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**The Honourable Frederick Blake Jr, Speaker**

**Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories**

# Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

## Members of the Legislative Assembly

### Speaker

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

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**Hon. Diane Archie**

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

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(Kam Lake)

**Hon. Paulie Chinna**  
(Sahtu)

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*Minister responsible for Homelessness*  
*Minister responsible for the Public Utilities Board*  
*Minister responsible for the Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission*

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(Range Lake)

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*Minister responsible for the COVID-19 Coordinating Secretariat*

**Hon. Julie Green**

(Yellowknife Centre)  
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*Minister responsible for Persons with Disabilities*  
*Minister responsible for Seniors*

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(Nunakput)

**Mr. Rylund Johnson**  
(Yellowknife North)

**Ms. Frieda Martselos**  
(Thebacha)

**Ms. Katrina Nokleby**  
(Great Slave)

**Vacant**  
(Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh)

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

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

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

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

**Hon. Shane Thompson**  
(Nahendeh)

*Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs*  
*Minister of Environment and Natural Resources*  
*Minister of Lands*  
*Minister responsible for Youth*

**Hon. Caroline Wawzonek**

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

**Ms. Jane Weyallon-Armstrong**  
(Monfwi)

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>PRAYER</b> .....	<b>3267</b>
<b>MINISTERS' STATEMENTS</b> .....	<b>3267</b>
192-19(2) – Temporary Day Shelter (Green) .....	3267
193-19(2) – Shelters (Chinna) .....	3268
<b>MEMBERS' STATEMENTS</b> .....	<b>3269</b>
United Nation Declaration on the Right of Indigenous People and Land Rights (Johnson).....	3269
Housing Shortage (Jacobson).....	3269
Caribou (Weyallon- Armstrong).....	3270
Northwest Territories Power Corporation Employee Position (Martselos).....	3270
Immigration Strategy (Cleveland) .....	3271
Support for Local Artisans (Rocky Simpson).....	3271
Tourism (Nokleby) .....	3272
Aurora College Transformation Budget (O'Reilly).....	3273
Eulogy for Tommy Norberg (Thompson).....	3273
<b>ORAL QUESTIONS</b> .....	<b>3273</b>
<b>WRITTEN QUESTIONS</b> .....	<b>3283</b>
<b>REPORTS OF STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES</b> .....	<b>3284</b>
<b>MOTIONS</b> .....	<b>3287</b>
Report 23-19(2): Move the Review of the 2018-2019 and 2019-2020 Public Accounts to Committee of the Whole.....	3287
<b>TABLING OF DOCUMENTS</b> .....	<b>3287</b>
<b>FIRST READING OF BILLS</b> .....	<b>3287</b>
Bill 41, Justice Administration Statutes Amendment Act .....	3287
<b>CONSIDERATION IN COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE OF BILLS AND OTHER MATTERS</b> .....	<b>3288</b>
<b>REPORT OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE</b> .....	<b>3288</b>
<b>THIRD READING OF BILLS</b> .....	<b>3288</b>
Bill 24, An Act to Amend the Revolving Funds Act .....	3288
<b>ORDERS OF THE DAY</b> .....	<b>3288</b>



**YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES****Thursday, December 2, 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, Ms. Martselos, Ms. Nokleby, Mr. O'Reilly, Ms. Semmler, Hon. R.J. Simpson, Mr. Rocky Simpson, Hon. Shane Thompson, Hon. Caroline Wawzonek, Ms. Weyallon-Armstrong

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

**Prayer**

---Prayer

**DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. Lesa Semmler):**

Welcome, colleagues. Colleagues, before we continue with orders of the day, I ask that you be conscious of the interpretation service being offered and urge you to slow down when you're speaking. Our interpreters offer an important service to allow constituents to listen to the Assembly's proceedings in our territory's official languages.

Ministers' Statements. Minister for Health and Social Services.

**Ministers' Statements****MINISTER'S STATEMENT 192-19(2):  
TEMPORARY DAY SHELTER**

**HON. JULIE GREEN:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am pleased to announce the temporary day shelter will open next week at the site of the former visitors centre in Yellowknife. The day shelter is vital to keeping residents experiencing homelessness safe during the depths of winter.

Madam Speaker, the need for a temporary day shelter arose from the public health order to physically distance indoors during the COVID-19 pandemic. This order, while critical to keeping all residents safe, has reduced capacity at the day shelter and sobering centre on 50th Street, meaning that many individuals who need that service are unable to rely on finding space available during the cold weather.

The Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority has been delivering additional temporary day sheltering services since the beginning of the pandemic. This service protects the health and safety of members of the community who are experiencing homelessness with shelter, bathrooms, food, laundry facilities, and program navigation.

Madam Speaker, providing this essential service is an important component of this government's commitment to reconciliation.

The City of Yellowknife's point-in-time count data collected in 2021 shows a significant overrepresentation of Indigenous people. Of those surveyed, 91 percent identify as Indigenous compared to just 23 percent of the total Yellowknife population. This data also tells us that 62 percent of the homeless population had at least one parent who attended residential school and 19 percent attended residential school themselves.

We can't ignore the tragic legacy of residential schools whose damaging effects are still felt today. Caring for and providing essential services to people experiencing homelessness and battling addictions is part of facing that legacy and advancing reconciliation. Despite the importance of this service, however, there have been significant challenges to secure a suitable option.

Madam Speaker, I am pleased to advise that through a concerted effort to find a solution, we secured the temporary day shelter modular through our partnership with the private sector. Contractors offered the use of their modular work camp units following the completion of the Tlicho all-season road. These units have been placed on the former Northern Frontier Visitors Centre lot. Use of the lot is made possible by a declaration of a local state of emergency by my colleague Minister Thompson as Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs.

The temporary day shelter will open in this location in the coming days and will provide safety and basic services to meet the needs of members of the community who are experiencing homelessness. The goal is to secure the required municipal permits for this shelter to remain in operation until the completion of the permanent Wellness and Recovery Centre in early 2024.

Madam Speaker, the opening of this temporary facility illustrates the importance of collaboration and is an example of what can be accomplished when we collectively commit to the needs of all residents, including those experiencing homelessness and addiction. I wish to extend my gratitude to Minister Thompson for using the Emergency Management

Act to ensure timely access to the site; Kavanaugh Waste Management for notifying us of the camp unit option; Kiewit Construction for helping get the units on site; and local contractors for their work to prepare the units for occupancy. I also want to thank staff from the Department of Health and Social Services and the Health and Social Services Authority for their tireless work to find a suitable alternative for the temporary day shelter. Without the efforts, we would not have been able to make this solution a reality.

I would also like to recognize the City of Yellowknife for making the Yellowknife community arena available for use while the visitors centre site is being prepared.

Madam Speaker, I want to thank those community members who have voiced their support for this important work. The GNWT shares their commitment to the provision of respectful and dignified services for all residents. The temporary shelter represents another step in the path towards finding a permanent location for these services. We are working diligently on the design of the permanent Wellness and Recovery Centre and will continue to look for support from the community to make it a reality.

Lastly, Madam Speaker, and certainly not least, I want to acknowledge the good work done by all shelters, including Inuvik, Hay River and Fort Simpson, to address and overcome challenges presented by COVID-19. Especially in my thoughts right now are clients and staff impacted by the recent fire at the Inuvik warming centre. I appreciate the efforts to relocate these clients and ensure services to them continue. The perseverance shown by shelter staff, across the territory is commendable, and I thank each and every one of them for your dedication. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister. Ministers' Statements. Minister for our Northwest Territories Housing Corporation.

#### MINISTER'S STATEMENT 193-19(2): SHELTERS

**HON. PAULIE CHINNA:** Madam Speaker, winter has arrived, temperatures are dropping and will continue for the next couple of months. Dropping temperatures bring great concerns for under-housed residents, without a warm place to live, without comforts that many of us enjoy day to day. Our partners who provide shelter services have been planning for months.

I would like to speak about the vulnerable and the critical of non-government organizations that have come together and the shelter workers to do, and to try and work with those without a home and a safe and healthy place to live.

In Inuvik, working the overall direction of many partners, including the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation, the Gwich'in Tribal Council, the Town of Inuvik, and people with lived-experience, two shelters are providing much needed support for persons experiencing homelessness. The Inuvik Emergency Warming Shelter, which is open to anyone requiring a place to sleep and a meal; and the Inuvik Homeless Shelter, which supports persons that may be more stable and independent but do not have a place to call home.

With the recent fire at the Inuvik Emergency Warming Shelter, we know that services to our underhoused population is more critical than ever. We are actively working with our partners and various levels of government to ensure that the displaced that we provide supports and can continue, and I am committed to keeping the House updated as we navigate a path forward.

In Hay River, the Hay River Committee for Persons with Disabilities operates an emergency shelter providing meals and a safe place to stay. In Fort Simpson, the Village of Fort Simpson coordinates the operation of shelters with the advice of community parties that includes the Liidlii Kue First Nation.

Yellowknife has long been a catchment area for people without a place to live. The Salvation Army provides shelter to men. The Women's Society Shelter provides a shelter for women as well as offers semi-independent rooms and runs a Housing First program. The YWCA provides emergency rental housing for homeless families. The Northwest Territories Housing Corporation provides operational funding for all of these programs. As well, our partners delivering -- for the NWT Housing Corporation is the Northern Pathways. The Housing program provides important opportunities for housing stability in Behchoko, Fort Simpson, Aklavik, and Fort Good Hope. Our partners include the Behchoko Friendship Society, the Liidlii Kue First Nation, the Aklavik Indian Band, and the K'asho Got'ine Housing Society. The Northern Pathways is recognized by the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness as a best practice and innovative model for addressing homelessness in rural and remote communities -- northern Indigenous communities.

Madam Speaker, the NWT Housing Corporation will continue to support all these operations by providing policy and procedural guidances where appropriate, supporting training opportunities for frontline staff, developing physical standards for facilities, and providing operational funding.

