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The Honourable Frederick Blake Jr, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

Members of the Legislative Assembly

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INUVIK, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES
Monday, August 28, 2023
Members Present

Hon. Diane Archie (remote), Hon. Frederick Blake Jr., Mr. Bonnetrouge (remote), Hon. Paulie Chinna (remote), Ms. Cleveland (remote), Hon. Caroline Cochrane (remote), Mr. Edjericon (remote), Hon. Julie Green (remote), Mr. Jacobson (remote), Ms. Martselos (remote), Ms. Nokleby (remote) Mr. O'Reilly (remote), Ms. Semmler, Hon. R.J. Simpson (remote), Mr. Rocky Simpson (remote), Hon. Shane Thompson (remote), Hon. Caroline Wawzonek (remote), Ms. Weyallon Armstrong (remote)

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

Prayer

---Prayer

SPEAKER (Hon. Frederick Blake Jr.): Members, by the order of the Commissioner of the Legislative Assembly, this sitting outside the capital in Inuvik. I thank mayor Clarence Wood and the town of Inuvik for the use of their chambers.

The Assembly last sat outside of Yellowknife in 1989 in Norman Wells. Under Rule 10.1, this sitting is a hybrid one. Members are here in person and virtually and is due to the state of emergency in the Northwest Territories. All Members are concerned for residents displaced by wildfires. Many Members are displaced themselves. Like you, we fear for the safety of your homes, businesses, and communities. On behalf of the Assembly, thank you to everyone working to keep our communities safe, the firefighters, military personnel, municipal staff and leaders, civil servants, contractors, and volunteers. We see your work and sacrifice.

At this moment, I want to acknowledge Northwest Territories firefighter Adam Yeadon. Adam died fighting wildfires near Fort Liard on July 15th, 2023. Adam was a young man who lost his life protecting others. I ask Members to join me in a moment of silence in his honour.

Thank you, Members.

Members, today's sitting will be different. Under Rule 10.5(2), I have issued special orders of the day to ensure the efficient operation of the Chamber. These orders reflect Members' desire for a business-focused sitting. We are here to deal with the timing of the election. We are also here to authorize additional spending to respond to these wildfires.

This is the largest hybrid sitting we have done. It is on short notice. We are in a community and not in the Chamber. There will be technical

difficulties, technical challenges. This includes the live stream. Be patient, stay focused on why we are here. If we do, we will get through this together.

Members, I have received a letter from the Commissioner, the Honourable Margaret Thom. It reads:

Dear Mr. Speaker. I wish to advise that I recommend to the Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories the passage of Appropriation Act (Infrastructure Expenditures) 2024-2025; Supplementary Appropriation Act (Operations Expenditures) No. 2, 2023-2024, during the second session of the 19th Assembly.

Members, the Member for Monfwi has provided me with notice that, pursuant to Rule 3.5(1), she wishes to move a motion for emergency debate calling upon the Government of the Northwest Territories to ensure that Indigenous governments are involved in the GNWT's response to end the current wildfire emergency. Under that rule, the Member would move the motion for an emergency debate at the conclusion of oral questions but those are not on the orders today. That means Rule 10.5(2) applies. That rule relates to remote sittings.

It states where the rules in this section are silent on a matter covered elsewhere in the rules, the Speaker may amend any rule or procedure as required to allow for the effective participation of Members appearing remotely. In the efficient operation of the Chamber under Rule 10.5 (2), I direct special orders of the day for today to ensure the efficient operation of the Chamber. This sitting could be characterized as an emergency sitting. The orders were issued to allow for a business-focused sitting, focused on dealing with two pressing matters:

- Changing the date of the election; and,
- Approving additional funding for wildfire response.

The Northwest Territories is under a state of emergency. We must be focused on the

pressing matters at hand; however, Members will have their individual privileges. When a motion is made for an emergency debate, if it passes all of the remaining business of the day is set aside. That would mean dealing with the timing of the election and authorizing spending for wildfire response would not be dealt with today.

I am concerned that the Member's motion may not get fair consideration if Members are worried that the matter we were called together would be put aside. As a result, under Rule 10.5(2), I will amend Rule 3.5(1) such that at the end of third reading of bills, the Member may move to set aside the original business of the House to discuss a matter of urgent public importance requiring immediate consideration.

Members, I believe this balances the privileges of the Member and the Assembly and ensures the efficient operation of the Chamber. Thank you.

Tabling of documents. Minister responsible for Finance.

Tabling of Documents

TABLED DOCUMENT 967-19(2):
SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES
(OPERATIONS EXPENDITURES), NO. 2,
2023-2024

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following document: Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 2, 2023-2024. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister responsible for Finance. Tabling of documents. Government House Leader.

TABLED DOCUMENT 968-19(2):
GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHWEST
TERRITORIES RESPONSE TO MOTION
74-19(2) RECONCILIATORY REVIEW OF
HOUSING NWT'S COLLECTION APPROACH

TABLED DOCUMENT 969-19(2):
GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHWEST
TERRITORIES RESPONSE TO MOTION
77-19(2) REVIEW OF THE TERRITORIAL
LAND LEASE POLICY AND PROCEDURES

TABLED DOCUMENT 970-19(2):
GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHWEST
TERRITORIES RESPONSE TO COMMITTEE
REPORT 40-19(2) REPORT ON THE
REVIEW OF BILL 61, AN ACT TO AMEND
THE OMBUD ACT

TABLED DOCUMENT 971-19(2):
GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHWEST
TERRITORIES RESPONSE TO COMMITTEE
REPORT 50-19(2) STRENGTHENING
COMMUNITY SUPPORTS, LIFTING YOUTH
VOICES RECOMMENDATIONS FOR
SUICIDE PREVENTION

TABLED DOCUMENT 972-19(2):
GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHWEST
TERRITORIES RESPONSE TO COMMITTEE
REPORT 51-19(2) REPORT ON
INDIGENOUS REPRESENTATION IN THE
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES PUBLIC
SERVICE

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the following five documents: Government of the Northwest Territories response to Motion 74-19(2) Reconciliatory Review of Housing NWT's Collection Approach; Government of the Northwest Territories Response to Motion 77-19(2) Review of the Territorial Land Lease Policy and Procedures; Government of the Northwest Territories Response to Committee Report 40-19(2) Report on the Review of Bill 61, An Act to Amend the Ombud Act; Government of the Northwest Territories Response to Committee Report 50-19(2) Strengthening Community Supports, Lifting Youth Voices Recommendations for Suicide Prevention; and, Government of the Northwest Territories Response to Committee Report 51-19(2) Report on Indigenous Representation in the Northwest Territories Public Service. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Government House Leader. Tabling of documents. Colleagues, before we get into consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters, I would just like to recognize in our small public gallery, our mayor, the mayor of Inuvik Clarence Wood. Thank you for allowing us to be in your Chamber today. Thank you.

Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters

Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and other matters, Bill 23, Bill 29, Bill 77, Bill 82, Committee Report 52-19(2), Minister's Statement 264-19(2), Tabled Document 681-19(2), Tabled Document 967-19(2), with Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes in the chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Committee, we've agreed to consider Tabled Document 967-19(2) Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures) No. 2, 2023-2024. Does the Minister of Finance have any opening remarks?

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair, I do. Madam Chair, I am here to present Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 2, 2023-2024. These supplementary estimates propose a total increase of \$75 million to fund the shortfall within the fire suppression budget for the Department of Environment and Climate Change.

I recognize that this request is substantial, and it will have an impact on the GNWT's forecasted operating surplus. I want to assure committee that the Department of Finance is taking steps to ensure that the government remains in compliance with the Fiscal Responsibility Policy, as well as considering how best to mitigate the financial impacts of the wildfire season. Given the challenges faced over the last six months, it is likely that GNWT departments will need to prioritize operations and assess activities that are key to government operations and support the residents of the Northwest Territories. As a government, we continue to seek opportunities to recover costs associated with these natural disasters from the federal government.

That concludes my opening remarks, Madam Chair. I would be happy to answer any questions that the Members may have.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Minister. Minister, do you wish to bring your witnesses forward?

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Yes, please, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Would the Minister please introduce your witnesses for the record.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Madam Chair, I believe on the line, also remotely, should be the deputy minister of Finance Bill MacKay, as well as Terence Courtoreille, the assistant deputy minister or deputy secretary to the financial management board. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Okay, thank you. I will now open the floor for general comments, and if the Members, just give me time to make sure that I don't miss anybody. All right. MLA Johnson.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm just wondering if the Minister can provide us an update of the initial fire suppression budget and what this initial -- or this additional \$75 million

brings us up to as a total and then perhaps try to answer the question whether we think this is the grand total or whether another supplementary appropriation may be coming. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): I'm just going to leave this as general comments until we get into the detail. So if you have general comments on this, state your general comments, and then if you want to get into detail with question and answer, we'll when we get into the line by line item. So do you want to continue, Mr. Johnson.

MR. JOHNSON: No general comments. I'll ask questions when it comes to detail. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. MLA for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. My questions are going to be detailed as well. So thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): All right. MLA for Kam Lake.

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I do have some general comments, and I'm going to start just by saying that I was quite surprised to see that this supplemental appropriation was specific to ECE and did not include Finance and ITI. Just from -- I'm currently sitting here in session today from the city of Edmonton, which has gone above and beyond to try to support residents, and I have to say a huge shout out to city councillors as well that have been working closely with MLAs, to try and help out people as best they can. But right now where I sit, a lot of residents have paid out of pocket for commercial airfare to get here and some of those dollars that they paid for to get here were from their mortgage and rent dollars. Some people car shared and with the current subsidies that are being provided by the GNWT, only the driver is eligible to get the dollars, and so that means that some people car shared, paid out of pocket for gas and aren't eligible to get any kind of subsidies from the GNWT. Some people ended up paying for hotels for days here down in Alberta because they were unable to get through the lineups with the Red Cross to access hotels or didn't have a means of leaving the city where it was longer for people to get hotels. And I spoke with one mother who had four young kids and was sleeping in a vehicle instead of an evacuation centre because she just didn't feel that that was a good option for her for sleeping with her children and that she would get more sleep in her vehicle. Some people are having to take

taxis to the Expo Centre here in Edmonton to get food for their families because they're not comfortable in a big city using public transportation, even though the city of Edmonton has graciously made that complementary. Some people have never left the Northwest Territories before, and so it's really quite intimidating to use such a large public infrastructure to try and get around. Some people are travelling for most of the day just back and forth to the Expo Centre to try and get food and have had to kind of use out-of-pocket dollars to access some of that and are really feeling the pinch.

So from there I also just wanted to kind -- and I'm using this time, Madam Chair, to talk about this because there isn't a space in this supplementary appropriation for Finance or ITI, and so I'm unable to kind of talk about it outside of this, this space right here. But my other concern is that I have a lot of constituents who have not seen a disruption to their income but given all of these additional costs that are out-of-pocket and given that a lot of people in our territory live paycheque to paycheque, the additional costs of this evacuation are really stretching them beyond their limits and they're not sure how they're going to really put themselves back together. And I know that one of the things that we often hear said is that people need to plan for a rainy day, but a lot of people have just started to recover post-COVID. And when I think of, like, our neighbours to the south of us over in Hay River, they've been hit with rainy day after rainy day after rainy day, and there's not been an opportunity between any of their evacuations to kind of save for that rainy day. And especially when you're living paycheque to paycheque, there's no money to put away for a rainy day; the North is an expensive place to live. And so I am very concerned about, especially the residents from Hay River, who are -- I don't know how they've even begun to catch their breath. I'm concerned for the residents that I serve as to how they're going to weather this, especially where we do not know what the timeline on this is, and so I have questions too at a later date about whether or not there is room to extend these subsidies and be a lot more simple and flexible and provide them to every resident; as to whether or not if this evacuation continues, if we're going to look at additional subsidies; and that doesn't even touch on our entrepreneurs and our business owners that we very much seem we rely on in the territory with all of the work that they have done to fire smart the territory.

I'm very appreciative that the SEED funding was opened up, but I have businesses who have paid out-of-pocket without billable hours.

They have paid salaries to their workers to keep them going, and they're not getting any billable hours. They're sitting down here, they are bankrupting their businesses in order to keep food on the tables and in the mouths of the workers that they have because at the end of the day, the longevity of their business, like, there's -- they're good people, which is why they're doing it, but the longevity of their business also relies on them affording their workers to come home and to stay in the territory and to keep building the territory with them. And so I just wanted to point those out there that I really would have liked to have seen some Finance and ITI dollars in this supplementary appropriation so we could discuss some of those items as well. And I'll have more specific questions for ECE when we get to the appropriate time in the budget. But I have a lot of concerns right now about our residents wearing this evacuation and weathering this very big storm. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Are there any other Members for general comments? Member for Tu Nedhe-Willideh.

