What I can say is that we are meeting with the Indigenous governments in the multilateral forum which will be happening on June 11th. With the United Nations declaration, we've already formed officials groups with all the Indigenous governments. They've been working in the background. This meeting on June 11th, we'll

be bringing forward topics. I believe in our agenda, there's eight topics at the moment.

So once we decide what we're doing with the United Nations declaration, where they feel about it, we need to talk about a consensus on an approach for the NWT.

Mr. Speaker, I've recognized in the year and a half that if you want to do things right with Indigenous governments, it's not appropriate to set our timeline; it's appropriate to work with them on their timeline.

So I don't know how long it will take, Mr. Speaker. But my commitment has been, since the beginning, I've said it over and over at every meeting: I see us as equals at the table, not the GNWT on top. So I will be taking the lead from them on how we move forward with this. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

ORAL QUESTION 728-19(2):
LAND USE PLANNING

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. My question is for the Minister of Lands about the slow progress outlining these planning outside areas covered by land rights agreements. Land use planning has been taking place in the Deh Cho for more than 20 years now. The last raised issue almost a year ago with the Premier in this House.

I'm not looking for excuses anymore but solutions and timelines. Can the Minister tell us the current status of the Deh Cho land use plan and why our government is holding it up. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, first and foremost, the Government of the Northwest Territories is not holding it up. I want to make that very clear. Deh Cho First Nations, the GNWT, and the Federal government are part of a working group for the Deh Cho Land Use Planning Committee. In talking to the Committee and being advised that to complete their plan is we're looking at 2022-2023. And, again, like I said, the GNWT is very supportive of this and working as an active member on it.

So the House is aware, the committee has a revised plan based on reviews of all parties, and the next step is to complete public review of this plan. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. O'REILLY: Mahsi, Monsieur le President. I have a funny feeling I'm going to be here one year again in the future asking the same questions.

Let's move on to land use planning in the Wek'èezhii management area under the Tlicho Agreement. Can the Minister give us an update on the status of this work and how much GNWT and the federal government have contributed in costs of the process so far. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That's kind of a two-set question there. So I'm going to try to do the first one and maybe answer the second one there.

So the first part is the Department of Lands is working with the Tlicho Government and the Government of Canada to establish a land use planning process for Wek'èezhii. Terms of reference for the planning process is completed but is not yet approved due to issues related that were raised through the government as part of our Section 35 process.

The Department of Lands is working with the Government of Canada, Indigenous governments to determine a path forward. The Government of Canada has proposed to support a facilitator to nation-to-nation discussions that resolve this issue.

In regards to the funding question, the GNWT has provided 52,000 in 2019-20, 69,000 in 22-21 to support multi -- or multiparty work to be prepared for the establishment of shared Tlicho Government and GNWT Land Use Planning Office. The Government of Canada has indicated a funding for the Wek'èezhii Land Use Plan is a federal responsibility and is committed to work on this matter.

The Government of Canada is expected to provide funding for the overall costs of the planning process, including funds for the participation of the Tlicho Governments. Senior officials from the Department of Lands have engaged counterparts in the Government of Canada regarding the amount and timing of the Federal funds for Wek'èezhii Land Use Plan, and these details will be shared when available. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Mahsi, Monsieur le President. I want to thank the Minister for that. But it's kind of like watching an old movie again and again and again. I've heard all of this before about why we're paying for land use planning up front and that I'll be here a year from now, Mr. Speaker, as I said, asking the same questions.

It's not clear to me why GNWT is fronting this funding for land use planning this large area that

includes a traditional territory, of others including Tlicho First Nations and Metis. Are we doing this to try to expedite mining? I have no idea, Mr. Speaker. Can the Minister explain why the Federal government is not fully funding land use planning in the Wek'èezhii management area? Because this is clearly implementation of the Tlicho Agreement. So what efforts are underway to make sure the federal government pays? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I appreciate the Member's commitment in looking at the same movie over and over again. But if it's a good movie, you want to watch it again and again. And so we want to get -- you know, see new things, moving on, and we can do that.