Winter is a dangerous time for people without a roof over their heads. I want to commend and thank all of our partners for stepping up when they are needed most. These are not simple jobs caring for the less fortunate amongst us. Often program participants may come with a number of complex issues including mental health, addiction, and physical health. Our partners and frontline workers provide supports focusing on people's strengths, not their weaknesses. I could not be more proud of the work that they are keeping and working with our residents and keeping them safe and secure.

I would also like to thank the Housing Corporation and the several staff that have come together in partnership and have created this partnership between the Housing Corporation and the non-profit organizations. Mahsi, Madam Speaker.

**DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister. Ministers' statements. Members' statements. Member for Yellowknife North.

### Members' Statements

#### MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON UNITED NATION DECLARATION ON THE RIGHT OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLE AND LAND RIGHTS

**MR. JOHNSON:** Madam Speaker, the other night I was watching the news and after years of Iran failing to come to the table to negotiate a nuclear deal, I heard the lead negotiator on that file say they expected a deal within one year. And Madam Speaker, I thought let's hire that guy to settle some land claims.

Madam Speaker, the time, all across Canada in fact, not just the GNWT problem, to conclude a land claim agreement is getting longer and longer. They are becoming slower and slower to negotiate and as the time period gets longer, the number of leaders involved in each negotiating gets longer, only exasperating the problem.

I believe the root of this cause is many. There is a little bit of blame on all parties and probably a lot to blame on lawyers like me who have turned it into a largely technocratic exercise that can take years as opposed to a political one about nation building. Madam Speaker, but I do believe that if we had the political will we could move much faster in this area. In fact we negotiated devolution, the single largest land transfer in Canadian history, much quicker than we have negotiated any other agreement.

I note there are different factors all around but, Madam Speaker, I believe that we need to take a new approach and press reset. We need to look at

all of our negotiating mandates in light of devolution, all of our government agreements in light of the powers we now hold, and have a whole scale rewrite. I believe that we need third party review of this, preferably a third party who has actually settled some agreements. I know there are a lot of ex-Chiefs and ex-negotiators in this territory who would love to see those mandates and provide some insight.

I believe it's worth noting that I have never seen a negotiating mandate. I have never been at a negotiating table so everything I say is to be taken with a grain of salt. But there are people in this territory who know how to actually get these things done, and it has been far too long.

Madam Speaker, you we have a suite of policies, whether it be the land lease only policy, land withdrawals, and various other policies that are, in theory, meant to help us assist in settling the unsettled claims but I think that we have to ask ourselves if whether those are actually hindrance. If everything meeting that my Cabinet colleagues goes to is about cabin lease taxes, I think that a hindrance to actually getting these claims done. I believe we know need a wholesale review with third party and public input on what we are negotiating and what we are willing to give up in light of our implementation of UNDRIP and our commitment to get this done as an Assembly. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Member. Members' statements. Member for Nunakput.

#### MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON HOUSING SHORTAGE

**MR. JACOBSON:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Today I just want to thank all the people in my communities that -- I'm really proud to bring forward that our frontline staff are doing so well working together in all four communities, and thank the health care crew, our school teachers, our RCMP staff, and all our local leadership in Nunakput. But I believe the ability and the diligent work of everybody in the communities to keep us safe and hard work is not going unseen, and it is to keep our communities safe and I am so grateful for that, Madam Speaker.

I would like to remind all this week I brought some Member's statements forward that our housing in Nunakput is in a crisis, Madam Speaker. My riding of Nunakput, people are suffering. It has not been a priority of our government; it needs to be a priority, to put forward all housing for the people across the territory. We need to access more money from CMHC. We need to start societies like Fort Good Hope, and all our communities that we represent and I represent, everybody should have a roof over their head and enough proper housing for the people, Madam Speaker.

This year, barges in the communities before freeze up, they were delayed but there was a big concern but in some cases looks, we have to start focusing on the people that we represent and the contracts, but I know they go to the work done and I am thankful for that, and it could have been a bigger than what it was, and I would like to thank MTS and the ministry again for working so diligently to get those boats into the communities.

Madam Speaker, I just want to encourage everyone in our communities and across the territory, in Nunakput, stay safe, take care of each other. If you have symptoms, stay home, get tested. And if you're not vaccinated yet, please consider getting vaccinated for your family and for the people, for our Elders. And keep our community safe and Nunakput's in our thoughts and prayers. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

#### MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON CARIBOU

**MS. WEYALLON-ARMSTRONG:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Today I'm doing it on caribou. Tlicho people have lived with caribou since the beginning of time. Traditionally when the caribou moved, Tlicho people followed. They would move from their settlement area to the barren lands to follow the path of the caribou. The meat would be harvested, the hide tanned, the bone marrow boiled, and other bones used for tools. Every part of the caribou was used and an important part of the Tlicho way of life. Today, Madam Speaker, we know the relationship with caribou is changing because the numbers of the herd continue to decline, and a ban is in place to protect the caribou for future generations.

There is a concern about this due to conflicting information regarding caribou herds. The herds of the caribou that we heard of. Accordingly when the ban was in force, Tlicho people were told the ban would be for three months in 2010. It is now 2021 and the number of herds reported is still low. The ban has been in place for over ten years.

Madam Speaker, there is concern that people who have always relied on caribou to survive are being separated from their traditional way of life. People identify themselves by their relationship to caribou. The current state of the herd and the ban on hunting impacts Tlicho way of life. The Department of Environment and Natural Resources has a lot of on-the-land programs to support families to get out on the land. I recognize the department's efforts to support healthy relationships with the land. But,

Madam Speaker, it is very difficult for Tlicho people to live as they always have since the herd is not easily accessible. Thank you, and I will have questions for the Minister for Environment and Natural Resources.

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

#### MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON NORTHWEST TERRITORIES POWER CORPORATION EMPLOYEE POSITION

**MS. MARTSELOS:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, there is one issue that I have tried resolving off the floor of the House. But today, I have not had sufficient responses on. Perhaps here I can get some clearer answers. The issue is about a position within the Northwest Territories Power Corporation which used to exist but has since been changed or terminated. That position is the regional South Slave superintendent.

Madam Speaker, I have tried asking now two separate Ministers of NCPCC to reinstate the South Slave superintendent position at the Fort Smith NCPCC office. The last Minister told me that this position never even existed in Fort Smith or in any other of their regional offices. Well, that's odd, Madam Speaker, because I know a Fort Smith resident who is a former employee of NCPCC whose title was superintendent and he worked there for nearly 20 years.

Madam Speaker, I asked oral questions about this on March 30th, 2021, but the Minister did not have any substantive answers. I have also sent emails January 25th, April 19th, and on May 10th, all of which went unanswered providing no responses at all.

Madam Speaker, I am asking that this position be reinstated and be based in Fort Smith just as it had been one time before. This might seem like a little thing to some people, but this position is important to Fort Smith. In fact, the entire Fort Smith leadership agrees with that and stated that to the Minister when she visited in March earlier this year. Especially with the expansion of the Taltson Dam underway, a position like will be beneficial with the undertaking of this project, particularly because the largest hydro dam in the NWT is in the Thebacha region. Madam Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to conclude my statement.

---Unanimous consent granted

Lastly, Madam Speaker, I do not agree with the current management and reporting structure within the regional office of the NCPCC. It is counter to regional decision-making authority. Also, it is not okay that all or most of the reporting of NCPCC in the

South Slave region began to be based out of Fort Simpson. The department has denied that but people have told me that, and there are other ways to avoid duplication of jobs too, since that was another excuse that the government has used to avoid reinstating this position and its former are reporting structure. I will have questions for the Minister responsible for NCPG later today. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

#### MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON IMMIGRATION STRATEGY

**MS. CLEVELAND:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. We are nearing the end of the GNWT's five-year immigration strategy with a vision of building a skilled and culturally diverse workforce that meets local employer's needs and leads to a vibrant diverse economy. The existing strategy lacked measurable targets so I can't say if the GNWT met its goals, but we have never filled our immigration quota so before this government sets a course for the next five years, I would like to make some suggestion.

First, a made in the NWT immigration program. Last year the Yukon launched a three-year location-restricted open work permit pilot program to drive immigration to fill industry needs. This pilot was not a program of convenience but one of necessity for economic recovery. In addition, the Yukon has gone the extra steps to establish an immigration exemption policy that allows newcomers to work for up to three different employers without the need for a labor market impact assessment. The pilot project reflects the unique labor market conditions in Yukon communities and was responsive to the specific needs of employers.

Labor supply shortfalls currently constrain business innovation in Yellowknife. Without people to fill the labor demands of an economic development dream, the dream stays an idea, literally, without legs to walk it forward.

Second is a shift in focus to industry support. There is a direct correlation between our cost of living and immigration, Madam Speaker. When businesses close, everyone loses. There is a chain reaction of shrinkage, loss of morale, and depression of our northern economy that increases the cost of living not only in Yellowknife but across the Northwest Territories.

This week, I asked for a shift in procurement focus from service to government to service to industry. I have the same request for immigration. An industry-focused effort to support economic development by supporting staffing needs we can't fill in the Northwest Territories.

Third, Madam Speaker, is a focused effort on immigration under one roof and one Minister responsible. Today if I want to discuss the immigration challenges of my constituents, I need to direct my questions to three different departments. The GNWT must consolidate its immigration efforts to serve industry needs through active outreach to be effective.

Successful economic recovery for the NWT relies on immigration. This is not a zero sum equation that cancels our need for education, increased graduation rates, skilled northern workers, housing, and northern procurement. Immigration supports our goals in the face of building up Northerners and our collective vision for the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

---Applause

**DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member. Members' statements. Member for Hay River South.

#### MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON SUPPORT FOR LOCAL ARTISANS

**MR. ROCKY SIMPSON:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, going into the festive season, which I believe is the time for family, friendship, and sharing, I have a favour to ask of all the residents in the Northwest Territories. I ask that this holiday you recognize and support your local artisans and consider purchasing the many creations that each makes available to us throughout the year.

Madam Speaker, one group of people that have not stopped working, or asked to be accommodated during this pandemic, has been the artisans. They have continued throughout with their art, to bring some comfort and reflection during these difficult times where some have had to make difficult life choices.