MR. EDJERICON: Thank you, Madam Chair. I also would like to add on to my colleague Caitlin Cleveland's comments as well. The majority of my calls are coming in from -- to me as the MLA for the Tu Nedhe-Willideh riding is that we have a lot of members that are in Edmonton and Calgary that are displaced. Right now as it is, you know, I understand that there's supplementary funding that's been made available up to \$750 for people that drove out and back. But right now as it is, people that are living on social assistance, you know, they can make application to get money and get direct deposit, but right now as you and I, we all sit here today, I have people that are -- can't afford to take a taxi to do laundry let alone to eat. You know, the monies that they have just basically, when they left Yellowknife, was basically they had no money. And now, you know, they're -- each First Nation are doing the best to help their members but as we speak right now, we got people that are asking, begging hotel managers and front desk for food and, you know, they can't even take a taxi down to the centre to get food for their children. So, you know, it just -- it's really disheartening right now as it is to -- you know, to hear these kinds of stories coming from my constituents that are down south. And not only from them but from other constituents as well, from Yellowknife and Behchoko and so on. So I'm hoping that, you know, when I read, you know, the Red Cross in Alberta, you know, who's south from us, and the food and everything else is cheaper -- are cheaper down there. But yet, you know, they

are -- the Red Cross will fund them \$1,250 per adult and \$500 for each dependent. And, you know, that's in Alberta, but here in the Northwest Territories we need to step up as a government to help our people out too as well that are part of this evacuees down in Alberta. I know there's people on the streets in Edmonton, Calgary, people being kicked out of the hotel rooms, and so on. So I'm not really sure, like, at this point -- my phone's been ringing day and night and dealing with all kind of issues. So I'm hoping that, you know, maybe this government should maybe reach out to the Red Cross as an idea and get them to -- because right now I don't know if we have the means to help all the evacuees here in the Northwest Territories right now, but we do need to help. So Red Cross has the capacity. Maybe -- I'm just throwing this out there for discussion but right now as it is, we need to do something. You know, this bill that we're talking about from the Finance Minister, I understand that and the urgency behind it, but we also need to really, really figure a way out because this is something that this -- this here incident or, what do you want to call it, disaster, doesn't happen, like this is the first one in a long time that I can remember that's hitting home. And -- but I get calls. I got mothers crying to me. I got fathers crying to me and so on. So I'm not sure what to do. But I'm just -- I just want to put it out there and maybe we could have a discussion on that too as well. But anyway, I think the Red Cross is out there. They have the means and capacity to pay these guys, our evacuees as much as they can, but Alberta, that's what they do in Alberta. Here in the Northwest Territories, our cost of living is much higher. So, anyway, I just want to put it out there and maybe have some discussion on it. But we do -- we need to do something, and we need to help the evacuees out. And it's already been over, what, a week or ten days now, and a lot of the people are, again, have no money, and they're struggling, and I'm really -- I just want to bring that to your attention. Thank you very much. Mahsi.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh. Members, I just want to remind you that this supplementary appropriation estimates is to provide funding for the shortfall in fire suppression activities for this season. That's what we are discussing here in Committee of the Whole. And so if you can keep your questions focused on that because the Minister is not -- that's what we're prepared for here today. We don't have a bill for -- or any other information on the recovery. So I'll just put it back to Members, are there general comments on this Supplementary Estimates No. 2? Thank you.

Seeing none -- oh, MLA Hay River South.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yeah, I just want to, I guess, a couple comments and, you know -- you know, the Minister's now asking and this government's asking for another \$75 million to continue with the fires, you know, the firefighting efforts going on, and rightfully so. There's a lot of work going on to -- you know, to support the -- you know, the firefighters, you know, there's probably cost of equipment and the support to those at the front lines as well. And I think this is just a start of what the ask will be. But, again, you know, I understand as well is that, you know, there's no asking here for additional funds for evacuees, which we're hearing a lot of.

In Hay River, we've been hit three times with evacuations and basically people are financially exhausted. We need to force -- you know, this government has to force the federal government to step up and provide -- for me, it would be no less than \$3,000 per adult and \$1,500 per youth as a start to support them while evacuated.

The other issue too that's come up and, again, it doesn't relate to the \$75 million, but is the need to address and support businesses. A lot of them are hurting right now. In Hay River, again, it's the third time that they've --

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): MLA -- Mr. Simpson?

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: What?

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): I'd just like you to keep the comments focused on the \$75 million for the wildfire suppression in general comments, and then -- thank you.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. And that's all.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Are there any other general comments? All right. So seeing no further general comments. Does committee agree to proceed to the detail contain understand the tabled document?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Committee, we'll begin on page 3 with the Department of Environment and Climate Change, Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 2, 2023-2024, Department of Environment and Climate Change, wildlife and forest management, not previously authorized, \$75 million. Does committee agree? Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Yes, thanks, Madam Chair. Just quickly, I'm in Edmonton; I want to thank

the firefighters, volunteers, contractors, and our Alberta hosts.

I'd like to know, though, from the Minister whether we actually have a total estimate of what the firefighting costs are to date and what it's likely to be by the end of the season and whether this supplementary appropriation is going to be enough? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. So, Madam Chair, ECC's base budget for fire suppression is around \$21.8 million, and our current estimate is that the supplementary estimate we're proposing should get to the end of the fire season, but you'll detect in my language some uncertainty. Our estimates as of right now, which led to the request for \$75 million, is based on where we were at already now about ten days ago -- if I had my date correctly -- and, of course, things have continued to change significantly. It was actually as of August 22nd; this is where we were at in estimating where we were, which would be a projection that would -- you know, bringing us to a total requirement of just under \$100 million. And so with that, the shortfall is around \$75 million, thereabouts. Again, a bit of an added contingency there. Yeah, can I say where we're at? Again, typical fire season would end sort of by the -- somewhere in October. Nothing about this year has been typical thus far. So, you know, hopefully this will be adequate to get through to the end of that period. If not, it should at least be adequate to get through to the point that there'd be another opportunity for an Assembly sitting later in the fall. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. So in my quick review of the disaster finance assistance arrangements that the federal government has to help provincial/territorial governments, it doesn't look like any firefighting costs are eligible for reimbursement, at least under the policy, and that seems to be across the country. Can the Minister confirm that and what we're doing about it as a government? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, yes, that is my understanding as well, that, indeed, the emergency response elements, so namely this is where some of the evacuation costs may be

covered if they are within the parameters currently existing under the DFAA but, indeed, firefighting response/wildfire response, would not be. Thank you.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Okay, thanks, Madam Chair. So this is going to leave us in a huge hole, obviously. Clearly, we cannot possibly be in compliance with the Fiscal Responsibility Policy, probably even after a couple years. But can the Minister just tell me what the supplementary -- or the reserve is at this point and how much over we're going to be as a result of this sup and -- yes, we'll start with that. Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. So, Madam Chair, you might recall there was \$35 million as part of the supplementary reserve. That is -- you know, that will be more than depleted, quite correctly, at this point, that not involving the wildfires but there's, you know, certainly been other events that have occurred. So, yeah, we'll be well out of that.

As for the Fiscal Responsibility Policy, Madam Chair, what we do also have going for us is that it's not only the cash of the costs for expenses that drive the operation surplus from the perspective of its compliance with the Fiscal Responsibility Policy, there's amortization of assets and that also does factor in it. And so with that, we are hopeful that we will still have sufficient amount to be in compliance with the Fiscal Responsibility Policy for the purposes of capital. That is not to say that we will be in a typically positive position overall in terms of where our operations expenses are. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Yeah, okay. Thanks, yeah, now I'm really worried. So does Cabinet anticipate anything to bring forward a special warrant or that sort of instrument during the sort of caretaker period between the end of this Assembly and the election of the next Cabinet to help cover firefighting and/or other costs? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, so, of course, a special warrant would be where it would be on

the lead of Department of Finance Cabinet to issue an appropriation without going through the Assembly process. That is never a first choice. Madam Chair, that's my hope where -- even as I was giving you the estimates of where we're at in terms of our firefighting and the estimated shortfall as of about a week ago, you know, it would put us around \$69.5 million shortfall, we are asking for \$75 million here today. If this is passed, it is our anticipation, Madam Chair, that this should be sufficient to get us through to the end of the fire season and therefore well into the next Assembly and certainly there should be, you know, enough flexibility with that that a special warrant would therefore not be required. Thank you.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. Can we anticipate seeing another supplementary appropriation, then, for the last sitting of this Assembly, scheduled for late September, that would perhaps deal with the firefighting issue but also support -- financial support for evacuation, you know, other costs associated with the emergency that's, you know, presently throughout the Northwest Territories. Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes, Madam Chair, I think at this point, ECC would be getting, you know, the benefit of this supplementary appropriation that we're proposing here today, and that would be for the fire suppression budget. MACA's responsible for evacuation/emergency costs, and certainly those have now been quite significant. There's quite a lot that does go into that, whether it's the evacuation of flights that have now been opened up, or whether it's the -- you know, just the coordination efforts that now span many communities. That is something they do budget for. Now, that said, the additional support funds that have been announced through the Department of Finance and through ITI are not necessarily something budgeted for and are also into the millions already. So I do expect that we would see that come forward in a sup if there is a late September sitting. Thank you.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Yeah, thanks, Madam Chair. Yeah, I would certainly strongly encourage Cabinet to do that. I don't think it's in anyone's interest to see a special warrant issued in that just in the interest of accountability and

transparency, there is obviously financial need for these areas and I think that the appropriate way to deal with it is through supplementary appropriation and not a special warrant, so -- and I think I saw the Minister shaking her head yes.

The last question, perhaps, Madam Chair, is -- or maybe one more comment after that very quickly -- what is Cabinet doing to try to secure any federal support to try to deal with this huge shortfall? Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, typically leave for that does, of course, fall to the Premier's Office, and I think it was made public, and it certainly was shared with Members that the Premier's Office did meet with the Prime Minister so, you know, in that sense has taken the message about as high up as it can go. And, you know, obviously as we move forward, if there are some individual areas of interest, you know, different Ministers are meeting with their counterparts. For example, the Minister responsible for emergency Preparedness would be meeting with his counterpart in the federal government or myself with CanNor if there's some specific issues but it is led by the Premier's Office, and that has already begun. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Minister. Member for Frame Lake, you have about a minute left.

MR. O'REILLY: Yes, no, thanks, Madam Chair. I guess lastly, I will have a number of comments that I'm going to make about the adequacy of the evacuation transport financial assistance program, whatever it's called, and the fairness and adequacy of that as well as some other supports that I think are needed as some of the other Members alluded to, but I thought that it was best to make those sorts of comments at second reading of the supplementary appropriation bill that should happen later today.

But I do want to thank my Cabinet colleagues for the work because I know that they are working very hard on all of this, so. And the public needs to recognize this, I think, as well, and we are going to need to work all together to get through this. So thanks to my Cabinet colleagues and my Regular Member colleagues as well. I will support this supplementary appropriation when it comes forward. Thanks, Madam Chair.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Yeah, thank you, Madam Chair. I'll just have a couple kind of technical questions. I'm wondering if the Minister has any ability to put this kind of into how much we are spending per day or per week? I get you're asking -- well, it's \$100 million total but, you know, if I had to wager a guess we've probably spent the vast majority of that in the last week or two. I'm just trying to get a sense of, you know, the pace at which we are spending. Is there any of that detail that could be provided? Thank you.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I have a vague recollection, in fact, that -- well, I can certainly, firstly, confirm that, yes, a large proportion of the spending on fire suppression has, indeed, happened over the last, say, month, and in particular in the last couple of weeks. I had a number in my head, and I'm just trying to see if I can find where in my notes that was before throwing it out inappropriately. I think I will not do that since I can't seem to find it quickly. I'll turn it back to the Member but, Madam Chair, if I find it, I will -- I'll share it. It is -- it has been a significant amount. Perhaps, I'll put it this way: We were preparing for there to be a supplementary appropriation going into the -- what was to be the August session. The number in terms of what we were looking for is -- has just -- it has astronomically grown in the space of the couple of weeks before what would have been our August session to now. So I don't necessarily know if it was -- I was estimating it was at around \$10 million a week, Madam Chair, and I'm getting some confirmation that my recollection might be accurate. There you go. Thank you.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Yeah, thank you, Madam Chair. I recognize this is an emergency sitting, and I am in support of this money. I don't think we're likely to vote down what is necessary fire suppression money but I think, you know, perhaps if we could get some details out to the public about, you know, how we're spending \$10 million a week, and if that is the number, and if that's going to be the number for the next couple weeks as we forecasted, and I guess in terms of a question there, I'm just wondering if we have a high level breakdown of what exactly this is being spent on? Is the majority of this helicopters and aircraft, or is this a massive thing of overtime and labour? I mean, I know it's

a combination of both but if we have any of those details of what our fire suppression budget looks like as a breakdown. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yeah, Madam Chair, I don't have a detailed breakdown in a way that I think what I'm hearing is being asked for here. There are the costs, of course, for air tanker support, then there's the cost for the helicopter support, and then there's the cost for moving crews around. There are the fires that folks are watching that are impacting Fort Smith, Hay River, Kakisa, Jean Marie River, obviously Yellowknife, but there was also fires that were impacting all the way up the entire valley. This -- there's been an estimated 70 percent of the residents of the Northwest Territories who have had to evacuate their communities and, Madam Chair, there's been more than that who are under threat of evacuation. So it's been, you know, the fires that were being dealt with are all over. And just one last note on that, Madam Chair, I want to make a point, too, that it's not because we're necessarily actioning more fires. As of the end of July, only 32 percent of the fires had actually been actioned. The focus has been on trying to ensure, of course, areas where there are populations or residences or are other areas of infrastructure. So just to get a sense that there's been a real targeted effort to focus where the spending was taking place and, you know, then keeping in mind how many other fires are actually burning and what that is doing right now. Thank you.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Yeah, thank you, Madam Chair. You know, I guess at this time I'm wondering if perhaps we could get a commitment of a detailed costing breakdown to be provided. I know, I believe in our capital infrastructure the GNWT is asking for 10s of million dollars for some new planes we were buying. There was some other -- I think there's about 50 million -- or there's 10s of millions for a fire centre. There's a lot of big other ticket items. Obviously going forward, we will probably adjust the fire suppression budget and perhaps have a date about -- or a debate about more, you know, prevention and more prescribed burning in communities. So I don't know if now is the time necessarily to get into all those details but this kind of \$100-million season definitely cascades into some very large decisions that have to be made by this Assembly. So if we could get a detailed

breakdown provided at a later date? Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, the timing is certainly rather challenging in that I don't know how much more this Assembly will necessarily have in terms of time or opportunity but certainly will commit that we will get a detailed breakdown. I know there is that information around; it's just that it's coming in from sources and it's changing as the costs go up and as the fires continue to be uncontrolled and therefore difficult to predict. But we'll get that to Members as quickly as we possibly can, and certainly if there is to be another sitting before this Assembly dissolves, I am conscious that we'll have that information available in advance so it's useful. Thank you.