So we are moving forward. I have to say that. It's government, and we're looking at three different levels of government, and it takes a long time to get all three parties working together here.

To date, there has been a productive dialog with the GNWT, the Government of Canada, and the Indigenous government. And so we're working with them to resolve this. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

ORAL QUESTION 729-19(2):
SUMMER STUDENT HIRING

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions today are for the Minister of Finance. I'm wondering if the Minister of Finance can tell us how many summer students are currently working for the GNWT this year. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Kam Lake. Minister responsible for Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As of May 31st, 2021, we have a total of 192 summer students currently hired. There's an additional 53 who have pending offers. Thank you.

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate that response. The numbers are much better than the last numbers that I have from the Department of Finance, and so that is good news to start us off with today. And so I thank the public service and the Minister for that.

But this number is still lower than previous years, and I'm wondering if the GNWT has plans to beat their numbers from pre-COVID times. Thank you.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And, yes, Mr. Speaker, there's been an effort being made to keep numbers updated.

Indeed, it's been a bit of a rally of late. So I am pleased to say that the numbers are improving. We're still a little bit behind where we were in 2019. I won't use 2020 as a comparator given what was going on a year ago with COVID.

But with respect to the 2019 comparison, Mr. Speaker, we're actually pretty close right now, whereas in -- at this time in 2019, we had approximately 247, and if we include the pending hires, we're only at 245, if I'm reading correctly on my numbers. So we're not doing too poorly, Mr. Speaker, but, really, the goal is to continue to hire and to continue to hire all through the summer. Maybe we can beat our numbers. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, by my numbers, the GNWT is still off by about a hundred fabulous students that would love to work for the GNWT. So I'm wondering if the Minister will make a commitment to at least hire another hundred students before the end of June. Thank you.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, but that it was so easy. So the summer student program, it doesn't have a separate line item or budgeting item to it, as I think was mentioned earlier in Members' statement. The way that it works, though, Mr. Speaker, the Department of Finance, of course, can coordinate the support hiring of summer students and can coordinate and support training programs for the summer students.

Every department has a responsibility to determine what their needs are, to find special projects that they often do, and often do rely, indeed, on summer students who are coming in to fill gaps over the summer period.

So, you know, opportunities such as this one, to be in the House, to be speaking to all the departments, who I know are listening, reminding them of the opportunity to bring in students, creates a succession plan for them in their departments, creates an opportunity to educate members of the public about the work they do, and to have ready and willing students available to do projects for them over the summer.

Again, this is an opportunity to essentially speak to the public service and to the departments and say, Please consider hiring a summer student. And, hopefully, we will get to that hundred mark by the end of June. Thank you.

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

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as it stands right now, the last numbers that I saw, I saw a lot of summer students really concentrated in Yellowknife. And there's a great deal of need in our communities as well. If we look at what's happening in the Northwest Territories to date, there's tremendous amount of flooding that leads all the way up to the Arctic Ocean. I'm sure that there's students that would love to be on the ground and helping out with that too, with cleanup opportunities and being able to see, you know, a different community or being able to help out their own community. And so I think there's a lot of opportunity.

But my question for the Minister today is currently the GNWT has a program within Human Resources that's called Building Capacity in Indigenous Governments, and as a cost sharing program, that allows the GNWT to play role in building capacity within Indigenous governments. So I'm wondering if the GNWT would be prepared to put together a summer student program that also costs shares summer students with Indigenous governments, municipalities, not-for-profit organizations going forward. Thank you.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the question began with a discussion of out-of-Yellowknife hire. So just to give some sense, about ten days ago before the rally, the numbers, we were already at 71 regional hires, and that's hires I think not pending as compared to 2019 when we were at 80. So, again, we're not tracking too badly just yet. And, again, the numbers have, indeed, gone up even in just the last ten days.

