



NORTHWEST TERRITORIES  
**LEGISLATIVE  
ASSEMBLY**

**2<sup>nd</sup> Session**

**Day 1**

**19<sup>th</sup> Assembly**

**HANSARD**

**Wednesday, February 5, 2020**

Pages 1 – 18

**The Honourable Frederick Blake Jr, Speaker**

# Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

## Members of the Legislative Assembly

### Speaker

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

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**Mr. Ronald Bonnetrouge**  
(Deh Cho)

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

**Hon. Paulie Chinna**  
(Sahtu)  
*Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs*  
*Minister responsible for NWT Housing Corporation*  
*Minister responsible for Homelessness*

**Hon. Caroline Cochrane**  
(Range Lake)  
*Premier*  
*Minister of Executive and Indigenous Affairs*

**Ms. Julie Green**  
(Yellowknife Centre)

**Mr. Jackie Jacobson**  
(Nunakput)

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

**Mr. Jackson Lafferty**  
(Monfwi)

**Ms. Frieda Martselos**  
(Thebacha)

**Hon. Katrina Nokleby**  
(Great Slave)  
*Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment*  
*Minister of Infrastructure*  
*Minister responsible for the Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission*

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

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

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

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

**Hon. R.J. Simpson**  
(Hay River North)  
*Government House Leader*  
*Minister of Education, Culture & Employment*  
*Minister responsible for the Public Utilities Board*

**Hon. Diane Thom**  
(Inuvik Boot Lake)  
*Deputy Premier*  
*Minister of Health and Social Services*  
*Minister responsible for the Status of Women*  
*Minister responsible for Persons with Disabilities*

**Hon. Shane Thompson**  
(Nahendeh)  
*Minister of Environment and Natural Resources*  
*Minister of Lands*  
*Minister responsible for NWT Power Corporation*  
*Minister responsible for Seniors*  
*Minister responsible for Youth*

**Hon. Caroline Wawzonek**  
(Yellowknife South)  
*Minister of Finance*  
*Minister of Justice*

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**YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES****Wednesday, February 5, 2020****Members Present**

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

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

**Prayer**

**Elder Lillian Elias:** [English translation not available.]

**SPEAKER (Hon. Frederick Blake Jr):** Please be seated, colleagues. Mr. Clerk, would you ascertain if the Commissioner of the Northwest Territories, the Honourable Margaret M. Thom, is prepared to enter the Chamber to open the second session of the 19<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly?

**Commissioner's Opening Address**

**COMMISSIONER OF THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES (Hon. Margaret M. Thom):** Please be seated. [Translation] Thank you. I am very, very happy that it is a brand new winter that we're starting, and all the others who will be sitting here. That's the reason why I'm glad that the people are here, and I'm hoping that it will be okay with everybody.

It's a new year, and we have a lot of new things to be working on, especially for the Northwest Territories, and you guys are all working for them. I wish that your session will be a good outcome, with personal balance with work for each of you. [End of translation].

I am honoured to welcome you all back. I trust you all had a wonderful festive season with your loved ones.

As we enter a new decade, we begin our work for the people of the Northwest Territories. Your work can be challenging, but working together as a team will ensure you make the best decisions.

I wish you a productive session with good outcomes and personal balance with life and work for each of you.

I am very pleased to be opening this session of Canada's first and only gender-balanced Legislative Assembly, led by Canada's only sitting female Premier.

This may also be one of the youngest Legislative Assemblies to have been elected in the Northwest Territories in recent memory, and it is the second Assembly in a row to have more first-time Members than returning Members.

It is clear in looking around this room that the people of the Northwest Territories voted for change during the last election.

The Government of the Northwest Territories is committed to delivering the change that our people have called for, as well as ensuring their voices are heard throughout the life of this government.

During this session, the government will be tabling its 2019-2023 mandate. This document will present the government's plan for advancing the priorities agreed to by all Members of the Legislative Assembly.

Our plan puts people first and recognizes that government succeeds when we support the success of every person in the territory. It is a holistic plan that takes into account the physical, social, wellness, and employment needs of residents.

We know that people need a strong and secure foundation on which to grow, beginning with the basics of food, shelter, and health.

To address the need for shelter, we will work with stakeholders to increase the number of quality, energy-efficient, and affordable housing units and put a stronger focus on community home-ownership opportunities.