Madam Speaker, when it comes to design and producing the many beautiful traditional and non-traditional creations we see every day, we must be reminded that the talent many of these artisans enjoy was passed down to them by a long line of present and past artisans. With this talent comes the importance of utilizing and respecting those natural resources harvested, or extracted, for use in their creations which will become part of our history.

Madam Speaker, for many of the artisans, it is not so much about the money. It is about passion, it is about vision, and that of sharing the artistic knowledge and talent that has been passed down to them or that which has been self-taught. However, we all know the value of the many unique pieces that are being produced and we must be sure that artisans receive fair compensation.

Madam Speaker, over the years I have had the pleasure of having many local and regional artisans visit me with traditional and gallery-quality creations. I believe that for the many of us who do not have the artistic ability, or may have not yet discovered our artistic potential, can still do our part by supporting and encouraging others to support those many talented artisans through the purchase and showcasing their creations.

Madam Speaker, I also encourage everyone to visit the NWT Arts website for artists and creations near you. And in advance, I would like to thank all those persons who will be supporting the artisans of the NWT this Christmas season and all those who have supported the artisans over the years. Please do not stop with this support. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member. Members' statements. Member for Great Slave.

#### MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON TOURISM

**MS. NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, I am doing my part to help out with what the Hay River South MLA is saying.

Currently, Madam Speaker, our out-of-territory tourists are not permitted to enter the NWT for leisure travel unless they are travelling directly to an approved remote tourism location. According to operators, to gain this designation they must submit a rigorous COVID plan that includes additional insurance for medevacs, plans for isolating guests, and provisions to bring doctors to site should a COVID diagnosis be required. After almost two years of literally no business, operators are finding themselves in the difficult position of having to decide if they close their businesses or go further into debt hoping that one day they will see a light at the end of the tunnel.

The tourism industry is an indirect and direct supporter of northern businesses including retail, restaurants, art galleries, suppliers, and airlines. We have seen a huge loss in our tourism sector with many businesses changing the services they offer or shutting down completely. Operators are selling their inventory of gear, and many of our shops and retail outlets are leaving or switching to online storefronts to survive the effects of the pandemic restrictions.

With the vaccination of children aged 5 to 11 in the NWT, I understand that the order restricting leisure travel by non-residents is being looked at and hopefully we can expect changes soon. Will these changes come quickly enough to save our vulnerable tourism sector? I really don't know and have to admit I'm not optimistic given how long it will

take for operators to recover any sort of profit after years of poor return.

As part of ongoing support for tourism marketing and infrastructure programming, the GNWT announced that the Tourism Product Diversification and Marketing Program and the Community Tourism Infrastructure Contribution Program are officially open for submissions and are eliminating a step by removing the expressions of interest phase.

Has this move by the GNWT come quickly enough to save the NWT tourism industry through the remainder of this pandemic?

When I see outfitters selling assets and hear rumors of large operators closing businesses that not only serve tourists but also local residents, I'm sad for them and worried for the future of the sector. Tourism operators have run out of resources, restrictions have starved their operations, and current entry requirements continue to turn people away. If we don't work hard now to help them, there is no way they will weather the COVID storm. And I have to ask, given the current bleak outlook are we already too late? Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

#### MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON AURORA COLLEGE TRANSFORMATION BUDGET

**MR. O'REILLY:** Merci, Madam la Presidente. I participated in a Standing Communicate on Social Development and public technical briefing on Aurora College's transformation on October 27th, 2021. It appears that the work is largely on track. As the Minister knows, and I have publicly stated, I support further development of, and investment in, our education system as a whole, including post-secondary education. I support a polytechnic university as way to focus development of our knowledge economy; ensure our investment in student financial assistance is maximized; and, to give to our students more options.

One part of the reason of the briefing that caught my ear as the federal government commitment of \$8 million in their last budget to support the transformation. While this is a welcome investment, it really pales in comparison to what has happened with federal funding or Yukon University.

In March 2019, the federal government announced \$26 million for a new science building for the then-Yukon College to assist with their transformation to a university. In January 2021, there was a further funding announcement of \$10.4 million in funding and in-kind contributions to establish a strategy for

patient-oriented research, support for a unit, and a patient-oriented research and trials unit in the Yukon.

This made me wonder why the GNWT is not getting a similar investment. I have always wondered what our Cabinet colleagues take to Ottawa as funding requests for submissions and what priority is given to various asks.

In the last Assembly, virtually all the effort went into getting big infrastructure funding for roads and more roads. I suspect that tune has not changed much, or not enough, with this Cabinet.

As I understand it, we will not have a full budget for the Aurora College polytechnic university transformation, including facilities, until July 2022. We can't wait that long.

We have a new and what appears to be ambitious federal government in a minority situation, again, almost like our own consensus government here. We need to get our case before them for funding and investment in our post-secondary system now. I will have questions for the Minister of Education later today. Merci, Madam Speaker.

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

#### MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON EULOGY FOR TOMMY NORBERG

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. On Tuesday, September 16th, Tommy passed away in his home. Tommy was known by many others during his life. In the residential school in Aklavik, many of his friends called him Tommy Tucker. At Read Island, he earned the name Aqpaq, for running messages camp-to-camp.

In Aklavik, he was told to help a single Gwich'in woman whom he didn't know. He would chop wood, haul ice, and trap for her. Before leaving Aklavik he finally learned that she was his aunt Caroline Moses.

He returned from school to Prince Albert Sound, where his uncle lived, to learn the life of a trapper and hunter until his father, Johnny Norberg, picked him up and took him to Read Island.

Tommy tells of his skating ability when he would skate on the river at Read Island to reach the trapline while Joe, his brother, would run the dogs. Sometimes Tommy would skate over 30 miles in a day.

Later in life, he was recruited for construction of the DEW Line sites. Wherever they were transferred to a site, there was no school, the children of school age were sent to residential school.

When their son Harry Maffa became of school age, Elva put her foot down telling Tommy to quit working because there's no more children that were going to be sent away to residential school. During that time they moved to Coppermine now known as Kugluktuk.

Tom and Elva went to visit their parents on Holman Island. While there, Tommy was offered a job of settlement maintainer. He maintained all the government buildings, including the school, nursing station, and operated the power plant. He built the first runway down the middle of town.

Eventually the government decided that the original site was not adequate to grow the community. Tommy was tasked with moving all the buildings to Queens Bay. The biggest piece of heavy equipment was a D4 Cat. He taught other men how to operate the equipment.

He's always talking to his daughters about going to school, getting an education, and a career for themselves. He reinforced that his grade 4 education from Aklavik was not sufficient. He encouraged his daughters to move where the jobs were and that home would always be there to come home to. He taught the boys and men in the family how to be prepared for unexpected situations especially when whales arrived. The young men and grandsons loved having him around while they wrenched, built sleds, or did equipment repairs. Supervising the operation and always giving tips, He kept them entertained, too, with stories. The boys loved his one-liners or comebacks.

Madam Speaker, I had the honor to be adopted by Tommy and Elva when I lived in Coppermine. My sisters, his siblings, friends and extended family and I will sadly miss him. The saving grace is he is now in heaven with his loving wife Elva. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member. Our thoughts and prayers are with the family. Members' statements. Returns to oral questions. Recognitions of visitors in the gallery. Acknowledgements. Oral questions. Member for Yellowknife North.

#### Oral Questions

##### ORAL QUESTION 852-19(2): UNITED NATIONS DECLARATION ON THE RIGHT OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLE AND LAND RIGHTS

**MR. JOHNSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. With calls across the country to return land to Indigenous governments and really at the heart of our standing land claims is a question about land. I was hoping the Premier could provide some insight.

Assuming we ever do settle the outstanding land claims, what percent of land in the NWT would we expect to remain public land versus private land? And I know that can be a hard question so perhaps some clarifying on surface or subsurface or what the general percentage has been in settled areas. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member. Honourable Premier.

**HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. As the Member stated, it's not an easy answer. It would be easy to say 10 percent, 50 percent, 75 percent, but it's not as easy as that. It all depends on the difference negotiations. So I'm going to try to explain some of it and of course offer a briefing to standing committee for more technical if they wish that, but the comparison of land quantum in claims can't be looked at in one area because there's negotiation process. Some take more cash, some takes more lands, some take more subsurface.

The other consideration we have to take when we look at settled lands and non-settled land is land that is publicly administered by the GNWT, land administered by municipalities, land that's owned in fee simple, land that's administrated by the federal government, and land that might be part of a national park or other conservation area. So, again -- and the other thing that's really -- comes into play as well is when some Indigenous governments in their negotiations are looking at exclusively Indigenous governments, which means only settled claims for their people, members of their people, and others are more inclusive in their provisions so they want to provide services to all the general public. Of course, all those factors have to be taken into consideration.

So, again, we're really flexible within that, depending on the needs, the region, the communities. Also overlapping lands. There's a number of lands where it's not just one Indigenous government; it's multi-Indigenous governments that have claims in for those lands so all that has to be taken into consideration. So there's no one size fits all.

But I think that it is worth noting, Madam Speaker, that in the NWT, our agreements are among the largest in the whole of the country in terms of land quantum, and I think that's where we are in regards to working with Indigenous governments in the NWT, is very progressive and sets an example for the whole of Canada and perhaps the whole of the world. So, again, it's not as easy an answer as I'd like it to be but if -- we will offer standing committee a briefing on it as well, a technical briefing. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**MR. JOHNSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I understand that it's complicated. I guess part of the

concern I hear from Indigenous governments is it's the only reason we have the land is devolution before and, you know, I think there's been a lot of criticism about having a third party at the table. And I guess my question is now that devolution is a bit of a defacto completion, is the agreement to sign on to devolution, and I think probably more importantly the corresponding royalty split, a condition for any future land claims as far as the GNWT is concerned?

**HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I know that Members don't like me to - us to say no in the House, but no, is not a condition of settling land claims. Land claims are separate. So devolution is a table. Many members have -- there's a mixture. Some have land claim settled, some have self-government settled, and some people are in the process and some are not even wanting to. So the devolution table is a table for all people to share royalties, to talk about land and resources and how we co-develop acts and regulations going forward, and every Indigenous government is welcomed to come to the table. Thank you.