As for entirely revamping the summer student program and modifying substantially how we will fund it, I'm certainly not in a position to give a firm yes on that standing in the House but always open to new ideas about how to support students, how to support succession planning in the government. And how to support, indeed, may well be the regional government's, non-for-profits, municipal governments and so on and so forth.

That conversation, though, Mr. Speaker, is one that I think would have to begin with those other entities and organizations, as well as looking at each department and the kind of connections that they have.

So, you know, I think that's one to take away and to see what kind of conversations we might be able to have and what ideas and inspiration it might lead to. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

ORAL QUESTION 730-19(2):
FLOOD RECOVERY

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd first like to start by thanking the Minister of MACA for the opportunity to travel through to Fort Good Hope on Saturday and meet with the community and residents and victims.

And the other thing, I was very impressed with the preparation the community had in place with respect to the flooding. But now it is time for this Government to actually step up. The community has done their part.

So, Mr. Speaker, can the Minister of MACA confirm who from her department is or will be taking the lead on flood recovery. The question has been asked by those impacted, and I guess for my information as well. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Disaster Assistance Committee oversees the governance and coordination for the GNWT recovery process. It is also responsible for assisting the GNWT to make a claim to Canada for assistance under the Federal Disaster Assistance Fund. The two GNWT staff that have been hired, they are navigators. They are currently supposed to be in Nahendeh this week, and they are to be providing immediate assistance in answering questions about the process for further information.

Staff will also be travelling in to Fort Good Hope as well, too, to conduct a further assessment and looking at what would we need to provide to the communities at this time to further support and assist them. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm not sure if that answered my question or not because I didn't hear the name of anybody. So I suspect there should be one point person, whether it's the Minister herself or somebody else, and I'll touch base with her later.

And, Mr. Speaker, right now is an uncertain time for many of those victims who have been displaced. So I'd ask the Minister to confirm if and when financial support will be made to flood victims who are struggling with meeting everyday bills and living costs. Thank you.

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just to elaborate on the first question, I just wanted to go back to that. Is that, you know, we're moving very quickly as a department, but it seems like very slow progress because we have to be preparing this disaster committee as well, too, in looking at

our financial response and what we can submit to the federal government. The navigator for the community for the disaster has actually just started today. We just hired the person on Friday with the request from the MLAs as well. So we have two people that are working, that are going to be our main contact in the flood risk communities.

For the supports, the financial supports for the individuals, we have provided the evacuation centres for the individuals. We continue to have the one operating in Fort Providence and providing meals as well, too, and also in Inuvik, and, you know, for the flood victims for Aklavik.

By looking at the assistance that we are providing, housing right now is our main priority in looking at how we could return people to those units and to their homes, whether it be public housing or whether it be private. We're looking within our department or the Housing Corporation on what further supports we can provide, what type of programming we can provide, you know, if we're going to be getting into a partnership with the Indigenous groups, and looking for local contractors to also work on the boilers and the heating systems as well, too, specifically right now with the -- in Fort Simpson.

There's a lot of information I could provide to the Member, and I will follow up with him as well, because there's a lot of information that is flowing right now. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, she answered question -- the first question and the third question. So I'm going to ask the second question again. Can the Minister confirm if and when financial support will be made directly to the flood victims who are struggling with meeting everyday bills and living costs. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Hay River South. Minister responsible for MACA.