We will support seniors to stay in their homes and communities by providing increased access to housing programs, increasing the Home Heating Subsidy, and establishing a community grant program for senior supports. We will also take action to protect seniors from abuse or neglect and create a separate income assistance program tailored to seniors and persons with disabilities.

We will increase food security by implementing regulatory and program changes to support locally produced and marketed foods. We will work with Indigenous and community governments to support community greenhouses, gardens, and country

food harvesting. As well, we will work with applicable governments to define community solutions to the Nutrition North Program.

To improve the health of NWT residents, we will work with our employees and partners to strengthen our healthcare recruitment strategy and implement comprehensive labour force planning.

We will also work with communities to increase the availability of e-health, traditional, on-the-land, and other proven approaches to mental wellness and addictions recovery.

We will improve wellness supports, including increasing peer-support programming, providing transitional housing for those returning from addiction treatment, and establishing medical detox and managed alcohol programming.

We will also strengthen community counselling services by providing standardized screening and assessment tools, improving employee training opportunities, and reducing wait times for accessing counselling.

As well as taking care of basic needs, we need to support residents, businesses, Indigenous and community governments so they have the tools to succeed.

To increase early childhood development, we will ensure better coordination of services and streamline funding to support community-based parenting and early childhood development programming.

We will develop a 10-year universal childcare strategy and increase child care spaces by providing non-government organizations with retrofit funding, amend policies to allow licensed childcare in public housing, and better utilize our own government infrastructure for early childhood program space.

An increase in childcare space will require more workers, so we will increase support for NWT students who wish to pursue qualified childcare programming.

We will support educational success by modernizing the Education Act and education funding framework. We will ensure distance learning is available in all small communities and pilot a classroom assistant training program. We will implement programming to assist schools and parents make decisions together about student placements and social passing, and we will continue to transform Aurora College into an accredited and independent polytechnic university.

Our government also recognizes that people want and deserve to have employment opportunities.

Good jobs and meaningful work provides people with both the means to support themselves and their families, as well as a sense of accomplishment and pride.

We will increase economic diversification and employment in small communities by developing regional economic development plans, increasing the number of journeypersons and apprentices in small communities, advancing the knowledge economy, and expanding tourism throughout the NWT. As well, we will change policies to allow licensed home businesses in public housing units, mentor entrepreneurs, and support community-led maker-spaces.

This government will support local businesses and encourage entrepreneurship by reducing red tape and regulatory burdens. We will also ensure that more benefits from government spending stay in the North by strengthening our procurement policies like the Business Incentive Policy, Northern Manufactured Products Policy, and our approach to public-private partnerships.

We will promote local competition by increasing awareness of GNWT contracting opportunities, actively encouraging NWT businesses to apply for BIP status, and developing a one-stop shop for vendors online.

As well, we will take action to improve the environment for resource development, which is still the biggest sector of the NWT economy, and make sure NWT residents are benefiting from it as much as they can.

We will do this by collaborating with Indigenous governments to develop and implement regional mineral strategies, increase resource exploration and development, increase funding for mining incentive programs, and look for new ways to support advanced projects. As well, we will assess the feasibility of local gas supply projects and the export of liquefied natural gas.

To ensure NWT residents enjoy a fair share of the benefits of development, we will conduct an independent comparison review of our royalty and taxation regimes and socio-economic agreements. We will meet annually with senior officials of NWT mines to review the results and utilize the recommendations in future agreements.

We also understand people need a sense of belonging and the stability of strong, affordable communities, and a clean environment to thrive.

That is why our government will respect and strengthen the ability of communities and regions to make their own decisions, based on their own needs and priorities, including empowering our own regional staff.

We will settle treaty, land, resources, and self-government agreements by working with facilitators and engaging directly on a leader-to-leader basis. We will establish a special joint committee on Indigenous reconciliation between Cabinet and Regular Members of the Legislative Assembly and review the principles and interests that inform our negotiating mandates.

With Indigenous governments, we will also create an action plan that identifies changes required in GNWT legislation and policies to best reflect the principles set out in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People.

This government will also take steps to increase the resiliency of communities, support their capacity, and help make them affordable places to live.

We will do this by reducing the municipal funding gap, refining our funding models, exploring opportunities for community governments to raise additional revenue, and reducing or stabilizing the cost of delivering core programs and services.