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

MR. JOHNSON: No further questions on the appropriation. Thank you.

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

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. And, Madam Chair, I know that the Member for Yellowknife North kind of alluded to some review of kind of this fire season and even the evacuation, and I know that that's something that will probably be discussed in detail in our September sitting, but can the Minister kind of indicate if that is an intent of the GNWT following this very huge fire season? Thank you. Both from the evacuation standpoint and also the fire suppression standpoint. Thank you.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. I missed literally the first few words of the Member from Kam Lake's question. If she could just repeat the beginning, I wasn't sure what -- if I could, please, just so I can answer more specifically. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Member for Kam Lake, can you repeat your question.

MS. CLEVELAND: Absolutely, thank you. No, the Member for Yellowknife North alluded to doing a review of both this fire suppression season and also the evacuation, and I know that that's going to be a heavy topic probably in September if we do end up sitting in September

but I'm wondering if there is any kind of commitment that could be made here today that that is work that will be done. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I'm never in a good position to make commitments that involve other departments. I'm fairly confident in saying that we can provide the information about the costing, both of the fire suppression this year as well as the evacuation response, including supports that have been put together very quickly over the last few days. What that will look like and whether, you know -- in terms of a sort of, quote/unquote, "review", that's where I'm hesitant in that there's typically some form of after-action review that does take place and there's certainly the processes of the Assembly that exist. So, you know, in that sense I want to say yes. I just, again -- not entirely -- I'm wanting to ensure that what the Member envisions -- sees happening and what I'm able to commit to sort of here align. But, again, there's always reviews that take place of these processes. So thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Member for Kam Lake. I think we've lost MLA for Kam Lake. We'll keep her time, and then we'll move on until she can reconnect.

Member for Thebacha. Are you there, Member for Thebacha? Member for Hay River South?

MS. MARTSELOS: Hello?

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Oh, sorry. Sorry, we'll just -- just one moment, Mr. Simpson. Ms. Martselos?

MS. MARTSELOS: Yes, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Go ahead.

MS. MARTSELOS: Thank you, Madam Chair. I too will be supporting this supplementary estimate of \$75 million. First of all, I want to acknowledge that, you know, Fort Smith evacuees have been away now for two weeks from the community and, you know, being the first community that was evacuated, it was a lot of -- it was very much a learning experience on behalf of myself and a big bearing on the evacuees from Fort Smith because, you know, there was a lot of loopholes. And I just want to thank all the Cabinet and all the ordinary MLAs and all the bureaucrats that helped me navigate to ensure that the Fort Smith residents were looked after properly. It was -- it was a big

experience and an experience that I will never forget.

I want to thank the first responders and everybody who helped and who are helping with the fire and all those that are in evacuation centres, you know, it's -- it's a big experience for not only our Indigenous but all residents of Fort Smith and the NWT with this kind of disaster.

My question is for Minister Wawzonek, and I just want to ask the question about the operational budget. \$75 million from the operations budget, I would like to know how that's going to affect all the departments and how we're going to ensure that we are not going -- the ordinary Members and residents of the NWT and all residents of the NWT are not going to have a situation where they have to do without in some other area in order for us to ensure that things continue as usual, because the cost of living in the North is very high, and the residents of the NWT have been very patient even during this evacuation. And, you know, and we have to ensure that we continue the services as we know it. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, MLA Martselos. Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. So, Madam Chair, we -- we've worked hard over the last four years, notwithstanding multiple forms of crisis and emergency, to go from starting off with a deficit situation to being at a point where we were announcing \$178 million surplus, what feels like a very long time ago now, back in February. That surplus is all but wiped out right now. There might be some smidgy bit left of that. That's my technical term, Madam Chair. At this point, we're, you know, at \$178 million while we're taking \$75 million out, better part of, right now. There was the \$35 million, you know, supplementary appropriations reserved that was mentioned earlier but that is largely eaten up right now. The low water season is causing serious cost pressures on NTPC. It is causing serious problems for MTS. We had a litany of problems before us, Madam Chair. So when we have to take that -- when we run out of the supplementary surplus that -- or the projected surplus that we have, then we need to start looking at taking on additional debt, which then comes with high costs of interest that I think everyone is familiar with. Government pays them too. And we have a significant growing deficit, and this will only add to that.

So all of this is to say, Madam Chair, I am very live to trying to balance the needs of fire suppression, the needs for an evacuation that

maintains all of our essential needs for people - accommodations, shelter, and the ability to return home - and the fact that we are not in a position as we're still recovering to then be adding a burden of high costs on people. This is a complicated and difficult and unhappy topic. I share the Member's concern. The cost of living is high in the North and, at the same time, the needs in the North are very high. I don't know that this is the time for me to try to answer or unpack all of that. I simply want to acknowledge the complexities of it, the challenges of it, and that that's -- these are conversations that have been keeping a lot of people up at night for the last -- well, I was going to say the last week, but probably before that too. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MS. MARTSELOS: Thank you, Madam Chair. The other question I want to ask also is about the capital budget. Is this going to affect the capital budget items that we are going to be discussing in September? I'm concerned, now that we have such a bad fire season, I want to make sure that, you know, the -- the new fire centre is still on the books because, you know, this is what happens, and if we ever lose that data that's in that -- in that old building in my community, we are in big trouble. And, you know, I'm saying this because it affects not only the community of Fort Smith, it affects the whole Northwest Territories, and I don't want to see an adjustment in the capital budget at this time. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. So this is where the split between our operations and capital does get a bit -- not always very intuitive. So this supplementary appropriation is attached to the 2023-2024 year. That capital budget was already passed last fall. So that's this Fiscal Responsibility Policy and our efforts to maintain to be within that impact the capital budget that we're -- that, you know, we would have been acting upon this last construction season. What will come forward to the Assembly this coming fall will be the capital budget for 2024-2025. So these operational expenditures don't impact on that. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Ms. Martselos.

MS. MARTSELOS: So I'm happy that the Premier had some commitments made from the Prime Minister regarding costs. I don't know what those commitments are in detail yet and

the criteria that is required. But maybe, you know, I'm hoping she covers all the travel, the evacuation costs, hotels, financial assistance to residents. And you know what, and some of the suppression, because we don't have the infrastructure, like she said, and I'm very happy that she did that and made it very clear the lack of infrastructure in the Northwest Territories.

You know, many times we are forgotten because, you know, we're a small population, does that mean we're -- we should be less than any other jurisdiction in Canada? I don't think so. And so I would like to get more details, and I'm sure we'll get that when we have sittings in September. And with that, I just want to -- I'm not going to ask any questions -- any more questions but I want to thank everybody who helped in the evacuation of the residents of Fort Smith and the NWT because it was -- it was scary.

I've never gone through anything like that, and I can imagine what happens with Hay River. Three times evacuations is unprecedented. And, you know -- and we have to realize that climate change is an issue, and it's going to continue to be an issue.

And with that, I want to thank all the Cabinet, and I want to thank each and every person that helps with all the evacuation efforts. And I especially want to thank one personnel person from Fort Smith, a MACA person, and that's Bobby Bourque. He helped me through navigating all these little issues with hotels even though, you know, it was -- it was horrendous when we first came here. And everybody else. I want to thank the leaders of the community of Fort Smith, the Aboriginal leaders, both chiefs, and the Fort Smith Metis President Allan Heron, Chief Laviolette, and Chief Paulette, for their coordinated effect on making sure that everybody came out safe and looking after the people. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member for Thebacha. I'll return now to MLA for Kam Lake since we have her back.

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. My apologies for being cut off. My computer is hanging on by a thread these days. And I appreciate all of the questions that my colleagues have asked. I've had a lot of my questions answered, and I really appreciate the responses we've received as well.

One of the questions that I really want to focus in on is whether or not the efforts that have happened within municipalities are included in this \$75 million as far as fire suppression is concerned. I mean, we saw in multiple communities, private industry really showing up

for all of our communities and, you know, doing sprinkler systems, doing firebreaks, and stuff like that. And so I'm wondering if those are dollars that are being charged to municipalities, if they're included in this, if those are dollars that will eventually make it up to the GNWT level because those are dollars as well that our municipalities will not have been prepared for and will far exceed municipal budgets. So I'm wondering if the Minister can speak to how private industry is being paid for their part in this. Thank you.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I have to say I'm not certain that will actually be within -- again, that breakdown, I realize more detailed line by line breakdown of what ECC has spent and where they need it to go. I do apologize, Madam Chair, but I will say it's been an unusual sort of ten days, particularly in and around the capital region, where fairly significant work was being undertaken around obviously a very significant geographic size of a community. So I have, you know, made some efforts here as I'm sitting here to try to gather that information remotely. If I can get it, I will try to convey that back to the Members. I can suggest, Madam Chair, that, you know, some will be. I just -- how much, I can't say for sure. If you suggest or prefer, Madam Chair, I could defer this to the Member -- or the Minister for Municipal and Community Affairs. I don't know that he's prepared detailed budgets, but he may at least be able to speak somewhat to the relationship. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Minister Thompson. No, we can't hear you.

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Can you hear me now?

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Oh yes, we can hear you now.

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Sorry, I feel like that commercial here. So in regards to the question, we know that some of the costs of the communities will be covered but some of the costs that -- if we actually take them, we wouldn't get a hundred percent reimbursement from the federal government. So we will be working with municipalities on certain costs and making sure that we submit that as part of our reimbursement -- submit that as part of our EFA aid application. Hopefully that answers some of the question. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. And I appreciate that. And can the Minister then confirm that municipalities will not be on the hook for expenses related to this forest firefighting effort -- or this wildfire fighting effort. My concern is that the cost of living in the territory is already incredibly high and that municipalities bearing the brunt of these costs will, in turn, actually just be passed on to residents through the form of taxes. And so I just want to make sure that we have a common understanding that these are not expenses that will be incurred and expected to be paid for by municipalities. Thank you.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. So, Madam Chair, I don't think we're going to be in a position to confirm that every last penny is going to be paid by the GNWT. The idea -- and I mean, the cost of living is very high, and the GNWT is the government that provides a lot of the public provisions of services across the Northwest Territories and in all communities and provides funding to all communities. And I know there's a constant tension and a desire to see that funding formula perhaps changed or increased but, fundamentally, I mean, there was a question earlier as to what the GNWT's going to be doing to pay for this in the face of a, you know, \$75 million budget now for fire suppression and calls for increases to the amounts we're spending in the evacuation response, which is going to be in the 10s of millions of dollars already. We also don't have that money necessarily sitting anywhere. We are trying very hard to make our evacuation emergency response one that we can see some reimbursement from the federal government. We have no guarantees that we'll get any of it back. I suspect that we'll get some of it back. I don't know how much. And until we get it from the federal government, we cash flow it. And if we don't have it, it means we take on debt to pay for it. So everything impacts residents in the Northwest Territories. That is constantly the balance of trying to ensure that we are doing our best to provide essential services to everybody without seeing any increases of taxes and without seeing any reductions of services. It is a fine balance. I've realized the community governments can't take on debt. That makes it even harder for them. I'm aware of that. But, you know, again, as to how much, if any, they will need to bear in terms of those costs, it is probably too early to say. I don't know that the city necessarily has -- and I'm speaking particularly about Yellowknife where I know there's been a significant undertaking, but other communities too have

had some significant undertakings this fire season. So until we get a full accounting of what each community has spent, looking at what we are now then maybe more likely to see come in from the federal government -- and, again, I want to believe, given the conversations that have been had, something will come. It is not -- it's just too difficult for me to say what we might get from the feds, what individual communities have spent, and what the GNWT's then able to necessarily bear. I do want to -- I gave the long answer because I want to assure the Member that all of those things are under consideration. We're aware of them and, again, I know that the communities -- it's been a topic, it has been a priority of this Assembly for four years to ensure that communities are supported. So that priority hasn't gone anywhere. I just don't quite know how it will turn out at the end of this fire season. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Minister. Does the Member for Kam Lake have a short last question and a short last answer?