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We're looking at the recovery for the disaster of the homes and returning people back to their residences. I don't have an answer -- I mean, I guess, an answer for the basic needs of food and clothing for the individuals. I'll have to get back to the Member as we are addressing the housing need right now, which is the priority, is to get people back into the their homes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the GNWT when -- at the start of the flooding there, we felt we fell short on

communications and with respect to acknowledging that the flooding was actually occurring. And so I think what we have to do is in our messaging, we've got to be concise and precise. When we're talking to people in the communities, you know, they're looking for answers and not a story. So, Mr. Speaker, can the Minister confirm what communication strategy her department has in place to keep the flood victims updated, how is it being achieved. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Direct contact for our communities is our regional offices and also the active EMO office -- EMO officers as well too and getting into the community and looking at further communication with the mayors and the chiefs and leadership of those communities. I've been meeting with the flood risk communities for the past four weeks, providing them information and updates, and also looking at the river flow and how it would affect the communities coming forward. We had started the meetings with Fort Simpson and Hay River, and we continued on with Aklavik and Fort Good Hope, also inviting McPherson and Tsiigehtchic as well too.

So through those meetings, there is adequate information that is being provided to the individuals. And we are provided -- we are available as a government to the leadership at that table as well, myself and the Deputy Minister. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

ORAL QUESTION 731-19(2):
UNIVERSAL CHILDCARE

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to thank the Department of Education, Culture, and Employment for reaching their discussion paper on early childcare and the great work they've been doing to date. I'm happy to see the funding for increasing education in that. But I think the big announcement is what's -- the ambitious words coming out of the federal government, where they've been committed to having the cost of childcare. I know there's \$30 billion federally over the next five years.

What I'm looking for from the Minister is do we have a sense of how much that money we will see in our bilateral agreement and whether it will be enough to actually get us universal childcare in the territory. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Yellowknife North. Minister responsible for Education, Culture, and Employment.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The bilateral agreement is still being negotiated. So I can't give the Member a number on that. However, the federal government, in addition to that 30 billion they announced from 450 million in workforce development, and we expect maybe 2 and a half million from that, and hopefully in addition to what we're getting at the bilateral. So we have been receiving about 2.4 million a year. And so in worst case scenario, we would get that in the first year of that agreement.

But the federal government has made an announcement. I'm not confident that they have ironed out all the details at this point. And I -- frankly, I doubt it, given that childcare isn't something the federal government does. It's the provinces and territories. And so their plan is dependent on our plans. And that's why we are positioned well, considering that we're developing our 2030 Early Learning and Childcare Strategy right at the same time they are developing their national childcare strategy. So the plan will be, you know, developed in conjunction with the federal plan, and we will keep the Members updated as soon as we learn any of the news. Thank you.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate we're negotiating the plan. And I guess I've got to try and squeeze a few more details out of the Minister if I can. And hearing from what the other provinces and territories have said across Canada, there's a big debate about cost sharing and I think fears from a number of provinces that Ottawa will fund us for five years, and then the provinces are going to be left with, you know, a giant childcare bill at the end of that agreement.

And I know a number of provinces have -- are quite opposed to this idea of Ottawa kind of imposing childcare. So I was hoping the Minister could speak to our views on any cost sharing requirement on childcare, if the federal government is going to require us to put up 50 percent of the dollars in this bilateral, are we willing to do that? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The question is is Ottawa willing to put up 50 percent of the dollars. We already put in a substantial amount of money many times more than Ottawa puts into childcare. So if Ottawa was to match what we're already spending, we would be almost where we need to be. There would probably be additional funding required, but that 50 percent from Ottawa would be great.