Reducing the cost of power remains a priority, as does reducing our reliance on diesel for generating community power. We know that in many cases moving to greener energy costs the system more money, not less, when we have to keep diesel as a backup. We will look to long-term solutions, including connecting more communities to existing hydro systems.

We will also work with partners and stakeholders to target energy conservation and efficiency programs for small and remote communities where the costs of energy are highest and the need is greatest.

As well, we will create a stronger and more affordable territory through strategic infrastructure investments that connect communities, expand the economy and reduce the cost of living. This will include advancing projects like the Mackenzie Valley Highway, the Slave Geological Province Corridor, and Taltson Hydro Expansion. We will also invest in fast and reliable broadband internet services for communities and modernize our airport infrastructure.

Finally, because the land is the life and the source of wellbeing and security for NWT residents, our government will do more to ensure that our environment is conserved and protected and we will ensure climate change impacts are considered when making government decisions.

We will also establish a Northwest Territories Climate Change Council, bringing together our government with Indigenous and community governments, MLAs, and other partners to strengthen our leadership and authority on climate change.

This is an ambitious agenda aimed at responding to the needs of people and making sure all residents are able to succeed and thrive. We know it will take more than four years to reach some of our goals, but we are committed to beginning the work now and encouraging future governments to continue it.

During this session, the Government of the Northwest Territories will also be introducing the following bills for consideration by the House:

- Appropriation Act (Operations Expenditures), 2020-2021;
- Supplementary Appropriation Act (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 3, 2019-2020;
- Supplementary Appropriation Act (Operations Expenditures), No. 4, 2019-2020; and
- Supplementary Appropriation Act (Infrastructure Expenditures), No. 1, 2020-2021.

The government considers these bills essential to the good conduct of government business and as such, I recommend their passage.

As your Commissioner of the Northwest Territories, I now declare open the 2<sup>nd</sup> session of the 19<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories.

Thank you, merci beaucoup, mahsi cho, qunani, koana.

**MR. SPEAKER:** On behalf of all Members of this House, I would like to thank Commissioner Thom for opening the 2<sup>nd</sup> session of the 19<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly. It is always an honour to have you join us in this House. I would also like to thank Ms. Lillian Elias for leading us in the prayer, and Brie O'Keefe for singing our national anthem today.

Colleagues, I am pleased to welcome you to the opening of the 2<sup>nd</sup> session of the 19<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly. Since we last met in this House, I know we have all been busy in our constituencies, with our committees, and with the ongoing work of the government. I hope that you were also able to find time to connect with family and friends and to energize yourselves for the hard work ahead of us.

Although the days may be long and we will not always see eye-to-eye, I am looking forward to this session. The debates, discussions, and decisions that take place in this House have a direct impact on all people throughout this territory.

As Members of this Legislative Assembly, I know that you will all continue to work diligently to make informed decisions. These decisions, the choices that we make as legislators, allow us to improve the lives of our residents and create a prosperous future for our people.

Colleagues, while in this House, I ask that you conduct yourselves with the utmost respect for one another, this House, our rules, and our unique form of consensus government. As Speaker, I will do my best to demonstrate a positive example of the level of decorum and respect that I expect from each of you.

I also want to recognize a milestone for the Legislative Assembly. During this sitting we will be providing interpretation into all official languages. Our official languages are vital to the culture and history of this territory, and I am proud of the efforts we have undertaken to make better use of our languages. I want to take a moment to thank our interpreters and the staff who have worked to make this possible.

Before we begin, I want to extend the condolences of the House to all Members, constituents, and families throughout the territory who have experienced the loss of loved ones since this House last sat. Thank you.

We'll start with our orders of the day. Item 3, Ministers' statements. Minister of Health and Social Services.

### Ministers' Statements

#### MINISTER'S STATEMENT 1-19(2): 2019 NOVEL CORONAVIRUS UPDATE

**HON. DIANE THOM:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I rise to provide an update to Northerners on the 2019 novel coronavirus. I would like to assure residents that, at this time, the risk of contracting this virus is low in the Northwest Territories.

Since the coronavirus was first reported in the Hubei Province of China, our government and the federal government have moved quickly to ensure we are prepared. Our public health and emergency preparations are well underway and we hope to continue to monitor the situation as it develops.

I would like to fill Members in on the preparations we've been undertaking, as I know that the anxiety level about this outbreak has increased in our communities.