MS. CLEVELAND: Yes, I'm wondering if the Minister can make a commitment, then, to keep Members on this side aware of what the GNWT will be requesting for reimbursement on when it comes to municipalities and what they're expecting municipalities to bear on their own when it comes to that cost breakdown just so that we have all the information and we're not finding out down the road that there was an expectation that a municipality take on a large chunk of this, so. But that's my last question. Thank you.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, certainly, I mean, all financial pieces do ultimately go through the Legislative Assembly, whether it's through the supplementary appropriation process, whether it's through the actual budgeting process that does take place annually in terms of understanding where our contribution dollars are going. So certainly those two processes alone, of course, will continue to take place and, you know, beyond that, again, this is where we get into some challenge of the timing where I presume that we'll be getting some of this information perhaps even when this particular Assembly is no longer together. So, you know, look, I've heard the request to get that accounting between what a community's spent, what is the GNWT spending, and what are we able to support. I've heard it, and I know the Minister responsible for emergencies has heard it as well. So I believe that it's always been our effort to try to maintain sharing. I would certainly

say that it would be -- I will try to make sure that I'm doing that. I can point to the example of the spending we've done on the floods over the last two years and the reporting we've done to Members in that regard, I believe monthly, if not quarterly, about what has been spent and updates on that. So with that as being a common example, I would say that would be fine. Thank you.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, the Member for Yellowknife North had asked for a high-level breakdown of costs. And I'd like to see that include what went out to local, regional, territorial, and businesses outside the NWT as well because this is something -- is this something, I guess, that the Minister can be provided? Because firefighting, really, in -- when we look at it is beneficial to part of our local and regional and territorial economy, and I think that, you know, when we're looking at it as much as, you know, we -- you know, we don't want to see fires because of the destruction they can cause but it does benefit our economy, and I just want to make sure that we have the numbers there to show that we did everything we could to ensure that local businesses and the businesses of Northwest Territories were given first chance at and the first opportunity in providing services. Thank you.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes, we certainly can. There is a contracts report that does get prepared every year. Procurement does manage and monitor and ultimately will be able to sort of collate, if you will, all of the spending. Certainly, in emergency times, that spending wouldn't necessarily follow a more formal procurement process, but sometimes it does too. All of which is to say those types of reports are prepared regularly, and I can see that there being one prepared that is specific to the wildfire season. Thank you.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. Of the \$75 million ask, I guess, will a portion -- or what portion of it will be used to offset the costs incurred by local governments, you know, as of today because most of the -- you know, most of our local fire departments are volunteers but they are using local personnel, they are volunteers there, they

are using local equipment and infrastructure as well. So, again, like Ms. Cleveland said, is that, you know, we got to make sure that, you know, their costs are covered as well because this is going to, you know, set us -- this whole fire season is going to set the NWT back a bit here. So if she can -- if the Minister can answer that. Thank you.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. So this \$75 million is going to the Department of Environment and Climate Change. They are the lead, and this to supplement their existing budget of roughly \$21.8 or so million. So this is to supplement that budget. That's a base budget that they have annually for wildfire suppression. I don't know exactly what proportion of that necessarily flows directly to a community or to community government or to individual contractors, nor can I say at this point whether the shortfall is going to proportionate to that or not. We would -- we have been doing variances in terms of what is being spent within that area of funding but not necessarily a detailed breakdown. So as I've said, we can repair ultimately -- we do prepare annual contracting reports and can ensure that there is one that is specific to the wildfire season. That might take a bit of time. We are sadly still in the wildfire season right now. It's out of control with fires burning in multiple locations. As for, again, what will go to individual municipalities, you know, as I said to the Member from Yellowknife earlier, it -- you know, I don't yet know from the municipalities themselves what they have spent. So there's still a bit of work to be done, and -- but as this comes in, we'll certainly -- I can certainly commit that we'll be doing an effort to make that contracting and reporting available. Thank you.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. And I appreciate the answer and I'm, you know, pleased to hear, I guess, you know, that the local governments and municipalities are on the radar of this government for some form of reimbursement or assistance as well. But, you know, the cost of firefighting -- or the cost of fighting these wildfires, we know, they take a toll not only on this government, but the people of the NWT as well, to the point that I'm hearing now that some of our residents will not return.

The Minister also stated that the Premier discussed costs with the Prime Minister. Can she confirm if there was any commitment from the federal government to cover some of the costs associated with this fire season, or do

they point to our agreement with them and say it is our responsibility? I guess the reason I ask this is that, you know, if we're bearing the brunt of it or all of it, it's going to impact future spending by all departments, you know, in probably the next, you know, into the next Assembly and beyond. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. Minister of Finance.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, that does seem to be directed at the Premier. I'd like to suggest that she address that. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Madam Premier.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes, I did have conversations with the Prime Minister. There are things he's looking to do. He's looking to, of course, fast track the employment insurance so please get that word out there. Looking at not making the normal provisions for EI. That will help a lot.

As for the commitment for extra money, he did talk about being able to advance the disaster assistance program, but he also mentioned that there's -- I mean, that he'll look at it. There was no firm commitment because he also talked about ensuring the fairness for all jurisdictions. I kind of tried to debate that a little bit but, again, I understand his position. If he opens it up, then he has every jurisdiction that's facing fires asking for the same amount. And I believe all MLAs have gotten a copy of the things that are covered currently within the disaster assistance program and things that aren't. So no firm commitments. A willingness to look at it but a statement from the Prime Minister that if he opens this for one, he's got to look at it for all.

He did also commit, and I think that's public knowledge, that the federal government will be working with jurisdictions to review the disaster assistance program, which hasn't been reviewed in a long time. But, again, I'm not seeing that that'll happen in the short term. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just a comment, I guess. You know, I look at this jurisdiction that we're in. You know, we're limited to, you know, revenue raise -- or raising ourselves. We count on the federal government for a big majority of the funding that we do have. And, you know, when we have disasters such as this, and multiple ones like in Hay River, over, you know, over 15 months, you

know, it takes -- it takes a real financial impact on the territory. It takes it on the government. It takes on -- you know, on individual businesses and everything. And I think that, you know, when the federal government, you know, says that, you know, they want to make sure that everything's fair and equitable, well, you know, I got a problem with that. But the problem is is that the territories is different. You know, we're -- we've got a large -- large area, and we need -- we need this government to step up and pressure and continue pressuring the federal government to ensure that we have the funds that we need to, you know, to cover these costs and any future disasters as well in order that we can actually, you know, continue to build -- build an economy, build infrastructure in the territories and create a -- you know, a good health care system and education system because, you know, if we're spending all our money on disasters, we're going to be in trouble. So, just a comment. Thank you.

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

MS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Go ahead, yes.

MS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Okay. I just wanted to ask the Minister that, well, I do sympathize with evacuees, Behchoko and Wekweeti were also evacuated back in -- or in July, and I do recognize the hard work of the forest firefighters and first responders. According to the report, over 2 million hectares of land was burned. So I just wanted to ask the Minister, do we have an estimate of how much money is spent in the region as per to the forest fire? I know Behchoko and Wekweeti are part of the North Slave region. Thank you.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, at this point, no, I don't have the breakdown of environment and climate change's budget by region. I just have the -- again, the fact that they are projecting a total shortfall of \$75 million. I anticipate, Madam Chair, that this may be complicated by region in that the fires are not necessarily staying in each region. So, you know, there's fires that are burning across communities. So I guess we'll have to see to what extent -- certainly, they're burning across and structurally across multiple constituencies. As how much they are sticking to within the regions, I -- again, I would have to pull out a map and see if we're even able to break that down. I know that there's been an

effort, Madam Chair, to ensure that fire crews are being moved around efficiently and so that too may make some of the breakdown more complicated. But, again, as I've said we'll certainly be providing a contracts report of the wildfire season as well as can try to do a breakdown of what gets spent over time, much as we have for the last couple years with the flood response. Thank you.

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

MS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Yeah, I think it's pretty obvious that North and South Slave are -- you know, we see more of our land burn and I know Sahtu and Inuvik region also experienced the same thing, but I was just -- you know, I just wanted to know about, you know, how much money was spent. But I think it's pretty obvious that North and South Slave went through the worst. But I just wanted to ask the Minister that if there's an estimate cost for the evacuation. Thank you.

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

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Madam Chair, I do have some estimated costs at this point. I know I had an opportunity to meet with several of the Members last week and was provided some of those costs to them. I don't have that necessarily at my fingertips now in that I was planning to focus the discussion today on the fire response and not on the various evacuation costs. Again, that -- I do expect, as I said earlier, that we will certainly be facing a supplementary appropriation, probably in the Department of Finance, which is where some of the added amounts are, but quite possibly for the Municipal and Community Affairs that is the leader of the EMO, that there will be costs also therefore drawing down on as well. As I said, probably were already used up by operations surplus but then so adding to our -- adding some short-term debt to us in order to provide for the massive level of evacuations we've experienced. Thank you.

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

MS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Yes, thank you. Yeah, no. Well, it's good that, you know, I'm sure that she's going to share the information with us once the information is available for the evacuations. So I don't have any more question. Thank you.

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

MR. BONNETROUGE: Mahsi, Madam Chair. I'd first like to sympathize with all the residents of the Northwest Territories that were uprooted from their communities, their homes, and their communities and who are all down south, and many who are still struggling because of the lack of supports, financial supports from our government. And it's fair enough that, you know, we're hearing that we don't have the financial resources to cover everyone. My colleague from Hay River South, you know, mentioned, you know, some significant amounts, and I feel that it's only fair for our residents for the, you know, amount of time that they have been evacuated.

I also want to express my deepest sympathies to the community in my riding, Enterprise, for the devastation that they faced and the loss of homes and businesses. I think my big concern there is the lead time leading up to the fire because they were in the middle of a festival that weekend, Friday, Saturday, and then Sunday they were -- they were out. I believe the department had advance knowledge of that fire and it wasn't relayed to anyone, not even to me, not even to the residents of Enterprise. I know it was the high winds that escalated the fires towards the community. I don't believe there were any fire crews there, I'm just assuming and from what I'm hearing, and they weren't very noticeable in the community even after because of the flare-ups that were happening within and there was some residents taking it upon themselves to fight those flare-ups in the community. You know, I feel for those people that lost, you know, their homes, their businesses, they -- oh my God, it's devastating. And that's a big concern, is it was known and I'm pretty sure, you know, I would really like the Enterprise fire situation really looked at, investigated. You know, how did we let that happen?

In the past, we had people that manned the fire towers. And ENR at that time, they did away with them saying that well, we got satellites. So I'm just wondering if you with see stuff like that on cloudy days and, you know, would a tower person have helped before the fire even got to Enterprise? I think that'll haunt me for, you know, for the rest of my life, what happened. Where were the crews? Why was no advance warning given? Madam Chair, this is relevant to the budget because I just wonder if the Minister of ECC could possibly answer that question. Mahsi.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member. I will put it to the Minister of Finance, and she can redirect it if -- thank you.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I know that some latitude is being given here to try to recognize that we are in a difficult position today. I know that many members of the public are likely watching today and from places all across western Canada at this point. Madam Chair, this -- I am trying to answer some questions that are not directly on the supplementary appropriation but that are at least related to the costs associated or costs that might be associated with amount. Madam Chair, the very specific details of firefighting efforts are really not something that I think we're in a position to answer to today. I'm deeply -- I mean, we were all, I think, affected by watching one of the communities of the Northwest Territories be so decimated by a wildfire and at the same time one of the communities being so urgently -- well, multiple communities being then so urgently removed.

Madam Chair, I heard it described to me when that fire moved almost 40 kilometres in a day, senior members of the firefighting team describe it as a nightmare, and they were outright shell shocked. So this is not to say that there's not people who are experts who are over at ECC and with our fire teams who are not equally affected. Madam Chair, I think beyond that, I don't -- I'm not going to move it over to the Member -- or to the Minister only because, again, there should be a fulsome discussion, there should be full opportunity for question and debate, and right now the context is around the costs of the fires and not some of the other choices that were made. There will be an opportunity for that. I know people will be frustrated that this is not today, but today is really about making sure that those firefighters who are still fighting those fires have the resources to do so. Thank you.

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

MR. BONNETROUGE: Mahsi, Madam Chair. And mahsi to the Minister for that answer. I had hoped the Minister of ECC would have answered my question related -- it's budget related, whether we're still going to count on the satellite systems or we're going to get people back on the towers to give advance warnings. Somebody from the tower would have seen that fire, you know, really moving. Why didn't we fight it ASAP? So I'm just hoping the Minister of ECC could answer that. Mahsi.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member. But the supplementary appropriation is on the money that is being used for the fire suppression, and the Minister of Finance responded. So if you have questions on that

related to the supplementary appropriation, I'll give the mic back to you. Member for Deh Cho.

MR. BONNETROUGE: Mahsi, Madam Chair. Yeah, I don't have a lot of questions on there that other Members haven't touched upon. So I'll pass this time, and I will take it up hopefully in the next sitting. Mahsi.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, Member. And the Minister did commit that we would have a fulsome discussion on all of the costs and all of the concerns that we have. So if there are any further Members that we haven't heard from to discuss the supplementary appropriation?

Seeing none, Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 2, 2023-2024, Department of Environment and Climate Change, wildlife and forest management, not previously authorized, \$75 million. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 2, 2023-2024, Department of Environment and Climate Change, total department, not previously authorized, \$75 million. Does committee agree?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you, committee. Do you agree that you have concluded consideration of Tabled Document 967-19(2) Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 2, 2023-2024?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Member for Frame Lake.