So, you know, of course, appropriations are voted on by this House. So I can't commit to any future funding. But I think it's fair to say there is a commitment to ensuring that we are partners with Ottawa as we work towards rolling out universal childcare in the Northwest Territories. Thank you.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the discussion paper, the department points out a number of barriers. You know, I think a lot of them are monetary. Costs is simply subsidization. The infrastructure is the funding of money to build the infrastructure. But the report says we need between 221 to 299 trained educators in childcare. And then to me, this seems the biggest barrier we're facing is that I know many operators today can't hire qualified staff. I'm hoping to get a sense from the department how realistic, you know, even in the next five years or in this 2030 strategy getting that hundred percent increase in educators actually is. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't have an over/under on, you know, how realistic that is. But the fact is that we recognize that we need qualified early learning childcare educators, not just people to, you know, watch the kids while they watch TV. We need educators if we really want to give children the best start in life. So there's a number of initiatives taking place. There are early learning and childcare scholarships for people who want to learn. There's a pilot program right now in person. You can do the first year of the diploma online. We're hoping to expand the number of dual credit courses so that the students in high school can graduate high school with credits towards their early learning and childcare diploma. So in addition, this is all before the additional workforce funding from the federal government. So there's a lot of big things that we can do and really are pushing to do. And it goes hand in hand with the transformation of Aurora College into a polytechnic university. So this is on the forefront of everyone's minds. In addition, I'll point out that it's not just hard to hire qualified staff. It's hard to keep qualified staff because, of course, these aren't government jobs; these are community-led jobs; they're nonprofits. And if you have the right qualifications, you can also teach junior kindergarten, which is a much more lucrative position than being an early childhood educator. So finding the funding to ensure that those educators stay in those positions is also part of the bigger picture that we're working on. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. JOHNSON: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister led into my last question, which is that a number of models exist for universal childcare. The cheapest model being essentially the day home model. But we ran into issues with that. In that, in some communities, it's just not ever going to be

profitable to run a day home. And in some communities, you can't find a nonprofit willing to step up and run those programs. On the higher end of that spectrum is making those jobs government jobs where the GNWT would actually hire early childhood educators.

Do we have an idea what kind of model of universal childcare we're working towards and would it include those jobs being government jobs? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There have been a number of engagements happening. There's a number still scheduled to happen. And through those engagements, we are hearing what the communities, what the childcare providers, what Indigenous governments want as a model. And we're hearing all of those options that the Member just identified. There's some communities, as he points out, where it's difficult to find a group or nonprofit to provide childcare. And in some communities, there's not enough children. Some communities, there's not a desire. So we'll never get to -- I don't think we'll likely ever get to a hundred percent of communities having childcare all the time. But I'm open to all of those options. Whatever fits a particular community, I think is what we need to look at. So we're still early in this engagement, and I look forward to being able to, you know, present to the committee and have some good discussions about what this could look like based on all of the feedback we're getting. And I have to say I appreciate the effort that the early childhood educators have put into providing this feedback. They have been a part of a lot of different symposiums, a lot of engagements. And, as well, Indigenous governments have been engaging with ECE on a number of different issues. So I want to thank them all for their participation as well. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Oral questions. Member for Frame Lake, round 2.

ORAL QUESTION 732-19(2):
LAND USE PLANNING

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. I don't want to go back to watching bad movies. But I think I have a solution here for the Minister of Lands. I continue to raise this issue with the federal government not living up to its obligation to fund land use planning under the Tlicho Agreement. If we can't get the federal government to the table to contribute, there is a dispute resolution process laid out in the Tlicho Agreement. Can the Minister tell us why GNWT has not invoked the dispute resolution process to get land use planning finally underway and have the federal government pick up its share of costs. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's not a bad movie. We're trying to actually move forward. So I keep on saying we're moving forward, and we're making progress. So a dispute mechanism is when we're not get moving forward. It may be not at the speed that the Member wants or I would want but we have a process in place that involves the GNWT, the Government of Canada, and Indigenous governments working together trying to get it resolved. And the challenge that we've seen right now is Section 35. We've seen some hiccups. Now we're trying to deal with that. And like I said previously, the federal government has looked at potentially bringing a facilitator nation to nation working together to get this resolved. And that's what we're trying to do. So a dispute mechanism does not need to be put in place right now because we are moving forward. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. If we're moving forward, why have I been asking these questions for the last year? I just don't get it. If you can't get someone to pay their fair share, Mr. Speaker, that sounds like a dispute to me. Can the Minister explain to me why this is not a dispute and shouldn't be brought to the dispute resolution process, as set out in the agreement? Look, first stage of any dispute is usually you've got to get the parties to sit down and talk about it. You can then go to mediation. Then you can go to arbitration if they can't sort it out. It's a long process. But why will this government not take the first step to invoke the dispute resolution process? Merci, Mr. Speaker.