Our Chief Public Health Officer is providing leadership to our health emergency planners and senior management within the Health and Social Services system to ensure our communities and our frontline staff are ready should the coronavirus be suspected or confirmed in the Northwest Territories. The Office of the Chief Public Health Officer and health emergency officials are constantly in touch with their federal, provincial, and territorial counterparts to ensure the sharing of timely and accurate information.

I am sure Members and residents are curious as to what specific preparations we have completed to date, and if we are prepared to handle possible cases in the NWT.

It is important to remind everyone that we've been here before. We have learned a great deal from the 2009 H1N1 influenza pandemic; the 2003 outbreak of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome, also known as SARS; and the ongoing surveillance of the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome, known as MERS. Similar to the current outbreak, these events have required international coordination and response, as well as preparations here within the Northwest Territories. As with these other events, there is no vaccine; instead, the approach is to prevent the spread of the coronavirus using the best practices in public health.

This is vital in order to rapidly identify people who might be sick and apply appropriate precautions in healthcare settings and communities. Our Chief Public Health Officer and her office is participating in daily briefings with her federal, provincial, and territorial counterparts to get the latest information to inform clinical information for frontline staff. Internal alerts are sent to frontline staff to ensure their personal protective equipment is ready, testing protocols are defined, necessary infection control measures are being practiced, and health facilities are ready to respond in the event that a person in the Northwest Territories develops symptoms concerning novel coronavirus infection.

We also have a responsibility to communicate to our residents, Indigenous and community governments, schools, tourist operators, daycare centres, and businesses. Mr. Speaker, these stakeholders were provided the most current information on hand, along with public education materials for them to share with their stakeholders. As this situation is rapidly evolving, we are committed to providing the most current information through the Department of Health and Social Services website.

We have also started a general communication campaign through social media and traditional media, including newspapers and radio ads to raise awareness about the virus. This includes preventive steps residents can take to protect themselves and their loved ones. The advice will sound very familiar, as it is similar to what we recommend for the flu, such as staying home if you're sick and contacting your local public health unit or health centre if you have any symptoms of concern. Also, the importance of regular hand-washing, the use of hand sanitizers, and healthy respiratory practices cannot be emphasized enough, especially since we have other infectious diseases circulating in our communities, including the flu and whooping cough,



or pertussis. These practices will help reduce the spread of these illnesses.

Travellers from places of known activity of this coronavirus, particularly the Hubei Province of China, are being provided information at their international points of entry into Canada to self-monitor. We know that residents of the Northwest Territories travel internationally for both business and pleasure. It is important that residents pay special attention to travel advisories issued by the federal government. This information is routinely updated on the Government of Canada's website under Travel Advice and Advisories. This link is found on our department's website, including direct reference on our coronavirus section.

Mr. Speaker, as this situation evolves, our thoughts are with China as they continue to take extraordinary efforts to contain this epidemic. Our thoughts are also with Canadian individuals and families who have been impacted by these events directly or indirectly. The Northwest Territories will continue to monitor and assess this dynamic situation and be a part of the national action to ensure we are prepared as a healthcare system and as a government. Thank You, Mr. Speaker.

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

MINISTER'S STATEMENT 2-19(2):  
MINISTER ABSENT FROM THE HOUSE

**HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE:** Mr. Speaker, I wish to advise Members that the honourable Paulie Chinna will be absent from the House today and tomorrow to attend meetings in Ottawa, Ontario. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Honourable Premier. Ministers' statements. Item 4, Members' statements. Member for Monfwi.

**Members' Statements**

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON  
INDIGENOUS LANGUAGE TEACHERS

**MR. LAFFERTY:** Masi, Mr. Speaker.

[Translation] Mr. Speaker, February is Indigenous Languages month. The NWT is unique in that we have 11 official languages – nine of which are Indigenous. I am proud to be a fluent speaker of one of these languages.

Today I would like to acknowledge the Indigenous language teachers in our communities. In the Tlicho region there are currently 17 Tlicho language teachers in our schools with a wealth of knowledge and experience. According to the TCSA,

In WhaTi: Marie Nitsiza, 23 years teaching; Diane Romie, 22 years as a Tlicho language specialist.

In Wekweeti: Ceci Judas, 6 years as a teacher.