**MR. JOHNSON:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would also appreciate any insight to whether we have updated our self-government mandates. My current understanding is that there's hundreds of pages which form the self-government mandate. There's a chapter on every single topic imaginable from health to education to government services. I mean, I have never seen any of this but I'm wondering if, given devolution, given the commitment to UNDRIP, whether a full rewrite of looking at all of the self-government mandates is occurring or has occurred? Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. A full rewrite of all them, you're right, it's a very big document; I think close a thousand pages and there are chapters on each area. The Member is correct in that as well. So it's not as easy as -- we're not looking at rewriting the whole thing. What we are looking at is building trust and being more transparent in this government. I know that the federal government does share their principles and interests around negotiations, and so we're saying why wouldn't we. You know, we do need to look at things like comparability, fairness, etcetera. But those things should be shared publicly. We take a lot of hits in the House. We take a lot of hits in the NWT saying that we're not reasonable, we're not fair. And so I do think, Madam Speaker, that by sharing our principles and interests of the mandates will actually outline that to people, and people know what they're dealing with. It's better for all of us going forward. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Thank you, Madam Premier. Final supplementary, Member for Yellowknife North.

**MR. JOHNSON:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would really appreciate if we shared some of those principles. I feel like asking questions about something I can't see is a bit of a search in the dark.

One of our commitments is to implement UNDRIP. To date, this House has seen no regulations. I don't believe there's been a single Cabinet policy change and certainly no legislation has changed to reflect UNDRIP. So my question for the Premier is what has been done to implement UNDRIP to date, or what are we doing to implement UNDRIP? Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I think that the implementation of the United Nations declaration was a priority of this government, and I take it to heart. Many of the chapters within the declaration talk about "this shall be done by Indigenous people", and so I've taken that to heart, and I think that all Indigenous governments agree with me 100 percent. So right as soon as we began, we -- one of the finer things that we've done in this government, that we've never done before, we've always had the intergovernmental council that looks at land and resources. That was the last government's initiatives. However, this government has brought forward more. We have two other tables that we work with - the Modern Treaty and Self-government table and the Council of Leaders, which every Indigenous government sits at. So within the Council of Leaders where all governments are, they've insisted that we tackle the United Nations declaration. They're not waiting for the Legislative Assembly. They're taking it to heart, that this is about them.

So within that, within the Council of Leaders, there's what's called a secretariat. And so it's a working group, members, officials from all governments. We are one member of that council so we have one official. Every Indigenous government has an official as well. So that working group of officials has just recently established -- they brought it forward to the Council of Leaders table which was two weeks ago, I believe. Life goes fast. And the Council of Leaders have supported the recommended approach on the next steps to implement the declaration.

So four key points that the Council of Leaders have agreed that we will work towards is.

1. The co-developing of a law that implements the United Nations declaration in the Northwest Territories;
2. To establish a memorandum of understanding with Indigenous governments towards the development of the law;
3. To set a timeline for this work; and,

4. To provide the ability for Indigenous governments to continue to make recommendations towards implementation.

Madam Speaker, what I will commit to as well is as that work progresses, we do already have a Member that joins us for that work but I will commit to making sure that all Members are kept up to date with the works. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Thank you, Madam Premier. Oral questions. Member for Thebacha.

ORAL QUESTION 852-19(2):  
FORT SMITH HUMAN RESOURCES

**MS. MARTSELOS:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, on correspondence with the former of Minister of NCPD regarding a regional superintendent in Fort Smith, he stated twice, A regional approach to supervision for multiple functions is not considered best practice in the utility industry.

Can our current Minister elaborate on this response and state what the "best practice" in the utility industry are according to government data? Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member. Minister responsible for Northwest Territories Power Corporation.

**HON. DIANE ARCHIE:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. So the structure of a government department and electricity utility are very different. What makes sense for a government may not be appropriate for operational companies such as NTPC. In electricity utility, it is not best practice from an operational or safety perspective to establish one individual, such as a supervisor for all workers in a regional office, as that individual may not have the required knowledge or skill set to effectively lead the various roles and functions within that office. Every utility is structured differently but most utilities in Canada are based on functional responsibility rather than a geographic location, which is how NTPC is also structured. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**MS. MARTSELOS:** Madam Speaker, the former NCPD Minister said in a July 24th, 2020, email that the NTPC superintendent position never existed in Fort Smith despite the contrary, because I'm aware of a Fort Smith resident who was the former superintendent for NCPD for nearly 20 years. Can the Minister explain this discrepancy of information? Was there or was there not a superintendent in NCPD in Fort Smith at one point? Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member. Minister responsible for Northwest Territories Power Corporation.

**HON. DIANE ARCHIE:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. There was a previous manager of operations and maintenance position in the hydro operations division that was based in Fort Smith. It was not a superintendent role as that was not part of NTPC's corporate structure. NTPC recruited for the manager position when it became vacant but it was unable to recruit a qualified candidate. As the Member pointed out, we have talked on numerous occasions about the Fort Smith NTPC positions, and she has sent emails on the subject. As these emails basically reiterated her positions from our conversations, I did not reply.

I can advise that with our reorganization of human resources in the South Slave, due to the purchase of the Hay River franchise there will be a manager position in Fort Smith. However, there will not be a superintendent position. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister. Supplementary, Member for Thebacha. Member for Thebacha. No more questions?

---Laughter.

---Applause

**DEPUTY SPEAKER:** All right. Order. Oral questions. Member for Kam Lake.

ORAL QUESTION 853-19(2):  
IMMIGRATION STRATEGY

**MS. CLEVELAND:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, my questions today are for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. Madam Speaker, it's my understanding that the NWT immigration strategy from 2017 to 2022 is a carbon copy of the Yukon's immigration strategy. So I'm wondering if the Minister can speak to why the Yukon is doing so well at filling their nominee program quota compared to the Northwest Territories. Thank you.

**DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Thank you. Minister responsible for ECE.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. So the Yukon's immigration strategy is from 2010. That's when it began. Ours began in 2017. So I would hope that with an extra seven years, they have learned lessons and advanced a little further than we have. And I wouldn't quite say that the strategies are carbon copies, although there are similarities given our similarities with the Yukon. I would say that we do work with the Yukon. We work with Nunavut as well. And we see what has worked for them because they do have a more advanced immigration

environment in the Yukon, and we take those lessons and we can apply those to our jurisdiction. So while it's not a carbon copy, we do like to take inspiration from their successes. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**MS. CLEVELAND:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, and my apologies for calling you Madam Chair. Madam Speaker, my second question for the Minister, and I'm happy that the Minister spoke to working with the other territories and taking from lessons learned from the other territories.

Given the success that Yukon has had with their nominee program and the potential for the territories to further work together, will the Minister commit to discussing the potential for an Arctic immigration strategy with Ministers responsible from all three territories? Thank you.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. So there is a Northern Immigration Summit where Nunavut, the Yukon, and the NWT get together with IRCC and they discuss the environment and ways to improve immigration services and, frankly, get more immigrants to the Northwest Territories and the other northern territories. And so through this work, we do work with our neighboring territories. And from this work, there is also a new position that is being funded by immigration -- Immigration, Refugee, and Citizenship Canada to coordinate these efforts even further. So it is a pan-territorial position to help coordinate the efforts of the three jurisdictions. So while I can't commit to an Arctic immigration strategy, we are getting the tools in place to ensure greater cooperation between our jurisdictions. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**MS. CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'm wondering if the Minister can clarify what the role of that person would be as far as working with industry stakeholders in the Northwest Territories.

One of the things that I'd asked for in my Member's statement today was more of an active role on the part of the GNWT to actually find out what is the biggest challenge for our industry leaders in the Northwest Territories and help them fill those positions. So I'm wondering if this position will fill some of that role, or if that is something that I would still need to pursue ECE to do. Thank you.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. And I don't have the details about what that specific role would do. I believe it's to more coordinate efforts between the three jurisdictions and the federal government. But I will follow up with the Member on that.

But I will say that ECE and ITI do some of the work that the Member is talking about. Last night there

was a session that was coordinated by ECE's immigration staff, as well as IRCC, to reach out and have those discussions with employers, and I think there was 14 employers who registered for the session.

There's also stakeholder meetings at the Yellowknife immigration partnership, the Francophone immigration network. There's meetings with the settlement providers on a regular basis. As I mentioned, we have the Northern Immigration Summit, and there's also international forums that ECE participates in to get our strategy and get our name out there to people outside of the territory and outside of Canada. So that work is being done.

And I will admit that if we had a bit more resources we could do more of that; we could pound the pavement harder but that work is actually happening. So I wanted to assure the Member of that. Thank you.

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

**MS. CLEVELAND:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, I appreciate the work that is being done by ECE but as it stands right now, many businesses in Yellowknife, particularly, are spending tens of thousands of dollars to help bring newcomers up to the territory and to help them through the immigration process. And so one of the things that has worked for other jurisdictions are certain exemptions that are particular or community specific. And so by working with industry leaders, we can find out what those exemptions are and go and communicate those to the federal government. So that's what I'm looking for, is more of a systemic change in how the North welcomes newcomers.

My last question, Madam Speaker, for the Minister, is will the Minister of ECE work with the Minister of ITI to consolidate immigration efforts within the Government of the Northwest Territories? Thank you.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair. And I will say that our immigration strategy is a strategy for 2017 to 2022, and so it ends next year. So the work to renew that will necessarily involve meeting with industry stakeholders, meeting with employers, and determining what we can do to address any of those systemic or systematic barriers that they are facing. So I can definitely commit that we are going to do that work.