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can't talk about the past. That's gone. What I can tell you about right now is the Government of Canada, the Tlicho Government, and the Government of Northwest Territories are working together. We're talking about face-to-face, bringing a facilitator. So if they're willing to do that and our Indigenous governments are willing to do this process, why do we as the Government of Northwest Territories need to bring in the dispute mechanism? We don't need to do that unless it's our last resort. So right now, the Government of the Canada, the Tlicho Government, and the Northwest Territories are moving together trying to get this resolved. We are willing to work with them within the system, and that is our last resort. And right now, we've been told by Tlicho, by the Government of Canada, and our officials that we are moving forward. So we are trying to get this resolved in a process that works for everybody. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. I want to thank the Minister for that. Look, I think I'm going to be here a year from now asking the same questions. But I'll keep pushing this a little bit further, Mr. Speaker. There's two separate issues here. One is overlapping traditional land use, interest in the Wek'eezhii Management Area. That's one issue. The other issue, though, is one party refuses to start to pay for its portion or all of the portion of the process. Those are two separate disputes, Mr. Speaker. I'm talking about our government starting to initiate dispute resolution on getting the Feds to start to pay their fair share. Will the Minister commit to invoking the dispute resolution process around that issue alone, getting the Feds to pay their fair share? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I guess my colleague's not going to like my answer. No, we're not going to invoke the dispute process right now. We're not going to do that. I totally agree that the federal government needs to pay for their fair share. And we're working on that right now. So if it's working and we're moving forward, then why would you invoke this process? So I cannot in good conscience invoke something that's not going to help the process. That, to me, is our last resort, and that's what we need to do. So I understand the passion of the Member. And I'm hoping that within a year's time when he brings it up again, we can have a finality to it. We can have the answers. We can show the progress. But right now, the answer is no. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

ORAL QUESTION 733-19(2):
HUMAN RESOURCES

MS. MARTSELOS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Minister of human resources. Mr. Speaker, can the Minister acknowledge the hiring culture in the NWT? It is not accountable and transparent. Complete denial of this culture is not acceptable. Would the Minister agree?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Thebacha. Minister responsible for Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, no, I don't agree that the entire hiring system of the GNWT is not transparent. It is certainly a complex system at times. There are quite a number of pieces of legislation policy that need to be adhered to and followed. The Collective Agreement has to be adhered to and followed. And in doing so, that, again, that does require a fairly rigorous process

and a fairly -- sometimes one might think of it being a complex process. If it's not always very well understood, just as the Affirmative Action Policy is not always very well understood. And all of those things together do lead to a number of questions that come forward. But that's not a lack of transparency. That is a complex system that perhaps we need to do a better job of explaining. It's also an opportunity, as I've certainly said before, to look again at the Affirmative Action Policy that we had in place and ensure that people understand it and determine whether or not it's meeting the needs that we all have and if it's not, to look back and see if there's a better way of doing things. That's a lengthy investigation and a lengthy piece of work. But, again, it doesn't speak to the fact that the process right now is not transparent. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. MARTSELOS: Mr. Speaker, does the Minister believe in the truth and reconciliation in changing this culture of 'who you know and not what you know'? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, those are two separate questions. Mr. Speaker, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission is one of the core and founding things that every government in this country right now needs to be paying attention to and acting upon. And I firmly and personally believe very much in what is spoken of the calls to action in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Speaking separately about the work of the Department of human resources and the hiring practices of human resources, again, there's quite a lot that's going on to improve what we have in human resources here in the Northwest Territories. There's labour force in -- there's a labour force survey being done right now to understand what population it is that we want to be better serving. At last information from census, the 2016 census, the labour force was comprised of 41.6 percent individuals who are Indigenous, and, of course, our hiring is usually down in the 30 percent. So we do have some work to do. We acknowledge that. And that's one of the reasons we're rolling out the Indigenous Recruitment Retention Framework, to put targets on every department so they can really do a better job of achieving that level of being truly representative. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. MARTSELOS: Mr. Speaker, does the Minister understand that the culture of hiring in the Northwest Territories is troubled, has double standards, and unfair to the people of the NWT?