COMMITTEE MOTION 467-19(2):
CONCURRENCE MOTION – TABLED
DOCUMENT 967-19(2): SUPPLEMENTARY
ESTIMATES (OPERATIONS
EXPENDITURES), NO. 2, 2023-2024,
CARRIED

MR. O'REILLY: Thanks, Madam Chair. I think you called on me. I move that consideration of Tabled Document 967-19(2) Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 2, 2023-2024, be now concluded and that Tabled Document 967-19(2) be reported and recommended as ready for further consideration in formal session through the form of an appropriation bill. Mahsi, Madam la Presidente.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Question has been called. All those -- Members, we will conduct -- are we having -- let's just have a recorded vote. It's just easier since everybody's virtual. We'll conduct a recorded vote for the motion. When the clerk calls you, please state if you're in favour, opposed, or abstaining. Mr. Clerk, give us one minute.

Mr. Clerk.

RECORDED VOTE

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Rutland): Thank you. Members can please respond if they are in favour of the motion, which is the motion to concur with the estimates, opposed, or abstaining when you are called on. I will begin with the Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Thank you. In favour.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Rutland): The Member for Nunakput.

I'll return to the Member for Nunakput. The Member for Yellowknife North.

MR. JOHNSON: In favour.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland): The Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

MR. EDJERICON: In favour.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland): The Member for Monfwi.

MS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: In favour.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland): The Member for Great Slave.

MS. NOKLEBY: In favour.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland): The Member for Nahendeh.

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: In favour.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland): The Member for Yellowknife South.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: In favour.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland): The Member for Sahtu.

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: In favour.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland): The Member for Range Lake.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: In favour.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland): The Member for Inuvik Boot Lake.

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: In favour.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland): The Member for Yellowknife Centre.

HON. JULIE GREEN: In favour.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland): The Member for Hay River North.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: In favour.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland): The Member for Deh Cho.

MR. BONNETROUGE: In favour.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland): The Member for Hay River South.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: In favour.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland): The Member for Thebacha.

MS. MARTSELOS: In favour.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland): The Member for Kam Lake.

MS. CLEVELAND: In favour.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland): And the Member for Nunakput.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Pursuant to the rules, the Member for Nunakput has three minutes to respond, to vote.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland): The Member for Nunakput has confirmed yes, he is in favour.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): The results of the recorded vote are 17 in favour, zero opposed and zero abstentions. The motion is carried.

---Carried

Tabled Document 967-19(2) will be reported as ready for consideration in the formal session through the form of an appropriation bill. Thank you, Minister. Thank you to the witnesses for appearing before us.

What is the wish of committee? Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Madam la Presidente. I move that the chair rise and report progress. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Ms. Semmler): Thank you. 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?

---Carried

The motion is carried. I will now rise and report progress. Members, we will just take a short five-minute break.

---SHORT RECESS

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, colleagues. We will continue. Report of Committee of the Whole. Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes.

Report of Committee of the Whole

MS. SEMMLER: Mr. Speaker, your committee has been considering Tabled Document 967-19(2) Supplementary Estimates (Operations Expenditures), No. 2, 2023-2024, and I would like to report progress with one motion carried, and that consideration of Tabled Document 967-19(2) is concluded and that the House concur on those estimates as amended and that an appropriation bill be based thereon and introduced without delay. And, Mr. Speaker, I move that the report of the Committee of the Whole be concurred with.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes. Do we have a seconder? Member for Inuvik Boot Lake. All those in favour? All those opposed? Any abstentions? The motion is carried.

---Carried

Notices of motion for the first reading of bills. Member for Sahtu.

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm just trying to navigate through two screens here, I'm so sorry. Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to waive Rule 6.1(1) so that Bill 90 --

MR. SPEAKER: -- notices of motion for the first reading of bills. Colleagues, we'll just make a couple changes here real quick.

Notices of motion for the first reading of bills. The Member for Inuvik Boot Lake.

Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills

BILL 97:
AN ACT TO POSTPONE POLLING DAY FOR
THE 2023 GENERAL ELECTION

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I provide notice that on Wednesday, August 30th, 2023, I will move, second by the Member for Kam Lake, that Bill 97, An Act to Postpone Polling Day for the 2023 General Election be read for the first time.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Inuvik Boot Lake. Notices of motion for the first reading of bills. Honourable Member for Monfwi.

BILL 98:
AN ACT TO AMEND THE EMERGENCY
MANAGEMENT ACT

MS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I provide notice that on Wednesday, August 30th, 2023, I will move, seconded by the Member for Great Slave, Katrina Nokleby, that Bill 98, An Act to Amend the Emergency Management Act, be read for the first time.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Monfwi. Notices of motion for the first reading of bills. First reading of bills. Member for Inuvik Boot Lake.

First Reading of Bills

BILL 97:
AN ACT TO POSTPONE POLLING DAY FOR
THE 2023 GENERAL ELECTION

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I seek unanimous consent to waive Rule 6.1(1) so that Bill 97, An Act to Postpone Polling Day for the 2023 General Election, may be read for the first time today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Inuvik Boot Lake. The Member is seeking unanimous consent to waive Rule 6.1(1) to allow Bill 97 to be read for the first time today. Are there any objections?

Hearing none, the Honourable Member for Inuvik Boot Lake, please proceed.

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, colleagues. Mr. Speaker, I present to the House Bill 97, An Act to Postpone Polling Day for the 2023 General Election, be read for the first reading. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Inuvik Boot Lake. Pursuant to Rule 8.2(3), Bill 97 is deemed read for the first time.

First reading of bills. Member for Monfwi.

BILL 98:
AN ACT TO AMEND THE EMERGENCY
MANAGEMENT ACT

MS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to waive Rule 6.1(1) so that Bill 98, An Act to Amend the Emergency Management Act, may be read for the first time today.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Monfwi. The Member is seeking unanimous consent to waive Rule 6.1(1) to allow Bill 98 to be read for the first time today. Are there any objections?

Hearing none, the Honourable Member for Monfwi, please proceed.

MS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you, colleagues. Mr. Speaker, I present to the House Bill 98, An Act to Amend the Emergency Management Act for the first reading.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Monfwi. Pursuant to Rule 8.2(3), Bill 98 is deemed read for the first time.

First reading of bills. Minister responsible for Finance.

BILL 99:
SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION ACT
(OPERATIONS EXPENDITURES) NO. 2,
2023-2024

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Mr. Speaker, I wish to present to the House Bill 99, Supplementary Appropriation Act (Operations Expenditures) No. 2, 2023-2024, to be read for the first time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister responsible for Finance. Pursuant to Rule 8.2(3), Bill 98 is deemed read for the first time.

First reading of bills. Second reading of bills. Member for Inuvik Boot Lake.

Second Reading of Bills

BILL 97:
AN ACT TO POSTPONE POLLING DAY FOR
THE 2023 GENERAL ELECTION,
CARRIED

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Rule 8.2(2), I seek consent to proceed with the second reading of Bill 97, An Act to Postpone Polling Day for the 2023 General Election, at this time.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Inuvik Boot Lake. The honourable Member for Inuvik

Boot Lake is seeking consent to proceed with second reading of Bill 97 at this time. Are there any objections?

Seeing none, Member, you have consent; please proceed. Member for Inuvik Boot Lake.

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, colleagues. Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Kam Lake, that Bill 97, An Act to Postpone Polling Day for the 2023 General Election, be read for the second time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this bill postpones polling day for the 2023 General Election. If passed, the election date will be changed from Tuesday, October 3rd, 2023, to Tuesday, November 14th, 2023. This bill has been brought forward on the recommendation of the chief electoral officer and at the direction of Members. It recognizes the current situation in the territories in that in more than half of the territory, an election could not be run safely starting next week as required by law. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Inuvik Boot Lake. The motion is in order. To the principle of the bill. Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Yes, thanks, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to talk to this. I think this is, you know, unprecedented times that we're in. We've talked about this earlier today even. It's not going to be possible for us to hold fair elections on September the 2nd as originally planned given that 70 percent of the population of the NWT has been evacuated. This would affect the majority of the actual ridings in the NWT as well. You know, so I think we've taken the advice of the chief electoral officer seriously. I think the only, I guess, piece of new information here is the date of November the 14th. And I guess, you know, I certainly will support this bill. I don't want the election prolonged any longer than necessary, and my public intentions of not running, I think, are known as well. So I think this is probably the least intrusive way we can do this. I am, though, concerned that the fires may continue on into October. That's what happened last year. The Scotty Creek Research Station near Fort Simpson was burnt down the middle of October last year, and so I am concerned that there may, indeed, still be some communities that are under an evacuation order even into October. Certainly, we're all hoping that that's not the case, but it could happen.

We do, as I understand, have the ability to go back and push it back further if indeed this were the case, but it would require changing not just one piece of legislation but two at that point

because the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act requires that there be a first sitting of the Assembly 45 days after the end of -- sorry, the end of an election and it also sets when an Assembly finishes. So we may, indeed, be put in the position of having to amend this a second time if the fires prolong for much longer than anybody would ever like.

I think the longer term fixed for this is to actually change both pieces of legislation if necessary to provide for some emergency contingency provisions such that we're facing right now, and I think that's the longer term effects that would probably require some -- a little bit more thinking and some drafting, and I think that's something that can and should come out of whatever review is conducted at the end of all of this. But, you know, in lieu of trying to find a way forward at this point, this is the least intrusive way and I will support the bill. And I want to thank our staff and the chief electoral officer for the advice that they have all provided and input they've given us on this. Thank you. Merci, Monsieur le President.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. Pursuant to Rule 10.3(1), this will be a recorded vote. The clerk shall call out each Member. Please reply with your vote either in favour, opposed, or abstaining. Thank you. Mr. Clerk.

RECORDED VOTE

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you. The Member for Inuvik Boot Lake.

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: In favour.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland): The Member for Yellowknife Centre.

HON. JULIE GREEN: In favour.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland): The Member for Hay River North.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: In favour.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland): The Member for Deh Cho.

MR. BONNETROUGE: In favour.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland): The Member for Hay River South.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: In favour.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland): The Member for Thebacha.

MS. MARTSELOS: In favour.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland): The Member for Kam Lake.

MS. CLEVELAND: In favour.

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

MR. O'REILLY: In favour.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland): The Member for Nunakput. The Member for Nunakput. We'll return.

The Member for Yellowknife North.

MR. JOHNSON: In favour.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland): The Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh. The Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

MR. EDJERICON: In favour.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you. The Member for Monfwi.

MS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: In favour.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you. The Member for Great Slave.

MS. NOKLEBY: In favour.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you. The Member for Nahendeh.

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: In favour.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland): The Member for Yellowknife South.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: In favour.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland): The Member for Sahtu.

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: In favour.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland): The Member for Range Lake.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: In favour.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland): Mr. Speaker, I've received a text from the Member for Nunakput indicating in favour.

And the Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes.

MS. SEMMLER: In favour.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland):
Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The results of the recorded vote: 18 in favour, zero opposed, zero abstentions. The motion is carried. Bill 97 has had second reading.

---Carried

The Honourable Member for Inuvik Boot Lake.

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to waive Rule 8.2(7) and have Bill 97 referred directly to third reading. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The Member is seeking unanimous consent to waive Rule 8.2(7) and have Bill 97 referred directly to third reading. Any objections?

Hearing none, Bill 97 will be referred for a third reading later today. Second reading of bills. Member for Monfwi.

BILL 98:
AN ACT TO AMEND THE EMERGENCY
MANAGEMENT ACT,
CARRIED

MS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Rule 8.2(2), I seek consent to proceed with second reading of Bill 98, An Act to Amend the Emergency Management Act, at this time. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Monfwi. The Member is seeking unanimous consent to proceed with second reading of Bill 98 at this time. Are there any objections? Hearing none, Member, you have consent. Please proceed.

MS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, colleagues and Mr. Speaker. I move, seconded by the Member for Great Slave, that Bill 98, An Act to Amend the Emergency Management Act be read for the second time. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Monfwi. If you'd like --

MS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Okay. No, no, I think I still have to proceed; sorry about that.

Mr. Speaker, the word "Indigenous" and "Aboriginal" cannot be found in the existing Emergency Management Act, and there is nothing in the act requiring coordination with Indigenous government or organizations in

carrying out of emergency management duties. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Monfwi. The motion is in order. To the principle of the bill. Member for Yellowknife North.

MR. JOHNSON: Mr. Speaker, will you just let the seconder speak first perhaps. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Sorry, I didn't see your hand there. Member for Great Slave.

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to my colleague. I had written in the chat that I did want to speak to this bill.

Mr. Speaker, I have spent the time since I left Yellowknife late Thursday evening dealing with numerous uncountable emails and messages and phone calls from people who have been evacuating and leaving the North. Many of these people are Indigenous. They have been reaching out to me. And in my time spent since this has started, I have become aware that there were no conversations with Indigenous governments ahead of all of this evacuation. No opportunity for Indigenous governments to bring their people home, no supports to bring them home. The people in Behchoko do not have food right now, which is part of the reason I chose to leave the community. Everybody is relying on a Northern store that has no supplies, that's getting a truck every now and then, and people are not being allowed into Yellowknife to do their shopping, including the elders home.

When I see all of this happening and I listen and see within the community the ability to have taken care of their own people, I wonder why they were not consulted by this Cabinet who talks a lot about their Indigenous relationships but when push came to shove, there was no conversation as all of the public service left Yellowknife and put a bunch of people on planes. And when I stood in that line -- around that lineup at Sir John, I did not see the higher level senior management public servants standing there. In fact, I know most of them left before the order even was made public or told to us as MLAs.