In terms of consolidating the program under one department, I just want to point out that over the past seven years the departments have been working together. Last summer, I was able to announce the launch of a shared database and a single web page, a single access portal for those people wishing to

immigrate to the NWT, and that was something developed jointly by ITI and ECE. And there's constant work that goes on. That being said, I'm always open to finding better ways to do things, more efficient ways to do things. It wouldn't be as easy as putting the file in one department because there's a lot of corporate knowledge in ECE about this file. And we want to make sure that anything we do, we are not going to lose that valuable resource. That's not something we can just transfer over in a budget document. However, we are looking at developing the main estimates that we will be debating next time we're together here, and now is the perfect time to start having those conversations about potential re-orgs like that. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

ORAL QUESTION 854-19(2):  
TOURISM INDUSTRY

**MS. NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, my questions are for the Minister of ITI. Can the Minister commit to forming a direct focus group with NWT tourism operators to find out what supports are needed to sustain them during the time it will take for us to rebuild and reopen the territory?

Just a piece of information, Madam Speaker. According to the Northwest Territories tourism association, it may take two to five years to build our international reputation again. Thank you.

**DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Thank you. Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, I certainly agree that this is -- the tourism sector is -- has been one of the hardest sectors hit through COVID. It's one of the ones that's going to, sadly, be one of the last to fully rebound. And there's a lot of work that already happens between ITI and Northwest Territories Tourism Association as well as with the COVID Secretariat. I think there was a meeting even just last week, if I'm not mistaken, or within the last couple of weeks, Madam Speaker. So I don't want to create a situation for the tourism association either where they are tasked with more meetings.

I will commit to making sure we've reached out. If, in fact, a set organization or group will make a difference in terms of these conversations, then I'm very confident ITI's going to want to do that. I just want to make sure that that's something that's going to benefit them. We are engaged with them directly, and I'm pleased that the Member's going to speak more about this industry here today. Thank you.

**MS. NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I'm pleased to hear that from the Minister as well. I do encourage her to have that direct conversation with the operators themselves. As we all know, within one organization, certain voices can become much larger than others. So to get that feedback from the grassroots, I think is really key here.

Moving on, great segue to my next question, what is the criteria for reopening tourism for out-of-territory residents? How is the department working with the office of the CPHO to set that criteria? Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, the office of the chief public health -- or the Office of the Chief Public Health Authority or office, that is the entity that is solely responsible for determining the risk factors under which the current restrictions are created, what they contain, and that is because we've always put our faith in the hands of medical science and not necessarily in politicians to be making those determinations. That said, Madam Speaker, we have continued to work closely, both myself and in both of my roles as Minister of Finance, Minister of ITI, do meet regularly with the Chief Public Health Officer, and as do the officials as well continue to meet, so that we are giving the right information to the Chief Public Health Officer so that she understands what the lay of the land is. And as such, Madam Speaker, I understand that, you know, certainly Emerge Stronger as you might recall had three criteria in it. The vaccination rates here in Canada, we've more than met. The case counts, unfortunately, with Delta Variant shot up, and so that criteria has not been met. But I know that the Chief Public Health Officer is now looking at whether a proof of vaccination system can bring us back to the hope that we all had of leisure travel opening much sooner than having to wait for the case counts. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**MS. NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, me and the Minister can debate whether science-based decision-making is happening at another time. My question here is how much did the tourism sector add to the GDP prior to COVID versus its current contribution; and, given this information, how realistic is it that we are moving away from a resource-based economy any time soon? Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, prior to COVID, tourism was at around 2 percent GDP. So not a huge contributor to our gross domestic product, certainly. And I don't think I've ever made any statements to the contrary that we are likely to remain dependent on a mineral resource sector as our primary contributor in the private sector to GDP. That is likely

to continue into the near future. That said, Madam Speaker, the tourism industry contributes over and above its weight in terms of job contributions. There's a high level of jobs across the territory, particularly outside of Yellowknife as well as in the North Slave region, that are brought in through the tourism sector and, Madam Speaker, it's an important cultural component. It's such an opportunity to get the story of who and what we are on the world stage. So -- so I do want to put those two little plugs in there just to make sure that we are remembering that tourism is about much more than just the GDP contribution. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

**MS. NOKLEBY:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Yeah, I never thought that the Minister didn't support the resource sector; I guess it just needed to be said to the public sometimes about how important it is.

Can the Minister commit to providing relief funding that does not require operators to financially contribute first? As two years without any business anymore means that they don't have any ability any further to provide money upfront to get their relief funding. So I would ask that the Minister considers 100 percent funding for relief for tourism operators. Thank you.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, there is a long list of different funding programs, both through the GNWT and still with some federal government programs, I believe, still open. So, you know, I had to pull them out myself. It is a long list; I recognize that. Some do require equity contribution. And the most recent one, the one that was announced by the GNWT here back in August/September, the Tourism Restart Program, that does require a 10 percent equity contribution. But earlier programs did not. So PREP and STAR, STAR was for accommodations providers and the other PREP was tourism businesses. Those ones did not. So, you know, I can't emphasize enough if there are those in the industry who are still looking to stay open for domestic travel within the Northwest Territories, looking forward to hopefully some changes coming in the near future, that they connect with the regional superintendents, and we will make sure to work with them as best we can to find some programming so they're ready. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

ORAL QUESTION 855-19(2):  
VACCINATION REQUIREMENTS

**MR. ROCKY SIMPSON:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. These questions will be directed to the

Minister responsible for Human Resources. And I apologize for not getting questions to her prior, but I know she has a good grasp on the subject. And I didn't want to go home without asking a few more questions on the issue of vaccinations and accommodation, then I won't get grilled tomorrow morning.

Madam Speaker, it is day two since proof of vaccination was to be submitted if one wanted to keep their job with the GNWT without having to be accommodated. I know that it's been a short time, but can the Minister maybe just give a quick little update on how the process is going and if there's been any kinks in what's happened so far. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Throwing everybody off today. Thank you, Member. Minister of Finance.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, the numbers are continuing to roll in, and I can say the first version I saw has changed in the 12 hours even since I first saw it a couple of times over. And in a good way. Madam Speaker, I want to say I've -- you know, there's some outlying areas that I do have some concerns that the numbers are coming in a little low. We are reaching out as a department and with respect to education authorities, I know ECE's reaching out as well, just to make sure that numbers are accurate, first of all, and then to figure out if there's some supports or information, education, that we can offer to employees who may have been hesitant to provide their proof of vaccination. But the majority, the vast majority of GNWT employees, GNWT departments are doing above the numbers here for the public. The numbers are overall looking, I'd say, very positive.

I've had some direct conversations that suggest that there's, you know, a couple of spots where it's taken a bit of a lag to get an approval in. So -- and of course, then the numbers -- official numbers won't reflect that. So if those are the kinds of kinks that the Member's asking about, then, of course, a new system and a new process is always going to have a few things like that but, Madam Speaker, we're doing well. And I'm really pleased that such a high number of public servants have put their proof of vaccinations in. Thank you.

**MR. ROCKY SIMPSON:** Thank you, Madam Chair -- or Madam Speaker. Within the government, we have office workers and all the way over to industrial-type workers in our -- in the work environment. So I'd ask the Minister to confirm if the PPE used throughout departments is consistent and how is it determined that the PPE meets government approval, because those are some of the questions I've been getting the last day or two. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, I recognize this is a point of frustration for some. I appreciate the patience that those who are going to have to follow the PPE element are showing, you know. As far as masks are concerned, in general the masks should be the three-layer masks and worn tightly to the face. But there is some adaptation for each work site because, exactly as the Member has noted, an office work site might not necessarily require any additional or alternative PPE as compared to someone working at a different type of situation such as an industrial one. So every department does have their own specific guidelines. They are under the MyHR website. They were all put out there within the last few days. They're available to the GNWT employees to go and to check out. And in addition to that, of course every supervisor is a resource to their employees. If someone is going to have to rely on the PPE side of this policy, then, yes, that information should hopefully be widely available to everyone. Thank you, Madam Chair -- Madam Speaker.

**MR. ROCKY SIMPSON:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Knowing that some departments require all employees to be vaccinated while others are allowed the accommodation, can the Minister confirm what happens if, for some reason, somebody who is accommodated has to attend a work site or an office building where all employees have to be vaccinated; is there a process for that? Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, the vaccination policy has always been one of to get a proof of vaccination in and, you know, I hope people aren't doing that, again, because of this; they're doing it because the vaccinations are the best way for them to stay safe and for them to keep their families safe and for -- as public servants, to keep members of the public safe.

If they're choosing to not provide a proof of vaccination, there's always been the option within the policy that they could then rely on a combination of PPE and testing. There may well be situations that if an employee is running up against requirements to attend other locations. So, for example, I know one that's come up here in the House is around federal transportation rules which will require people now to be vaccinated. If there is a bona fide requirement in someone's job that requires them to do something, go somewhere, rely on federal -- or, you know, rely on transportation options where vaccinations are required, then they have to be able to perform their duties and perform their functions and -- and so in that sense, that would be a point of concern I imagine. But as far as GNWT work sites, the option has always been there of please proof of vaccination first but that alternative does exist and continues to exist. Thank you, Madam Chair -- Madam Speaker.

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

**MR. ROCKY SIMPSON:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, this requirement for vaccinations, for PPE, for testing has got to come to an end at some point. The emergency order is going to be ended, and there's going to be, you know -- so I guess the question I have is -- for the Minister is how will that impact employees? How soon do you think we're going to see -- and she -- maybe she didn't have the answer, how long -- or, yeah, how long in the future you think we're going to see vaccinated and non-vaccinated people working side by side without the PPE, without the testing, and I guess without the bickering. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, I sadly don't know when COVID will go away. I wish it was gone; but it's not. And, you know, in the interim, we now have a new variant. So, you know, variants continue to arise. Variants continue to spread. And, you know, that's again part of the reason that we have a vaccination policy in the first place is that this -- you know, in the last year and a half has demonstrated itself to be the best way to keep people safe, residents safe, public safe, people we serve, particularly in the Northwest Territories where, you know, we saw how quickly in some of the conditions in small communities, that may have overcrowding in houses, how quickly it can spread. And the impacts on it where we have communities and people who have already lower health care indicators. So until the COVID-19 pandemic is under control, we have an obligation to use all the tools at our disposal, including vaccination policies as well as the panoply of masking and distancing that's going to keep people safe. So you know, someday I do hope that there's a normal that doesn't involve COVID-19, but until that point, Madam Speaker, we're going to continue to have this policy in place. Thank you.