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, speaking about a culture of hiring, Mr. Speaker, I don't accept that that characterization is fair, that the idea of saying that it

is troubled and has double standards or is unfair. I don't accept that characterization, Mr. Speaker. There's a lot of people within the entire GNWT, 5,000 strong, who care deeply about the territory, who care deeply about the people that they serve, and care deeply about having a representative workforce. That is not to say that every process is perfect. That is not to say that every public servant is perfect any more than every other individual anywhere in any large organization is perfect. But there is tremendous work underway to try to always do better, to be aware and to be conscious of what we do. There's now mandatory cultural sensitivity training for all staff. There is a new recruitment retention framework coming out to provide those targets that I think we've agreed would better position hiring the -- the hiring committees to know to look forward to what they can bring on.

I would note that in the last fiscal year of 2019-20, I believe, the number of Indigenous recruitments who were -- were actually hired than the number of those who applied. So there's a real effort underway to change the way in which we do things in terms of hiring Indigenous candidates.

And as far as, I mean, broadly speaking and everyone who's applying to the GNWT, again, there is an appeal process. There's opportunities to speak to a hiring committee. There's opportunities to get advice from human resources of resumé writing, interviews. To truly understand the process, it is complex, and it's complex because we have legal obligations and policy obligations.

So all of those things exist. We are doing our best to make sure that they're available, and we'll continue to do so. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Final supplementary. Member for Thebacha.

MS. MARTSELOS: Mr. Speaker, hopefully in my past two statements gives insight to the hiring processes. Would the Minister consider a complete renewal strategy within the Government of the Northwest Territories for the human resource department? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the division of Human Resources within the Department of Finance is -- really, they service the clients of all -- they're the departments of their clients. So this is again not something that we can look at one or two or a handful of individuals who are being -- who are within the department or within the Department of Finance. It is about the entire Government of the Northwest Territories, every department, every community, and every hiring manager out there that they are taking the mandatory training, both in terms of cultural sensitivity, that they are taking the

mandatory training about how to do government hiring, and that they are relying on the tools available to them through the department of human -- I'm sorry -- through the Department of Finance and the human resource professionals that we have. The Department of Finance is going through the government renewal first to ensure that the spending of money that we have there aligns with the priorities and values of the Government of the Northwest Territories and completing right now a framework that will again ensure that when we do that hiring, that every department is really providing a framework so that human resources can look at each department. And you know, again, Mr. Speaker, the point and the purpose of all that is to continually renew the work that we do, to continually renew the public service, and to ensure that it is responsive and representative. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Oral questions. Written questions. Returns to written questions. Replies to Commissioner's Address. Petitions. Reports of committees on the review of bills. Member for Kam Lake.

Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills

BILL 25: AN ACT TO AMEND THE EDUCATION ACT

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Your committee would like to report on its consideration of Bill 25, an Act to Amend the Education Act. Bill 25 received second reading in the Legislative Assembly on March 30th, 2021, and was referred to the Standing Committee on Social Development for review. The standing committee held a public hearing with the Minister of Education, Culture, and Employment and completed its clause-by-clause review of the bill on May 31st, 2021.

Mr. Speaker, the committee reports that Bill 25, An Act to Amend the Education Act is ready for consideration in Committee of the Whole. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Kam Lake. Reports of committees on the review of bills. Reports of standing and special committees. Tabling of Documents. Minister responsible for Finance.