As this all has progressed, I have become aware of 50 to 70 homeless people that were dropped off at evacuation centres in the south, mostly Indigenous. One has OD'd and perhaps will probably die here in the next while. There has been a death of a person from Fort Smith that's been evacuated. And there has been a person badly burnt in the evacuation of Hay River that was then hit by a car due to the mass panic of people leaving the territory. So when I look at all of this and I look at the capabilities of

our communities and I hear our Premier say that other communities and other MLAs --

MR. SPEAKER: -- to the principle of the bill.

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you. I believe that Indigenous governments should have been consulted and given the opportunity to deal with their own people before they were shipped south to be treated terribly down there. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Great Slave. To the principle of the bill. Member for Yellowknife North.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I guess in -- I guess as a point of procedure, I received this bill a couple hours ago and when I looked it, it requires the emergency management organization to coordinate with Indigenous governments. It's not necessarily clear what "coordinate" means. My understanding of how the emergency management organization works. The team was kind of a fluid organization. You know, sometimes Joint Task Force North is there, sometimes a specific community government is there. It depends where and what emergency we are dealing with at any given time.

You know, I'm not necessarily opposed to the principle of this bill but it is my understanding that the sponsor of the bill is wishing to move it through unanimous consent to third reading today. That is not something I'm willing to support. I will vote in favour of it in second reading, and I will vote in favour of it to send to the committee to properly do their work. I just want to note in committee, I have spent hours and hours debating single words in legislation and something that is going to alter how our emergency management organization works in the middle of an emergency warrants that thorough review by the Standing Committee on Government Operations.

You know, hopefully, with that committee and the Member and the Members of the EMO can get before committee, before the end of this Assembly, and we can do a proper review. I'm not sure that this solves the problem that the sponsor wants about further coordination or better coordination with Indigenous governments. I don't want to get too off the principle of the bill.

I do have concerns about the way the emergency management organization operates and the way it coordinates with different levels of government. I believe there are fundamental disagreements of who is responsible for things in this current emergency, whether that is a municipality or the GNWT. I think some of the

communication has been lacking out of the emergency management organization, and I know we are all very anxious to see return plans and to see a lot of information come out of that decision-making body. I'm not even clear who's exactly on that decision-making body and who's making the decisions when it's a federal decision, when it's a territorial, and when it's a municipal decision. These are not new concerns. We've expressed them a couple of times. The EMOs been -- stood up for different things.

I get emergency management, it's not always perfect, it can't always be perfect. That's the nature of it. But I'm just not convinced that this bill solves all the problems we want to be solved and, in fact, it may cause further problems and all of a sudden changing what is the structure of our emergency management organization that has been set up. So I hope it gets through second reading and committee can have a thorough and, you know, as much time as we got left -- we got another month now in this Assembly, to try and figure out some of those problems. But thank you to the sponsor of the bill. I hope that the government hears her concerns and the EMO hears her concerns about, you know, bringing in the Tlicho government and those governments that, you know, were not directly evacuated but now sitting in a territory with questionable supply lines. Thank you very much.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Yellowknife North. The motion is in order. To the principle of the bill. Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. I want to thank the mover and the seconder for bringing forward the bill, but the public should know that we received by email exactly one hour before this special sitting. So I really haven't had a lot of time to consider the bill, and I think it's kind of very unusual to get a bill in this manner. Of course, these are very unusual times.

I do share, I think the intent of wanting to improve emergency management, and I think that's a shared value amongst us all and if it isn't, we are not doing our jobs. But I guess I do question about whether this is the right approach.

I'm not sure that I can agree with all the points that the Member for Great Slave raised. I think at the initial part of the evacuation, things were chaotic and perhaps communications can and should be improved, but it's not my understanding of the work that's being done now with Indigenous governments. Perhaps there's some room for improvement, but I don't

think that this bill would necessarily do that even in the current emergency that we're in.

I guess I also think that we need to very carefully take the necessary time to do a proper review and evaluation of what's happened in the current emergency with the evacuation orders and the response as well, and my view is that I think that would, I guess, be done probably by an independent third party. And that's in no way any criticism of any of our staff, the firefighters. They need to be a central part of whatever review takes place. But certainly the nature and -- of fire is changing as the climate is changing. It's a climate emergency, and I think where the nature of fires changed dramatically over the last few years and that needs to be part of whatever review takes place. Like my colleague from Yellowknife North, I'm not sure that it's -- it cannot happen within the lifetime of this Assembly. I think we need to be very honest. I think if we have a sitting in September, that'll be an opportunity to ask some questions, have a debate around all of this, but we're still in the midst of this emergency and I think we need to focus our time and effort on getting the work done to protect our communities, getting the -- supporting the firefighters, the contractors, the volunteers that are doing the work, and working on behalf of our constituents, many of whom have been evacuated, to make sure that their needs are met as well. So I think our time and effort would be much better spent on those areas.

I did have a look at the current legislation, and, you know, section 6(4) of the current legislation, this is where, under the direction of the Minister, the emergency management organization shall do a number of things. I will acknowledge that coordination with Indigenous governments is not mentioned in this bill, but it certainly does -- sorry, in the legislation itself, but it does speak to the issue of emergency support, the emergency management activities of local authorities. So, yeah, that could probably be fine-tuned. But I'm not convinced that doing this on the fly like this is the best way necessarily to address the issue, the problem. In fact, it may even be more desirable to better define membership in the emergency management organization and what sort of scope and breadth that it deals with in particular kinds of situations. But I'm not an expert in this area, but I think it does warrant some public debate and discussion but as part of a broader more comprehensive thoughtful review.

All that being said, Mr. Speaker, I'm prepared to have this bill go to second reading and, like my colleague from Yellowknife North, have it studied by a committee or, indeed, in the

context of a broader review of, you know, the emergency and our response, but I'm not prepared to have this go to third reading today. And if unanimous consent is sought to do that, I will say simply because I'm not convinced that this is necessarily the best approach. I'll also need more time to look at this, and I think it should be part of a much more comprehensive review of what's happening and we need, again, Mr. Speaker, to focus our efforts on supporting those that are working and putting their own lives at risk to support -- to -- sorry, protect our communities. So that's where I think our effort would be best directed. Mahsi, Monsieur le President.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. The motion is in order. To the principle of the bill. Member for Nahendeh.

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: So first and foremost, I've been in touch with the impacted IG leaders. MACA has been meeting daily with Tlicho. I can tell you that right now. The Yellowknife -- Yellowknife is working in partnership with Yellowknife Dene, and there are several senior GNWT staff in Yellowknife working.

Mr. Speaker, amending the Emergency Management Act in the middle of a severe ongoing emergency response is not safe or a responsible thing to do. The act provides the structure to coordinate emergency response through a territorial emergency management organization called TEMO. The TEMO includes representatives from jurisdictions actively responding to the emergency, including federal agency, territorial government, department and local governments. These folks work under incredible difficult circumstances to action activities quickly under an incident command model, which is best practice for emergency response around the world.

I commend the work that the Tlicho government, Gwich'in government, Inuvialuit Regional Council, Deline government, and other Indigenous governments and organizations for taking action to support their residents, and we'll continue to commit to have our officials as they are available to work collaboratively to support our shared goals. I cannot, however, agree that we should be retooling our emergency management in the middle of a crisis.

Presently, we have seven communities that are evacuated from their homes. Implementing structural changes to our EMO in the middle of a crisis is not fair to the people already working, the organization, and they need to be able to rely on predictable approaches and clear responsibilities as they're doing their work. To

suddenly and without planning 15 new organizations are added to the response activity, I am gravely concerned that TEMO's ability to function as intended and as needed. Right now local governments are part of the TEMO and, in some cases, the local government is the Indigenous government. I recognize that we should be doing some work to consider better -- or defining roles for Indigenous governments in the TEMO. That day is not today.

What we can do today is to commit to work with all Indigenous governments and have a proper review of the Emergency Management Act when circumstance allow. So, therefore, Mr. Speaker, we will -- Cabinet will be naying this second reading -- or going to the third reading. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion is in order. To the principle of the bill. Member for Hay River South.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the mover and the seconder of the bill as well because I think it does have merit. As far as I'm concerned, Indigenous participation is important and paramount when it comes to protection of our land, forests, and communities. However, Mr. Speaker, for me, at this time, knowing what's taken place in Hay River, Fort Smith, and Yellowknife, I don't think it's appropriate to change this piece of legislation at this point without consultation from all Indigenous governments. Some thought has to be put into this, and it's probably something that's best left for the future government. So I don't mind it, I guess, going to -- you know, moving on, but, you know, I can't support a change at this point in time. I think we got too much work ahead of us and right now, for me, you know, being in Hay River for -- you know, for the, you know, most of the -- what's happening here for the last week or two weeks, you know, we're in the fight to save our community and other communities are in the same boat as well, and then that's where our focus has to be. It has to be on our communities, and it has to be on the people at this point in time. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Hay River South. The motion is in order. To the principle of the bill. Member for Kam Lake.

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, before we move on, I just wanted to take the opportunity to thank both the mover and the seconder for bringing this forward. I think that this is a really important conversation to be had, and I appreciate when people use private Member's bills in order to

move things that they are passionate about and that are important to the people of the Northwest Territories. I wanted to just thank the Member for Monfwi for bringing this forward. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Kam Lake. The motion is in order. To the principle of the bill. I will allow the Member for Monfwi to do closing comments. Thank you.

MS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's good to hear what my colleagues think of this, of the bill. Mr. Speaker, you know that everybody knows climate change is here. It's -- maybe it's here to stay, or it's going -- you know, it's going to be different next year. We're not too sure, you know. But at this time, we are dealing with hot and dry weather. Minister of ECC said on the news article -- in a newspaper that this year he knew it was going to be a dry and hot summer, yet we feel they did not do enough to fight the fire that went -- that, you know, like, that burned out of control. And in the process, with the evacuations and all that, it created a lot of chaos. It displaced a lot of our people. Yes, I understand about 6.4(b), the local authority, but the local authority is not Indigenous government or Indigenous organizations. So what we're trying to do is that we want to put Indigenous government, to recognize Indigenous government or Indigenous organizations to work with us in coordinations, in coordinating some kind of -- to work with our organizations -- I'm sorry, I'm just a little bit upset here because -- to work with us, to work with the Indigenous government to do a better job of coordinating a plan. Instead, what they did now is, like -- I mean, like, just like one of my colleagues says, what happened in the south. We lost some members from the North, you know, and we are worried about the vulnerable people. So that's why we wanted to put in here Indigenous government, to recognize the Indigenous government.

We cannot be second class citizen anymore, and that's what you guys are doing. This is what the government is doing. We're second class. Like, all this was happening in our land and we were -- we were not consulted. Tlicho government was not consulted. Other Indigenous government were not consulted about the state of emergency and about the evacuation that was going to happen in Yellowknife because that state of emergency put our life at risk, and there's still 28 communities that we have to consider. And that 28 communities and they're still, okay, half of Yellowknife is gone, or almost all of Yellowknife population is gone, and along with the South Slave, but there's still 15,000 people here. And

it is us that's going to be here, not -- we know we lost some -- some Northwest Territories residents as a result of all this, as a result of the evacuation. Some of them are not going to come back. We know that, you know.

So I wanted to say that, Mr. Speaker, in times like this, many of our elders have said, you know, we may not like each other but make an effort to work with each other to move forward. We should put our political difference aside and try to work with each other to support each other to move this government forward. This is not about us. It's not about the Cabinet. It's not about all the Regular MLAs. It is about the people of the Northwest Territories. So we don't have to go through another chaos like this, because the climate change is here to stay. And the expert that Minister keep referring to, well the expert needs help. They need to work well with the Indigenous government, Indigenous knowledge. For me, I don't consider them expert because they did not include the traditional knowledge. They did not include our elders who are the keepers of the land. And you guys, all of you, all of you Indigenous should know this. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Monfwi. The motion is in order. To the principle of the bill. Member for Thebacha.

MS. MARTSELOS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too want to just thank the mover of the motion and the seconder for their intent of the motion. I think a good review that will take place with the next Assembly will be -- we'll know what happened and what was wrong and what was right and -- but I'm not going to be questioning some of the -- you know, I want to remain calm because that's what my constituents would appreciate. I know for a fact as a former chief of the Salt River First Nation that I've been chief for 14 years, and Indigenous governments in the community of Fort Smith were always kept informed throughout the steps of every step until the evacuation. The mayor and council and the person in charge of EMO in Fort Smith was -- were all consulted, including myself. And I was always updated by the Government of the Northwest Territories and the Minister of ECC. I was always kept informed and, you know, I'm not a computer person. Everybody knows that. And so they either text me and then I'd look at my emails, because I know how to do that, and I was able to navigate everything that I've done for the people of Fort Smith. At this point, I really do not want to sound like -- you know, there might have been some communication gaps but those communication gaps were for me to make sure that the communication gap was addressed. Every MLA has to do that. That's my job. I was, like I said previously, the 1-800

number. I'm not going to be questioning what the first responders are doing or not doing. It's not up to me because I know they're trying to save my community, which is still at risk. Okay, when you have 30-degree -- 30-degree Celsius at this time of year, that's unusual, but I will not be saying that we have to go ahead and go ahead and do the EMO bill that -- the private Member's bill that's before us. I will not be supporting that at this time. You can't do that in the middle of the emergency. There's a time and place for everything. And in the next Assembly, or in the next sitting in September, we'll have a debate on this. And I will not be supporting the amendment of Bill 98 in the second -- in this second reading. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. Pursuant to Rule 10.3(1), this will be a recorded vote. The clerk shall call out each Member. Please reply with your vote either in favour, opposed, or abstaining. Mr. Clerk.