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

ORAL QUESTION 856-19(2):  
AURORA COLLEGE

**MR. O'REILLY:** Merci, Madame la Presidente. My questions are for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. I would like to explore why the Yukon seems to be doing much better than us when it comes to federal investment in their post-secondary education system.

Can the Minister tell us what the specific ask was from our government that resulted in the federal announcement of \$8 million in their last budget? Merci, Madam Speaker.

**DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member. Minister of Education, Culture and Employment.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. The ask that resulted in the \$8 million contribution from the federal government was an ask for \$8 million. We got every penny that we asked for. It is for the:

- Development of a facilities plan, including making sure we go and do the proper engagement;
- A research services team pilot, which is a way to advance the research environment in the Northwest Territories, bring more money into the Northwest Territories via research and really build connections among the research community in the Northwest Territories; and,
- Money for the Western Arctic Research Centre expansion, and that is of course the facility in Inuvik.

So those are the three items that we approached the federal government and said these are the pieces that we need right now at this point in the transformation, and they happily obliged, and we got a shout out by name in their budget and we were very happy about that. So I'm very thankful the federal government sees the value of this and is fully supportive. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Merci, Madame la Presidente. Thanks to the Minister for that. I guess I'm just a little bit greedy, and I would like some more.

I think that part of the reason why we're not attracting federal investment is we don't have a budget or a business case together yet for the transformation and, as I understand it, that won't be finished until July 2022.

Can the Minister tell us what he is going to do to speed up the development of that budget and a case for investing in the transformation and facilities for a polytechnic university. Merci, Madam Speaker.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It might not seem like it, but 2022 is less than a month away. So July 2022 is not that far off. And there is a lot of work that needs to be done. The Member often references the Yukon and them getting money. The reason they got money is because they put a lot of effort into developing a facilities plan. That's what we're doing. We don't want to go with a document that is not up to par, that the federal government will look at and say we can't give you this much money based on this plan. So that's the work we're doing. It does take time. We do need to engage with communities because we are looking at a facilities plan that talks about the entire college from the three campuses down to the

community learning centres. And that covers a lot of ground, and we need to make sure we do it right. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Merci, Madam la Presidente. Thanks to the Minister for that. I just worry that the window of opportunity's closing.

So can the Minister tell us what specific work is being done to encourage, promote the NWT to the federal government as a good place to invest in post-secondary education? Merci, Madam Speaker.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. And I don't have to sell the value of education to the federal government. When I meet with Minister Vandal, when I meet with any Ministers, they appreciate the value of education. It's pretty easy to look at a chart and see that the more education you have, the more prosperous you are as an individual and the more prosperous your community and territory are. So there's plenty of excitement.

And I would also say that in addition to those interactions I have, the officials from the Aurora College and the Aurora College transformation team are in contact with federal officials, keeping them apprised of what's going on, and my Cabinet colleagues, Minister of Finance and the Premier, carry that message to Ottawa as well. This is a major priority for this government. And those conversations don't just happen at my level. They happen at a number of different tables. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** Merci, Madam la Presidente. Lastly, I think part of the reason we're not attracting federal investment post-secondary education is that our federal engagement is not clear enough, and it's still focused on big infrastructure that has little prospect of actually proceeding or benefitting NWT residents.

Can the Minister tell us what he's doing to convince his Cabinet colleagues that investment in post-secondary education is a very high priority, even higher than big infrastructure? Merci, Madam Speaker.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. So I do want to clarify that, you know, the Member said we're not attracting federal investments. This year, in this federal budget, we attracted federal investments in our post-secondary education system. It's happening. So I don't have to convince my Cabinet colleagues either of the value of this. Everyone is well aware that this is a priority. It's a priority of this Assembly. It's a priority of this government. Everyone understands the value of education and higher education. So I don't think that

I need to convince everyone. I think we're all on the same page. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

ORAL QUESTION 857-19(2):  
RESTRICTION ON BATHURST CARIBOU

**MS. WEYALLON-ARMSTRONG:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Yes, okay. I would like to rephrase the word that I used, "ban", to "restriction and/or limiting harvest." So because those are the most appropriate word to use when I'm referring to the ban on caribou. I would like to rephrase that.

So a restriction on caribou, the Bathurst caribou herd has been in place for over ten years. Does the Minister anticipate that the restriction will ever be lifted? What requirements need to be met before the Minister can consider -- can consider lifting the ban on Bathurst caribou? Thank you.

**DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member. Minister for ENR.

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Again, I'd like to thank the Member for the question. I know it's very important to her. We've had numerous conversations in the hallways, on the phone, and I thank her for that. This is an opportunity.

First and foremost, again, I need to reiterate the Bathurst herd is, you know, very small right now. We've seen I think, 98 percent decline in the population of the herd. However, the Beverly herd is all right. It's still being able to hunt there. But the most important aspect of it is with this mobile zone and non-hunting and -- in this mobile zone is -- been through our co-management partners, the Wek'eezhii Renewable Resource Board. So we've had those conversations with them. Again, it's about using local, traditional, and scientific knowledge to see how we can try to increase this herd's population so that then we can be able to get that back on to the opportunity to hunt. But, again, I have to reiterate there is the opportunity to hunt Beverly. It's a little further away and last year we had the unique situation of the Beverly and the Bathurst interlinking together. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**MS. WEYALLON-ARMSTRONG:** Thank you. We all know that limiting and the restrictions on the caribou has been hard on our people. So limiting the harvest was based on caribou declines, and the process is in the Tlicho Agreement. So I want to ask the Minister, can he provide an update, based on the most recent population survey of both herds on Tlicho land within the Wek'eezhii and Monfwi Gogha De Niitlee? Masi.

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, we have completed the survey with the herds there. We are -- we've tabulated a report. We are now just working with our Indigenous governments and leaderships, including the Wek'weezhii Renewable Resource Board. We are in the process of setting up the opportunity to meet with them to share the report. We also will be sending it to committee. As well once that is done, we will get it out into the public and sharing that. But, yeah, it's been done, and we've been able to get the surveys done this year even despite of COVID. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**MS. WEYALLON-ARMSTRONG:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I recognize there are technical working groups to support the management and recovery of caribou species. Can the Minister commitment to update myself and Tlicho leaders on a regular basis regarding the discussions and decisions occurring at the technical working group meetings? This is to ensure that Tlicho Agreement is respected and recognized. Thank you.

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Yes, I'll make that commitment. We've already been sharing this information with Tlicho leadership, with the Wek'weezhii Renewable Resource Board. So we're very much about sharing the information and making sure we respect the agreement with the Tlicho government. So I again thank the Member for that. And, again, we will share that information on a regular basis. Thank you.

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

ORAL QUESTION 858-19(2):  
CORPORATE RESTRUCTURE

**MR. JOHNSON:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. My questions were for the Minister of Housing but I've noticed she's stepped out. So I'm going to have an impromptu question for our Premier.

There's been some previous discussion about corporate restructuring, and I'll note that some of that discussion is centered around the departments of ENR, MACA, and Lands, who all tend to have one Minister right now. I'm just wondering if this is still on the table in the life of this Assembly, whether the Premier is going to look at corporate restructuring and how different departments are structured?

**DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member. Madam Premier.

**HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Sometimes I wonder if people are flies on the wall because we just had that conversation yesterday. So absolutely, yes, it's still on the table.

We're talking those talks now. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Thank you, Madam Premier. Oral questions. Member for Yellowknife North.

**MR. JOHNSON:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. This week, I asked the Minister responsible for MACA when the seniors facility in Fort Good Hope would open, and he told me to ask the Minister of Housing. So my question for the Minister of Housing, I know she is intimately familiar with that facility, having been the one who opened it in her community, when will that facility open Madam Speaker?

**DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Thank you. Minister responsible for Northwest Territories Housing Corporation.

**HON. PAULIE CHINNA:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I just -- I received an update from my department. So the electrical assessment is to be complete and finalized and the engineering and structural assessment are underway by professional engineer and architectural firm. The Housing Corporation is highly engaged with architectural and engineering consultants to finalize the remaining remediation requirements to ensure safety occupation as soon as possible. Based on the assessment to date, the Housing Corporation is targeting to have the building ready for occupancy March 2022. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**MR. JOHNSON:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'll note that March 2022 is a full year after the Minister opened the building officially. Can someone just explain to me what is going on here? Thank you.

**HON. PAULIE CHINNA:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Member is correct; we did officially open the building last year in February 2021. The inspection was completed by a professional engineer of the Office of the Fire Marshal in 2021, found that further work was needed to ensure safety occupancy of the building. One example, the requirements for the fire separation between the units. When we have a multi -- a multiplex unit, the fire separation is the current -- is in the current building does not meet the code requirements, and this is a safety consideration. We want these buildings to be designed in a way to protect and give adequate time for a neighbor to get out of their unit should a fire occur in one of the other units. Thank you, Madam Speaker -- yeah, thank you, Madam Speaker.

**MR. JOHNSON:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. You know, I know there's a lot of experts here, and I struggle to understand how something doesn't get built to code, and then I know sometimes the experts get in fights about what actually the National Building Code says. So my question for the Minister of the

housing, do her experts in the Housing Corporation agree with the fire marshal's assessment of the National Building Code, or are we in one of these situations we're having a battle of the experts in the GNWT? Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**HON. PAULIE CHINNA:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Housing Corporation concurs with the findings of the Office of the Fire Marshal and is working to the remaining code concerns addressed as soon as possible. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

**MR. JOHNSON:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I really hope there's not some engineer in the GNWT who just cringed when he was told that he concurs with the assessment. But my question here is this has happened to the GNWT multiple times, where we've opened buildings and then there's been -- well, in this case, a one-year delay before the building is actually opened. Are there some sort of lessons learned? Is there a path forward to prevent us from continuing to not open our buildings or not build them to code. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**HON. PAULIE CHINNA:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Housing Corporation works closely with the regulatory authorities, including the Office of the Fire Marshal, to ensure our full construction process takes into account a best-building practices, including the plan reviews and regular inspections. The Housing Corporation will work with its staff and contractors to ensure better awareness of these building practices and regular requirements as well. And also to encourage the Office of the Fire Marshal as a recommendation to work with the Housing Corporation to review the plans prior to the final design inspection. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

ORAL QUESTION 859-19(2):  
BUILDING STANDARDS ACT FOR THE  
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

**MR. O'REILLY:** Merci, Madam la Presidente. A hot pursuit question for the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs. What I didn't hear in her response, though, to my honourable colleague from Yellowknife North was the Building Standards Act. Is that something -- like, I think this is what's at the root of the problem, Madam Speaker, is the lack of a Building Standards Act here. Is that something this Minister and her Cabinet colleagues are prepared to look at, is a Building Standards Act for the Northwest Territories? We're the only jurisdiction in Canada that doesn't have one. Merci, Madam Speaker.

**DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member. Are you addressing it to Minister of MACA or -- okay, so Minister of MACA.

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** Thank you, and I thank the Member for the question.

He's right; we don't have it. We're the only jurisdiction in Canada. It's something that we're working on but right now, we have other legislation that we need to get done. And I know the Member wants us to do all this great work but we need to get things done as we've already planned to do it. If we have time later on, as we complete other legislation, then that will be one of the things that we have on our books presently. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister. Supplementary. Okay. Oral questions. Written questions. Member for Frame Lake.

### Written Questions

WRITTEN QUESTION 31-19(2):  
ACCESS TO ENERGY EFFICIENCY RETROFIT  
PROGRAMS

**MR. O'REILLY:** Merci, Monsieur le President. Access to Energy Efficiency Retrofit Programs, my questions are for the Minister of Infrastructure who has responsibility for the Arctic Energy Alliance.

Northwest Territories residents are experiencing a number of difficulties accessing energy savings programs offered through the Arctic Energy Alliance. Arctic Energy Alliance programs are so popular that funding usually runs out well before the end of the fiscal year.

How is the Department of Infrastructure working with the Arctic Energy Alliance to ensure as many NWT residents as possible can benefit from the energy efficiency programs on offer, including additional funding; and,

1. Which Arctic Energy Alliance programs have run out of money before the end of the fiscal year over the last five years;
2. For those programs that have run out of funding before year end, please provide the date on which funding allocations have been fulfilled; and,
3. What, if any, additional funds have been provided by the Government of the Northwest Territories to the Arctic Energy Alliance to increase accessibility to their programs; and,.
4. What actions have the Department of Infrastructure and Arctic Energy Alliance undertaken to increase accessibility to energy

saving programs for all communities and Northwest Territories residents, and more specifically, low-income families.

Merci, Madam Speaker.

**DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member. Written questions. Returns to written questions. Replies to the Commissioner's address. Petitions. Report of committees on the review of bills. Reports of Standing and Special Committees

### Reports of Standing and Special Committees

#### COMMITTEE REPORT 23-19(2): REPORT ON THE REVIEW OF THE 2018-19 AND 2019-20 PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

**MR. JOHNSON:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Perhaps I can just get clarification on whether I'm supposed to move the committee report into Committee of the Whole after or before I read the report?

**DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Member for Yellowknife North.

**MR. JOHNSON:** The paper is on my desk.

Madam Speaker, your Standing Committee on Government Operations is pleased to provide its Report on the Review of the 2018-19 and 2019-20 Public Accounts and commends it to the House.

#### Introduction

The Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories' Standing Committee on Government Operations has a mandate to review the Report on the Government of the Northwest Territories' Public Accounts. This review helps ensure that issues related to public spending the GNWT's fiscal management practices are publicly examined and scrutinized to promote government accountability. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the committee's review of the 2018-19 public accounts was delayed to January 22, 2021. Committee reviewed the 2019-20 public accounts on June 18, 2021. Both reviews took place in Yellowknife, Northwest Territories.

During its reviews, the committee made recommendations to the government to improve financial management reporting and practices. The committee is pleased to present this joint report on its reviews and looks forward to receiving the government's response.

#### Acknowledgements

For their appearance before committee, committee Members would like to thank officials from the Office of the Auditor General, auditor Karen Hogan,

assistant auditor general Sophie Miller, assistant auditor general Casey Thomas, principal Lana Dar, principal David Irving, audit principal Jo Ann Schwartz, director Marie-Josée Gougeon, director Kelsey Hogg, and audit director Maria Pooley.

Committee also thanks officials from the Office of the Comptroller General for their appearance: comptroller general Julie Mujcin; Assistant comptroller general Chervahun Emilien; assistant director Tegwen Jones; and manager Walter Mupedziswa.

#### Background

About the public accounts: The public accounts are the financial statements of the Government of the Northwest Territories which are prepared annually according to Canadian Public Sector Accounting Standards. They are also prepared in accordance with requirements contained in the Federal Northwest Territories Act and the GNWT's Financial Administration Act.

The public accounts contain: The consolidated financial statements, reporting the combined results of operations for all GNWT departments, revolving funds, public agencies, territorial corporations, and other related entities that are considered part of the government reporting entity. This information is audited by the Auditor General. Non-consolidated, unaudited financial statements for GNWT departments, the revolving funds and special purpose funds they administer, as well as the Legislative Assembly and its statutory offices.

Supplementary financial statements of boards and other entities. An unaudited financial statement discussion and analysis, which provides a management analysis by the GNWT of information reported in the public accounts.

#### Audit Opinion

The committee notes that the consolidated 2018-19 public accounts and the consolidated 2019-20 public accounts both received clean audit opinions from the Auditor General. In an unqualified or clean report, an auditor provides an independent opinion on two objectives:

- First, that the government presented its consolidated financial statements fairly, in all material respects; and,
- Second, that the government's transactions that came to the auditor's notice during the audit complied, in all material respects, with specified authorities.

A clean opinion indicates that the government complied with Canadian Public Sector Accounting Standards and statutory requirements. It also

demonstrates that any changes in accounting policies, and the impact of those changes, have been adequately determined and reported. A clean opinion does not necessarily tell the reader that the government is in good economic health. Its purpose is to provide assurance that the government's financial reporting is complete and transparent and has not misrepresented any important facts.

The committee commends the Government of the Northwest Territories for achieving a clean opinion for the consolidated 2018-19 public accounts and the consolidated 2019-20 public accounts.

### **Recommendations**

**Old Stanton Refurbishment:** One issue that arose in the audit of the 2019-20 public accounts was whether the project to refurbish the Old Stanton should be classified as a public-private partnership.

The government concluded that the Old Stanton refurbishment is not a P3 project. The government therefore classified the Old Stanton refurbishment as a lease commitment, with contractual obligations and rights, in the public accounts. In contrast, the Auditor General concluded that the Old Stanton refurbishment meets the definition of a P3 project. According to the Auditor General, Old Stanton was leased to Ventura, which was responsible for refurbishment and subletting. The government later signed an agreement to sublet the entire building back from Ventura and decided to finance most of the refurbishment costs. Once the sublease starts, the government will pay base rent and other fees on a 30-year term and will pay additional rent to reimburse Ventura for all operations and maintenance costs. This lease commitment, estimated to begin in November 2022, will cost the government \$3.5 million per year over 30 years. Ventura will contribute invested capital and is contracted to perform design work and other consulting services. The government is entitled to a 50 percent profit sharing from Ventura. The profits are net of a yearly return for Ventura on its invested capital. Therefore, the committee recommends:

#### **Recommendation 1**

The Standing Committee on government Operations recommends that the Department of Finance classify the project to refurbish Old Stanton as a public-private partnership and report on it accordingly.

#### **Claims and Litigation**

In the public accounts, the government estimates and discloses the total amount for claims and pending and threatened litigation cases outstanding against the government for which the outcome is not determinable.

The committee noted that there has been exponential growth in the amounts claimed against the government in litigation cases with uncertain outcomes. The dollar value of these claims has increased from single-digit millions to triple-digit millions over the last ten years. The committee is concerned about the significant, rapid growth in claims with indeterminable outcomes and the potential for liabilities to arise from these claims. As a result, the committee supports enhanced public reporting on these claims in the public accounts.

Several Canadian provinces and territories provide examples. British Columbia reports a breakdown of its contingent liabilities according to five broad categories, such as property access disputes and contract disputes. Ontario lists all claims against the Crown arising from legal action either in progress or threatened expected to exceed \$50 million, which amounted to 73 individual claims in 2019-20. Therefore, the committee recommends:

#### **Recommendation 2**

The Standing Committee on Government Operations recommends that the comptroller general enhance reporting in the public accounts of contingent liabilities arising from claims and litigation, and specifically,.

- a) include a breakdown of claim amounts by category; and,
- b) identify individual claims above a certain amount.

Madam Speaker, I will now turn it over to the Member for Thebacha.

**DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Member for Thebacha.

#### **MS. MARTSELOS:**

#### **Fiscal Responsibility Policy**

The Fiscal Responsibility Policy is a public statement of the government's commitment to maintain long-term fiscal sustainability by spending responsibly, controlling expenditure growth, and prudently managing borrowing and debt repayment.

In 2019-20, the government was not compliant with the infrastructure financing provision of the FRP. This provision required the government to generate \$78 million in cash from the operating surplus, the minimum amount to ensure infrastructure investments were funded at least 50 percent from the operating surpluses and no more than 50 percent from debt. Instead, the government only generated \$46 million in cash from the operating surplus.

The consequences of noncompliance with the FRP and the government's policy response to return to compliance are not clear to the committee. The committee is more broadly concerned that the FRP,

as it is currently defined, is not meeting its objective for long-term fiscal sustainability. The FRP excludes P3s, which have recently become a significant category of capital expenditures with respect to determining the appropriate level of infrastructure investment. The FRP further disallows any capital spending if the government has an operating deficit.

The committee's concerns are heightened by the significant risks to the NWT's fiscal outlook, especially ongoing operating expenditure pressures, slow projected revenue growth, and trajectory to exceed the borrowing limit in 2023-24. Therefore, the committee recommends:

### Recommendation 3

The Standing Committee on Government Operations recommends that the Department of Finance undertake a review of the Fiscal Responsibility Policy to ensure that the policy meets its objective for long-term fiscal sustainability and provide the committee with the opportunity to comment on any proposed revisions to this policy.