Tabling of Documents

TABLED DOCUMENT 411-19(2):
SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES
(INFRASTRUCTURE EXPENDITURES), NO.1,
2021-2022

TABLED DOCUMENT 412-19(2):
SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES (OPERATIONS
EXPENDITURES), NO. 1, 2021-2022.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table the following two documents: Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 1, 2021-2022; and Supplementary Estimates (Operation Expenditures), No. 1, 2021-2022. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Tabling of documents. Honourable Premier.

TABLED DOCUMENT 413-19(2):
EMERGING STRONGER: PLANNING THE NWT'S
SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC RECOVERY
TOGETHER

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following document: Emerging Stronger: Planning the NWT's Social and Economic Recovery Together. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Honourable Premier. Tabling of documents. Minister responsible for the Public Utilities Board.

TABLED DOCUMENT 414-19(2):
2020 ANNUAL REPORT – NORTHWEST
TERRITORIES PUBLIC UTILITIES BOARD

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following document: 2020 Northwest Territories Public Utilities Board Annual Report for the year ending December 31st, 2020. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Notices of Motion

MOTION 34-19(2):
REFERRAL OF TABLED DOCUMENT 413-19(2):
EMERGING STRONGER PLANNING THE NWT'S
SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC RECOVERY
TOGETHER TO COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. I give notice that on Wednesday, June 2nd, 2021, I'll move the following motion. Now Therefore I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Hay River South, that Tabled Document 413-19(2): Emerging Stronger: Planning the NWT's Social and Economic Recovery Together be referred to Committee of the Whole for consideration. Merci, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. Notices of motion. Motions. Notices of motion for the first reading of bills. First reading of bills. Member for Frame Lake.

First Reading of Bills

BILL 29:
RESOURCE ROYALTY INFORMATION
DISCLOSURE STATUTE AMENDMENT ACT

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. I move, seconded by the Member for Nunakput, that Bill 29, Resource Royalty Information Disclosure Statute Amendment Act be read for the first time. Merci, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. Motion is in order and is non debatable. All those in favour. All those opposed. Any abstentions. Motion is carried.

---Carried

Bill 29 has had first reading. First reading of bills. Second reading of bills. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters: Member's Statement 161-19(2); Tabled Document 411-19(2); Tabled Document 412-19(2) with Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes in the chair.

Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters

MS. SEMMLER: I will now call Committee of Whole to order. What is the wish of the committee? Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Madame le President. The committee wishes that the chair rise and report progress. I would like to move it as a motion. Madam Chair, I'd like to move a motion that the chair rise and report progress. Thank you.

MS. SEMMLER: Thank you. There's a motion on the floor to report progress. The motion is in order and non-debatable. All those in favour. Opposed. Motion is carried.

---Carried.

I will now rise and report progress.

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

Report of Committee of the Whole

MS. SEMMLER: Mr. Speaker, your committee has been considering Ministers' Statement 161-19(2);

Tabled Documents 411-19(2) and Tabled Document 412-19(2). And I'd like to report progress. And, Mr. Speaker, I move that the report of Committee of the Whole be concurred with. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes. Do we have a seconder? Member for Nunakput. All those in favour. All those opposed. Motion is carried.

---Carried.

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 Tuesday, June 1st, 2021, 1:30 p.m.:

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

19. Second Reading of Bills

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

- Committee Report 13-19(2), Report on the Review of the 2019-2020 Northwest Territories Ombud Annual Report
- Minister's Statement 161-19(2), Emerging Stronger: COVID-19 Social and Economic Recovery Plan
- Tabled Document 411-19(2), Supplementary Estimates (Infrastructure Expenditures, No. 1, 2021-2022
- Tabled Document 412-19(2), Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 1, 2021-2022

21. Report of Committee of the Whole

22. Third Reading of Bills

23. Orders of the Day

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

--- ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at 3:27 p.m.