RECORDED VOTE

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is a recorded vote on second reading of Bill 98. The Member for Monfwi.

MS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: I support. In favour.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you. The Member for Great Slave.

MS. NOKLEBY: Strongly in favour.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you. The Member for Nahendeh.

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Opposed.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland): The Member for Yellowknife South.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: In favour.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland): The Member for Sahtu.

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: In favour.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland): The Member for Range Lake.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: In favour.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland):
The Member for Yellowknife Centre.

HON. JULIE GREEN: Opposed.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland):
The Member for Hay River North.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: In favour.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland):
The Member for Deh Cho.

MR. BONNETROUGE: In favour.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland):
The Member for Hay River South.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: In favour.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland):
The Member for Thebacha.

MS. MARTSELOS: Opposed.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland):
The Member for Kam Lake.

MS. CLEVELAND: In favour.

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

MR. O'REILLY: In favour.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland):
The Member for Nunakput has indicated that he is opposed.

The Member for Yellowknife North.

MR. JOHNSON: In favour.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland):
The Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

MR. EDJERICON: In favour.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland):
The Member for Inuvik Boot Lake.

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: In favour.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland):
The Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes.

MS. SEMMLER: In favour.

MR. SPEAKER: The results of the recorded vote: 14 in favour, four opposed, zero abstentions. The motion is carried. Bill 98 has had second reading.

The Honourable Member for Monfwi.

MS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Okay, yes, sorry about that. Thank you. Sorry about that,

Mr. Speaker. So can you just give me a few minutes?

MR. SPEAKER: Page 12.

MS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Page 12. Okay. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I seek unanimous consent to waive Rule 8.2(7) and have Bill 98 referred directly to third reading. Mr. Speaker -- okay, that's you, okay, sorry about that.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Monfwi. The Member is seeking unanimous consent to waive Rule 8.2(7) and have Bill 98 referred directly to third reading. Are there any nays?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Nay.

Colleagues, there is not unanimous consent to refer to third reading. The bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Government Operations for further work to be done.

Second reading of bills. Minister responsible for Finance.

BILL 99:
SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION ACT
(OPERATIONS EXPENDITURES) NO. 2,
2023-2024,
CARRIED

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Member for Nahendeh, that Bill 99 Supplementary Appropriation Act (Operations Expenditures) No. 2, 2023-2024, be read for the second time. This bill makes supplementary appropriations for operations expenditures for the Government of the Northwest Territories for the 2023-2024 fiscal year. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister responsible for Finance. The motion is in order. To the principle of the bill. Member for Frame Lake.

MR. O'REILLY: Yeah, thanks, Mr. Speaker. I had a few comments, some of which I may have made in Committee of the Whole, but, yeah, I want the public to know that I'm in Edmonton with my family. I recognize the hardship that the current situation has caused 70 percent of the Northwest Territories residents, but I believe that we need to continue to focus on firefighting and saving the communities, and I want to thank the firefighters, the contractors, the volunteers for the work that they're doing. Of course, I also want to thank the Albertans that have shown us tremendous support here in Alberta and thank the provincial government for all that they've done to support us. And I've

already said I think there is going to be a time and a place to review and question what happened during the emergency and the response, but I don't think today is that day. And I think we need to pull together and focus on supporting those that are protecting our communities and helping our constituents here in the south. So I will support the supplementary appropriation, but in my view, clearly, it's not enough. This is an interim step, and I think the Finance Minister also recognizes that. She talked about bringing forward another supplementary appropriation if we get to a sitting in September that will deal with perhaps more of the emergency response side.

So I am worried about what this bill does not contain or what this bill does not authorize at least in terms of spending and, you know, that the Finance Minister did say that the firefighting costs, at least under the current arrangement with the federal government for disaster assistance, are not covered. And that's -- we -- we're not going to change that policy, that approach from the federal government unilaterally. That's something that's going to require some work, and I want to thank Cabinet for the work that they've started to do on that but also recognizing that if the vault -- the doors are opened for the Northwest Territories, I'm sure British Columbia will be right behind and other jurisdictions across the country that have had, you know, a horrific season of fires.

So I am worried about what this particular supplementary appropriation will do in terms of our Fiscal Responsibility Policy compliance and debt, and that's not to begrudge the firefighters or not supporting them in any way, but obviously these things do cause some financial implications and those need to be carefully considered and managed.

I think this is going to have implications, not just for the rest of this Assembly but the next Assembly, in terms of what infrastructure, what sort of projects should receive priority, and in my humble opinion, as I've always said in this Assembly, housing continues and should be the highest priority for our infrastructure and, of course, I think now there's going to be greater recognition and understanding that climate adaptation in response to the climate emergency also needs a lot of work as does telecommunications and making sure that we have access to and the same level of services as people in southern Canada and to make sure that if our future emergencies, we have ways to actually better inform people in a timely fashion. So that's going to mean that some infrastructure projects will probably fall off the radar, and I don't think that's a bad thing, but we

need to focus on the things that matter and that count for our people moving forward.

I am a bit worried too that even I think some of the evacuation costs are not going to be recoverable from the federal government unless there's strictly damage to property and buildings and so on, but. So I think some of the evacuation costs will not be recoverable from the federal government. I do want to thank Cabinet for bringing forward the evacuation transportation -- transport assistance program, but it's not enough. We did have discussions about this. I think it -- the amount needs to be increased from \$750 to a much greater level, and other Members have started to talk about that. I also think that the scope of the program needs to be broadened as well. Other Members have talked about how people paid out of their own pockets so that they could fly on commercial flights to avoid putting stress on the necessary government evacuation flights. And I think those people deserve some consideration and need to be treated fairly as those that drove out. I'm also aware of people that did take the government flights out to southern locations and, in some cases, were not able to access services or -- whatever. So I think we've got to find a fairer way to treat everybody who's been evacuated, and I think the current program as envisioned is a start but it needs some more work.

I don't think I really have much else to say so many of my concerns are about, Mr. Speaker, about what's not in this bill. I will support the bill, the money moving forward, but there's a lot more work that needs to be done in preparation for the supplementary appropriation that will likely land on everybody's desk in September, and I encourage my Cabinet colleagues to work with us as Regular MLAs as they did during this emergency and I want to, you know, congratulate them for those efforts and encourage them to continue to do work with us because we all have to work together in the interests of protecting and saving our communities across the whole NWT. So once again, I want to thank my colleagues in Cabinet, the Regular MLAs, the firefighters, and everybody that's working so hard to protect our communities, and people here in Alberta as well. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. The motion is in order. To the principle of the bill. Member for Kam Lake.

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm not going to repeat a lot of what I've said during Committee of the Whole. I agree wholeheartedly with what my colleague from Frame Lake has said here

today. My biggest concern right now as well is with residents who are currently evacuated, with businesses that are currently struggling while they're being evacuated, and with the businesses that are back home that are doing the work on the frontline right now. It's not lost on me that a lot of my constituents in Yellowknife are essential workers who are currently working on the frontline in Yellowknife, and this supplemental appropriation just cannot be the -- the be all end all cannot be it. To me, this isn't about making sure that the 20th Assembly is well set. This is about making sure that we are supporting the prosperity of the territory and that we are supporting residents because we simply cannot afford to not support them right now with where they're at in this emergency. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Kam Lake. The motion is in order. To the principle of the bill. Member for Great Slave.

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I won't reiterate a lot of what my colleagues have said but I do want to also point out that given in the past that, as we dealt with COVID and the payments that came out around that, there were a lot of community promises made that communities would be paid back for costs they incurred, and then that was never followed through on when the federal money came through. So I just want to ensure that Cabinet realizes that that can't happen again this time and that any money and promises made to communities that, you know, they were going to have things paid back for or orders that they were given that they needed to follow that they be reimbursed for those costs and that communities that are underfunded are not the ones bearing the costs of the GNWT having their emergency response plan last updated in 2018. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Great Slave. The motion is in order. To the principle of the bill. Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes.

MS. SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just wanted to speak a little bit in regards to being in support of this motion. You know, that we know that there's going to be continued efforts, there's going to be continued costs fighting this fire. We receive updates daily on the activity and it doesn't seem to be getting any better in some of our southern communities and for that, I'm fully support of this. But I too want to just raise a couple of issues that is not in this bill and that I hope that the Minister and their staff will hear, is that when the evacuation did happen, Indigenous governments did step up. People have connections to the North of the territory, people flew because there were flights north,

and Inuvik is not an evacuation centre but many people flew here with the monies that they received from their Indigenous groups because they could afford to instead of being a burden on the south or going south where they're not comfortable, and so I just wanted to make sure that finance is hearing that because a \$400 fee does not cover the cost for them to get back. It costs more than what their Indigenous groups to get them on that flight to get here, and they have their own accommodations and they're -- you know, and things like that because they're not an evacuation centre.

So I just wanted to make sure that those people are also being looked at that did do what the government asked, to make -- to get out if they can, you know, and they did go to other parts of the territory, and they did come home to the North. So I just wanted to make sure that that is being out there and that it's being -- going to be looked at as well. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes. The motion is in order. To the principle of the bill. Member for Hay River South.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yeah, I support the bill. You know, knowing how hard and the efforts that frontline workers and those that support them are -- you know, the effort that they're putting in to fighting this fire, not only in Hay River but throughout the territories. You know, to reach their goals, they need equipment, you know, they need supplies and that, and that all takes money, and then -- and we have to provide that to them so that they have what they need in a timely manner. I know I did send a letter to -- or an email to the Premier and, you know, and asked for more money be given to those that -- those evacuees that went out on their own and I said, you know, if it -- if they weren't going to give them anything, then, you know, I would not support this bill and I would try and convince others not to support it as well. But some money did go to the evacuees. Not as much I would have liked to have seen, and I'm hoping that, you know, the Premier and Cabinet can hopefully encourage, you know, the federal government to step up and to provide some additional dollars to the people who did evacuate on their own and took that initiative, so. But knowing, you know -- knowing the work and -- that's going on in Hay River especially and, you negotiation how delicate it is there in these last few days, the fire so close to town, you know, I've got to support this bill and make sure that -- or this appropriation bill and make sure that, you know, the firefighters and the department has the money it needs to win the battle. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Hay River South. The motion is in order. To the principle of the bill.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. Pursuant to Rule 10.3(1), this will be a recorded vote. The clerk shall call out each Member. Please reply with your vote either in favour, opposed, or abstaining. Mr. Clerk.

RECORDED VOTE

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Rutland): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is a recorded vote on second reading of Bill 99. The Member for Yellowknife South.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: In favour.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Rutland): The Member for Sahtu.

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: In favour.

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

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: In favour.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Rutland): The Member for Yellowknife Centre.

HON. JULIE GREEN: In favour.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Rutland): The Member for Hay River North.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: In favour.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Rutland): The Member for Deh Cho.

MR. BONNETROUGE: In favour.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Rutland): The Member for Hay River South.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: In favour.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Rutland): The Member for Thebacha.

MS. MARTSELOS: In favour.

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

MS. CLEVELAND: In favour.

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

MR. O'REILLY: In favour.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Rutland): Mr. Speaker, the Member for Nunakput has indicated he is in favour.

The Member for Yellowknife North.

MR. JOHNSON: In favour.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Rutland): The Member for Tu Nedhe-Willideh.

MR. EDJERICON: In favour.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Rutland): Thank you. The Member for Monfwi.

MS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: In favour.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Rutland): The Member for Great Slave.

MS. NOKLEBY: In favour.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Rutland): The Member for Nahendeh.

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: In favour.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland): The Member for Inuvik Boot Lake.

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: In favour.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland): The Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes.

MS. SEMMLER: In favour.

MR. SPEAKER: The results of the recorded vote: 18 in favour, zero opposed, zero abstentions. The motion is carried. Bill 99 has had second reading.

---CARRIED

Second reading of bills. Third reading of bills. Member for Inuvik Boot Lake.

Third Reading of Bills

BILL 97:
AN ACT TO POSTPONE POLLING DAY FOR
THE 2023 GENERAL ELECTION,
CARRIED

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Rule 8.2(2), I seek consent to proceed with third reading of Bill 97, An Act to Postpone Polling Day for the 2023 General Election at this time. Quyananni, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Inuvik Boot Lake. The honourable Member is seeking unanimous consent to proceed with third reading of Bill 97 at this time. Are there any objections? Hearing none, please proceed.

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: Thank you, colleagues. Mr. Speaker, I move, second by the Member for Kam Lake that Bill 97, An Act to Postpone Polling Day for the 2023 General Election, be read for the third time. Quyananni, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Inuvik Boot Lake. The motion is in order. To the motion?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. Pursuant to Rule 10.3(1), this will be a recorded vote. The clerk shall call out each Member. Please reply with your vote either in favour, opposed, or abstaining. Thank you. Mr. Clerk.

RECORDED VOTE

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is a recorded vote for third reading of Bill 97. The Member for Inuvik Boot Lake.

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: In favour.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland): The Member for Yellowknife Centre.

HON. JULIE GREEN: In favour.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland): The Member for Hay River North.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: In favour.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland): The Member for Deh Cho.

MR. BONNETROUGE: In favour.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland): The Member for Hay River South.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: In favour.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland): The Member for Thebacha.