### Transparency, Relevance, and Accessibility of the Public Account

The committee is concerned about the Government of the Northwest Territories consistently low score in C.D. Howe reports on fiscal transparency. While the committee commends the Department of Finance, through the Office of the Comptroller General, for the notable improvements to public accounts reporting in recent years, there remains much work to be done. Instead, the Minister has said that the department's always looking for ways to improve reporting. The committee is pleased to offer several recommendations for improvement.

Following the public hearing on the 2017-2018 public accounts, and in response to a committee recommendation, the comptroller general provided committee with a review of best practices for public financial reporting in five provinces and territories. That review identified several reporting items in other jurisdictions that are either missing in the NWT's public accounts or could be improved.

The committee believes that matching the best reporting practices in other jurisdictions will enhance the transparency and relevance to the NWT's public accounts. Therefore, the committee recommends:

### Recommendation 4

The Standing Committee on Government Operations recommends that the comptroller general add to the financial statement discussion and analysis section of the public accounts several reporting items that are present in the public accounts of other jurisdictions; specifically;

- a) Population data;
- b) Unemployment rates;
- c) Key non-financial results of major sectors;
- d) Variances between budget and actuals and between the current and prior year actuals by revenue source;
- e) Variances between budget and actuals and between current and prior year actuals by expense program and object;
- f) Discussion details on each liability line item;
- g) Classification of the indicators of financial health to one of three elements: Sustainability, flexibility, or vulnerability

The Standing Committee on Government Operations further recommends that the comptroller general extends all historical charts in the financial statement discussion and analysis section of the public accounts to include ten years of data.

The committee further notes that there is growing work across Canada to make public accounts reporting timelier, more online, and generally more accessible. The federal government recently indicated that it would begin work to develop potential changes to its public accounts to make it more user-friendly and accessible.

The federal government already provides several online datasets for its public accounts and other financial reporting as part of the Open Data portal.

The committee also heard from officials at the Office of the Auditor General that Yukon has recently expanded the discussion section and included more graphs in its public accounts to improve accessibility.

I will now pass it on to the Member for Yellowknife North.

**DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member. Member for Yellowknife North.

**MR. JOHNSON:** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The committee believes the GNWT can and should be a leader in the accessibility of financial reporting, and therefore recommends:

### Recommendation 5

The Standing Committee on Government Operations recommends that the comptroller general, in consultation with the Office of the Auditor General of Canada and the Standing Committee on Government Operations, study potential changes to the public accounts to make them more user-friendly and accessible while ensuring a high degree of

transparency and accountability from the Government of the Northwest Territories.

### Conclusion

This concludes the Standing Committee on Government Operations Report on the Review of the 2018-2019 and 2019-2020 Public Accounts. The committee looks forward to the government's response to these recommendations.

### Recommendation 6

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

**DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member. Member for Yellowknife North.

### Motions

MOTION 45-19(2):  
MOVE COMMITTEE REPORT 23-19(2), INTO  
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE,  
CARRIED

**MR. JOHNSON:** I MOVE, seconded by the honourable Member for Thebacha, that Committee Report 23-19(2), Report on the Review of the 2018-2019 and 2019-2020 Public Accounts, be received by the Assembly and moved into the Committee of the Whole. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Thank you. The motion is in order and non-debatable. All those in favour? All those opposed? Abstentions? The motion is carried. Committee Report 23-19(2), Report on the Review of the 2018-19 and 2019-20 Public Accounts is received by the Assembly and moved into the Committee of the Whole.

---Carried

**DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Reports of standing and special committees. Tabling of documents. Minister responsible for Workers Safety and Compensation Commission.

### Tabling of Documents

TABLED DOCUMENT 515-19(2):  
WORKERS' SAFETY AND COMPENSATION  
COMMISSION 2020 ANNUAL REPORT

**HON. PAULIE CHINNA:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I wish to table the following document: Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission 2020 Annual Report. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister. Tabling of documents. Minister responsible for Status of Women.

TABLED DOCUMENT 516-19(2):  
STATUS OF WOMEN COUNCIL OF THE  
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES 2020-2021 ANNUAL  
REPORT.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I wish to table the following document: Status of Women Council of the Northwest Territories 2020-2021 Annual Report. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister. Tabling of documents. Minister of Justice.

TABLED DOCUMENT 517-19(2):  
FOLLOW-UP LETTER FOR ORAL QUESTION  
790-19(2): LAND ISSUES IN TLICHO  
COMMUNITIES

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Madam Speaker, I wish to table the following document: Follow-up Letter for Oral Question 790-19(2): Land Issues in Tlicho Communities. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister. Tabling of documents.

TABLED DOCUMENT 518-19(2):  
THE OFFICE OF THE CHIEF ELECTORAL  
OFFICER 2020 ANNUAL REPORT

**DEPUTY SPEAKER:** In accordance with section 266-1(1) of the Elections and Plebiscites Act, I wish to table the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer 2020 Annual Report.

Tabling of documents. Notice of motion. Motions. Notice of motion for the first reading of bills. First reading of bills. Minister of Justice.

### First Reading of Bills

BILL 41:  
JUSTICE ADMINISTRATION STATUTES  
AMENDMENT ACT,  
CARRIED

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Inuvik Boot Lake, that Bill 41, Justice Administration Statutes Amendment Act, be read for the first time. Thank you.

**DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Thank you. Motion is in order. All those in favour? All those opposed? All those abstaining? The motion is carried. Bill 41 has had first reading.

---Carried

**DEPUTY SPEAKER:** First reading of bills. Second reading of bills. Consideration of Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters. Bill 23, an Act to Amend the Public Utilities Act; Bill 29, Resource Royalty Information Disclosure Statute Amendments Act; Bill 30, an Act to Amend the Aurora College Act; Committee Report 20-19(2), Standing Committee on Social Development Report on the Review of Bill 30, an Act to Amend the Aurora College Act; Committee Report 21-19(2), Standing Committee on Economic Development and Environment Report on the Government of the Northwest Territories Approach to the Mining Regime Fiscal Review; Tabled Document 437-19(2), Capital Estimates 2022-2023, with Member from Hay River South in the chair.

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

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson):** I now call the committee to order. What is the wish of the committee? Member for Frame Lake.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Mr. Chair. I move that the chair rise and report progress.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Rocky Simpson):** There is a motion on the floor to report progress. The motion is in order and non-debatable. All those in favour? All those opposed? Motion is carried. I will now rise and report progress.

---Carried

### Report of Committee of the Whole

**DEPUTY SPEAKER:** May I please have the report of Committee of the Whole. Member for Hay River South.

**MR. ROCKY SIMPSON:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, your committee has been considering Bill 41 and would like to report progress. And, Madam Speaker, I move that the report of the Committee of the Whole be concurred with. Thank you.

**DEPUTY SPEAKER:** May I have the report of Committee of the Whole? Member for Deh Cho. Motion is in order. All those in favour? Opposed? Abstentions? Motion is carried.

---Carried

**DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Report of Committee of the Whole. Third reading of bills. Minister of Infrastructure.

### Third Reading of Bills

BILL 24:  
AN ACT TO AMEND THE REVOLVING FUND ACT,  
CARRIED

**HON. DIANE ARCHIE:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Hay River North, that Bill 24, an Act to Amend the Revolving Fund Act, be read for the third time. And Madam Speaker, I request a recorded vote. Mahsi Cho.

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Question.

**DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Question has been called. The Minister's requested a recorded vote. So all those in favour, please stand.

### RECORDED VOTE

**CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer):** The Member for Inuvik Boot Lake. The Member for Hay River North. The Member for Thebacha. The Member for Frame Lake. The Member for Kam Lake. The Member for Yellowknife South. The Member for Range Lake. The Member for Yellowknife Centre. The Member for Great Slave. The Member for Hay River South. The Member for Monfwi. The Member for Yellowknife North. The Member for Deh Cho. The Member for Nahendeh. The Member for Sahtu.

**DEPUTY SPEAKER:** All those opposed, please stand. All those abstaining, please stand.

The results of the recorded vote, 15 in favour. No -- zero opposed. Zero abstentions. The motion is carried. Bill 24 has had third reading.

---Carried.

**DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Orders of the day, Madam Clerk.

### Orders of the Day

**COMMITTEE CLERK (Ms. James):** Tuesday, December 7th, 2021, orders of the day, 1:30 p.m.

1. Prayer
2. Ministers' Statements
3. Members' Statements
4. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery
5. Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills

6. Reports of Standing and Special Committees
7. Returns to Oral Questions
  - Oral Question 846-19(2) Addictions, Aftercare and Mental Health Supports -Date of Question - December 1, 2021
8. Acknowledgements
9. Oral Questions
10. Written Questions
11. Returns to Written Questions
12. Replies to Commissioner's Address
13. Petitions
14. Tabling of Documents
15. Notices of Motion
16. Motions
  - Motion 44-19(2), Appointment of Equal Pay Commissioner
  - Motion 45-19(2), Move Committee Report 22-19(2) into Committee of the Whole
17. Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills
18. First Reading of Bills
19. Second Reading of Bills
  - Bill 41, Justice Administration Statutes Amendment Act
20. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters
  - Bill 23, An Act to Amend the Public Utilities Act
  - Bill 29, Resource Royalty Information Disclosure Statute Amendment Act
  - Bill 30, An Act to Amend the Aurora College Act
  - Committee Report 20-19(2) Standing Committee on Social Development Report on the Review of Bill 30: An Act to Amend the Aurora College Act
  - Committee Report 21-19(2) Standing Committee on Economic Development and Environment Report on the Government of the Northwest Territories Approach to the Mining Regime Fiscal Review
  - Tabled Document 437-19(2) Capital Estimates 2022-2023

21. Report of Committee of the Whole

22. Third Reading of Bills

23. Orders of the Day

**DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Thank you. This House stands adjourned until Tuesday, December 7th, 2021, at 1:30 p.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 3:30 p.m.