MS. MARTSELOS: In favour.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland): The Member for Kam Lake.

MS. CLEVELAND: In favour.

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

MR. O'REILLY: In favour.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland): Mr. Speaker, the Member for Nunakput has indicated he is in favour.

The Member for Yellowknife North.

MR. JOHNSON: In favour.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland): The Member for Tu Nedhe-Willideh.

MR. EDJERICON: In favour.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland): The Member for Monfwi.

MS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: In favour.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland): The Member for Great Slave.

MS. NOKLEBY: In favour.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland): The Member for Nahendeh.

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: In favour.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland): The Member for Yellowknife South.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: In favour.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland): The Member for Sahtu.

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: In favour.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland): The Member for Range Lake.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: In favour.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland): The Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes.

MS. SEMMLER: In favour.

MR. SPEAKER: The results of the recorded vote: 18 in favour, zero opposed, zero abstentions. The motion is carried. Bill 97 has had third reading.

---Carried

Third reading of bills. Minister responsible for Finance.

BILL 99:
SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION ACT
(OPERATIONS EXPENDITURES) NO. 2,
2023-2024,
CARRIED

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Nahendeh, that Bill 99 Supplementary Appropriation Act (Operations Expenditures), No. 2, 2023-2024, be read for a third time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. SPEAKER: Question has been called. Pursuant to Rule 10.3(1), this will be a recorded vote. The clerk shall call out each Member. Please reply with your vote either in favour, opposed, or abstaining. Mr. Clerk.

RECORDED VOTE

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is a recorded vote on Bill 99. The Member for Yellowknife South.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: In favour.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland): The Member for Sahtu.

HON. PAULIE CHINNA: In favour.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland): The Member for Range Lake.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: In favour.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland): The Member for Yellowknife Centre.

HON. JULIE GREEN: In favour.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland): The Member for Hay River North.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: In favour.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland): The Member for Deh Cho.

MR. BONNETROUGE: In favour.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland): The Member for Hay River South.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: In favour.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland): The Member for Thebacha.

MS. MARTSELOS: In favour.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland): The Member for Kam Lake.

MS. CLEVELAND: In favour.

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

MR. O'REILLY: In favour.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland): Mr. Speaker, the Member for Nunakput has indicated he is in favour.

The Member for Yellowknife North.

MR. JOHNSON: In favour.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland): The Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh.

MR. EDJERICON: In favour.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland): The Member for Monfwi.

MS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: In favour.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland): The Member for Great Slave.

MS. NOKLEBY: In favour.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland): The Member for Nahendeh.

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: In favour.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland): The Member for Inuvik Boot Lake.

HON. DIANE ARCHIE: In favour.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland): The Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes.

MS. SEMMLER: In favour.

MR. SPEAKER: The results of the recorded vote: 18 in favour, zero opposed, zero abstentions. The motion is carried. Bill 99 has had third reading.

---Carried

Third reading of bills. As per my ruling earlier today, I will now hear a motion from the Member for Monfwi. The Member for Monfwi moves a motion. Member for Monfwi.

MS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Okay, thank you. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, during the evacuation of Yellowknife and areas, Indigenous --

MR. SPEAKER: -- one second, Member for Monfwi. You have to move the motion.

Motions

MOTION 83-19(2):
EMERGENCY DEBATE ON GOVERNMENT
OF THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES
RESPONSE TO END THE CURRENT
WILDFIRE EMERGENCY,
OUT OF ORDER

MS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Okay, thank you. Mr. Speaker, I move to set aside the ordinary business of the House to discuss

calling upon the GNWT to ensure that Indigenous governments are involved in the GNWT's response to end the current wildfire management -- wildfire emergency. I think it's you now; do I continue, or?

MR. SPEAKER: Yes, just go into your -- the Member complied with Rule 3.5(1) and the motion does not raise a matter of privilege and does not raise any matter which can only be debated upon the motion with notice. The motion is in order. Members, the Member of Monfwi may make a statement no more than five minutes explaining the matter to be discussed and the reason for the urgency. Thank you, Member for Monfwi.

MS. WEYALLON ARMSTRONG: Okay, thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I was saying, during the evacuation of Yellowknife and areas, Indigenous people, many with language barriers and unique needs, were uprooted to cities in the south in which no one knew their language or knew how best to help them with their unique needs. As everyone here can imagine, in addition to fearing the wildfire, this extra burden on Indigenous people of the Northwest Territories of being dropped into unfamiliar territories in the south without the needed support has disproportionately added stress to their lives and has led to many Indigenous people facing extreme and unnecessary hardships that could have been avoided.

I cannot speak for all Indigenous governments and the effects on their citizens the evacuation has had, but I can speak to the effects this lack of coordination has had on the Tlicho people as I have heard directly from them and them -- and from Tlicho government who are on the ground down south trying to find their citizens and provide the necessary support they need. This failure to coordinate with Indigenous governments throughout the response in both planning and decision-making has led to our most vulnerable population at greater risk, such as elders, the homeless, and those struggling with addictions -- excuse me, I'll just take that -- sorry, about that.

This failure to coordinate with Indigenous government throughout the response in both planning and decision-making has led to our most vulnerable population at greater risk, such as elders, the homeless, and those struggling with addictions. If steps were taken to coordinate with Indigenous government, they could have made sure their people were taken to the safest possible environment. In some cases, of their own communities and provided with immediate supports. Instead, Tlicho and other Indigenous people of the Northwest

Territories were shipped out across the country to large centres in Alberta, BC, Manitoba, and Yukon.

I have heard directly that people went missing for several days and were put in unsafe situations, such as homeless people with no IDs, money, or contacts in streets of large cities. Even child welfare issues as well. Tlicho government went so far as to create its own registration system to track down where its citizens were. They have since staffed volunteers down south to provide necessary support to its people. They have set up their own support centre in the south and are actively engaged in supporting its people in the cities. Thousands of kilometres away from home in unfamiliar place, Indigenous people of the Northwest Territories are cut off from their home, from their home communities, and support of their people. This could and should have been avoided with proper planning and coordinations with Indigenous government and organizations.

Mr. Speaker, today we have an opportunity to change, improve, GNWT working relationship with Indigenous government and organization be involved -- to be involved in ending this crisis, the emergency that is before us. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Monfwi. Any other Members may speak for five minutes on whether or not this debate is urgent. Member for Great Slave.

MS. NOKLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I've heard others say that this is not the time for this conversation in the middle of an emergency. However, I would completely disagree with that statement. This is exactly the time now to bring the Indigenous governments in and use them to bring their people home. They know who their people are. They're looking for them themselves. So bringing them in as soon as possible would actually avoid more catastrophe down south that we're hearing about as Regular Members. I understand that Cabinet is very busy, so perhaps they haven't had the time to really delve into the stories that are happening in the south. However, I have numerous advocates, shelters, others in Alberta that are reaching out to me to tell me their stories, people that need food, people that need money, people that need gas. So this conversation needs to happen immediately with the Indigenous governments and, really, and I'm quite surprised that this is not at the forefront of everyone on this Assembly's mind given the fact that we have all spoken about the need to collaborate with Indigenous governments. They

can bring their people home better, safer. They know who they are, and HSS and others are not tracking that properly. We've seen that. Everybody thought the registration was their ticket out of here, and I had to tell numerous people that registering for that number with the GNWT was doing nothing for them as far as leaving town. So it was a second layer of bureaucracy. Bureaucracy is what marks this government. We have a red tape working group as a result of it. Put the power in Indigenous people's hands, give them the power to bring their people home now. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Great Slave. If anyone further would like to speak to -- Member for Yellowknife North.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yeah, so essentially, we are having a debate to whether move the motion which will then have an emergency debate, emergency debate. We are given ten minutes each, and then it kind of includes -- there's no actual official outcome of an emergency debate or any motions or anything concluded. I was not given any previous notice of this. Reading what the emergency debate would be, would be the GNWT to ensure Indigenous governments are involved and that GNWT's response to end the current wildfire emergency. I believe no one is opposed to that occurring. That is all what we want. Perhaps, really, the outcome here is that the GNWT go away and do that. I guess if we were to have an emergency debate and if I was given some head's up by my colleague, I would have probably had some different concerns. My concern is getting the plan to return people, period. I get we have to involve Indigenous governments, but I'm eagerly awaiting the GNWT's return plan, especially now that the city of Yellowknife fire is being held. That is where I'm hearing concerns. That is the emergency debate I would like to have. As I said, we're not having that one. This is not the time for that one. I'm hoping the Minister will get before the Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight and answer our questions when people are going to get home, at least in the Yellowknife fire. I know the South Slave fires are very much still out of control and we are fighting those battles but, you know, if we're going to have an emergency debate, there is probably a wider scope I would like to raise questions on. This seems narrow. It seems to be repeating what the private Member's bill already did today. I'm not in favour of spending any more time on this emergency session. And hopefully, we can all get back to work. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Yellowknife North. Anyone further wish to speak to -- Mr. O'Reilly.

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. I want to thank the mover of the motion for bringing it forward. I guess, yeah, I too, like my colleague from Yellowknife North, I had no notice whatsoever of this. It only really came up, I think, in your opening remarks for me. So I didn't even have a copy of the motion itself until it was provided to us in the chat function that we're using the platform for us to meet. I don't really have any -- yeah, I've heard a lot of these kind of concerns. I hear the same from my constituents. I've seen the media reports as well. You know, I don't know what to say. I'm not sure this is the right forum, you know, for having the a better explanation, maybe more detailed explanations from the Minister on what is happening in terms of communications and work with Indigenous governments because this is not -- you know, this is a debate. It's not a place for questions and answers. So, you know, I don't even know whether the government, the Cabinet intends to even make a statement here or participate in the debate, and there's no requirement that they do. I think it would be helpful as well to have some insights, more detailed insights into how communications can and should be improved, and I guess this is not just a communications issue; it's about trying to co-manage some of this, and that's, you know, an approach that I've always tried to advocate.

But trying to change this or -- anyways, I'm just not sure that this is the right forum for trying to solve some of the issues that the mover has raised, and I've heard through the media as well, so. But, look, I'm going to be the last person to stand in the way of an emergency debate on these issues. I, like my colleague from Yellowknife North, believe that there are a lot of other issues in terms of the emergency that deserve some public airtime, and I'm not -- I wasn't prepared for this debate, discussion, and absolutely no notice whatsoever. And sorry, when I come to things, my colleagues know that I usually try to do my homework before I get here, and I would have appreciated the opportunity to talk to some of my colleagues, the people that work with Indigenous governments so I have a better understanding of some other issues are. But more importantly, to try to focus as well on what the solutions are. And I'm not sure that I want to revisit some of the issues that were raised in the previous debate today, so. But I'm not going to stand in the way of this emergency debate, but I'm not sure that it's really going to accomplish what the mover is hoping to do.

But maybe even just airing some of these issues today will make people more informed and sensitive, people like myself apparently. So I'm -- you know, I'm not going to stand in the way of this debate but a little bit more notice, I think, would have been helpful and, you know, there has been a request to meet with the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs as well. So I look forward to that opportunity. But I'm not going to stand in the way of an emergency debate. Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. Any other Members may speak for five minutes on whether or not this debate is urgent.

Thank you. Seeing no further speakers, I have considered the debate and find that the motion is not in order. The subject matter is now before a committee, in the form of Bill 98, of government operations. As the motion is not in order, we'll continue with the orders of the day.

Members, thank you for your work, patience, and cooperation today. You have dealt with important business on behalf of residents of the Northwest Territories. The Commissioner will be asked to assent in writing to the bills you passed today. Thanks, again, to the town of Inuvik for the use of their council chamber. Members, when it is safe to do so, I will recall the Assembly in Yellowknife. There is still important work to do before the end of the 19th Assembly. Today, we've dealt with the timing of the election, you authorized additional spending to respond to the wildfires, and referred Bill 98 to committee. Now turn your energy back to your constituents, communities, families, and friends. And continue the good work you have been doing and stay safe.

Mr. Clerk, orders of the day.

Orders of the Day

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Glen Rutland):

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Orders of the day for Thursday, October 12th, 2023, at 1:30 p.m.

1. Prayer
2. Ministers' Statements
3. Members' Statements
4. Returns to Oral Questions
 - Oral Question 1548-19(2), Indian Day Schools
5. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery
6. Acknowledgements
7. Oral Questions

8. Written Questions
9. Returns to Written Questions
10. Replies to the Commissioner's Address
11. Petitions
12. Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills
13. Reports of Standing and Special Committees
14. Tabling of Documents
15. Notices of Motion
16. Motions
17. Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills
18. First Reading of Bills
19. Second Reading of Bills
 - Bill 64, An Act to Amend the Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act, No. 3
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 77, Nursing Profession Act
 - Bill 82, Legal Profession Act
 - Committee Report 52-19(2), Standing Committee on Rules and Procedures Report on the Review of the Rules of the Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly
 - Minister's Statement 264-19(2), Response to the NWT Chief Coroner's Report on Suicide
 - Tabled Document 681-19(2), Government of the Northwest Territories Response to Committee Report 26-19(2): Report on the Child and Family Services Act – Lifting Children, Youth and Families: An All of Territory Approach to Keeping Families Together

21. Report of Committee of the Whole

22. Third Reading of Bills

23. Orders of the Day

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. The second session of the 19th Assembly stands adjourned until Thursday, October 12th, 2023, at 1:30 p.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 4:50 p.m.