In Behchoko: Terri Douglas, 13 years teaching; Philip Mackenzie, 19 years promoting language and culture; Rosa Mantla, 28 years teaching and serving in Tlicho language; Therese Mantla, 23 years teaching Tlicho language and culture; Tammy Steinwand Deschambeault, 27 years teaching and serving in Tlicho language; Josie Bishop, 22 years teaching Tlicho language; Alestine Mantla, 18 years teaching; Cecilia Zoe-Martin, 28 years teaching; Cecilia Migwi, 23 years teaching; Lafi Shuck, 9 years teaching; Donna Camsell, 1 year teaching; Melissa Mantla, 8 years teaching; Victoria Drybones, 5 years teaching; Lucy Lafferty, 34 years teaching and leading in Tlicho language; Ernestine Steinwand, 45 years teaching Tlicho language and culture. [Translation ends]

**MR. SPEAKER:** Member is seeking unanimous consent to conclude his statement.

---Unanimous consent granted

**MR. LAFFERTY:** Masi, Mr. Speaker. In addition to these amazing warriors fighting to promote and preserve our language, there are also 25 classroom support assistants in Tlicho schools who speak the Tlicho language, as well as instructors who support community initiatives.

I would like to acknowledge all of the interpreters and translators here in this House and in all of the communities for their important work.

Mr. Speaker, most importantly, I would like to acknowledge all those who speak their language and are still learning their language. Our language is an integral part of our culture and who we are. Masi to all those who are keeping this language alive. Masi.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Mahsi, Member for Monfwi. Members' statements. Member for Kam Lake.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON  
INTERCONNECTEDNESS OF PRIORITIES SET  
BY THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

**MS. CLEVELAND:** Mr. Speaker, every priority this Assembly has set is interconnected and interdependent. This means our challenges are connected and our stories are converging. We must ask: how does inadequate housing in Tlicho communities drive the affordability of housing in Yellowknife? How does the trend of centralized government services impact economies and empowerment in small communities and regional centres? How does the lack of skilled workers

across the territory increase our cost of doing business?

Members repeatedly say we are only as strong as our weakest community. We are all reliant on the success of every Northerner. Everyone wins, and it is not a zero-sum game. We are in this together, and no one should be left behind. Our system relies on trust, empathy, generosity, and a common desire for all of us to succeed and thrive in healthy communities.

Mr. Speaker, over the next two months, I will speak to all parts of this system, starting with housing, then healthy families, healthy economy, sustainable lands, and community empowerment.

The government is a human system, driven by purpose. If our collective purpose is healthy communities, what are the indicators that paint the picture of what success looks like? Achieving healthy communities relies on many components of the system working together. People need affordable, accessible, safe housing to have healthy families. Our healthy families nurture knowledge, and knowledgeable people feed our healthy economy through meaningful contributions and retained labour and resource benefits. This all feeds into socially and environmentally sustainable care for our land and community empowerment through a recognized right to self-determination and control over land, culture, language, and community-based decision making.

Our role is to raise the North up, to create a learning system that sustains and inspires itself. Underpinning each part of our system, Mr. Speaker, is connectedness, relationships, and democratic participation. We can't change the North by standing here and telling people what they need. We need to listen. Every Northerner must have a voice on the direction of policies and processes, attracting economic development, promoting the North as an incredible place to visit and live, and in healing the deep wounds caused by residential schools, systemic racism, and colonialism, a destructive way of thinking from which we all must heal.

I look forward to discussing this with Members, each of whom brings a valuable perspective to the whole system. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON AURORA COLLEGE CHANGE IN LEADERSHIP

**MS. GREEN:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. It's difficult to make progress toward a goal when project

leadership turns over frequently and suddenly. Such is the case with the transformation of Aurora College into a polytechnic university, a project that I support.

In 2017, the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment dismissed the board of directors of Aurora College and replaced them with an administrator. In 2018, the college's president resigned, following a foundational review of the college. The review set the scene for revamping the college by hiring a new president, who would also serve as assistant deputy minister of post-secondary education renewal. Now, the wheels have come off that bus and another new college president has been appointed. I thought that we had entered a period of stable leadership at the college, but I am mistaken. Each year brings its own new leadership.

It's worth remembering, Mr. Speaker, that the GNWT hired a southern head-hunting firm to collect resumes for the president's job. GNWT made the decision to hire Dr. Tom Weegar a year ago. He came with the relevant education and work experience to begin the transformation, the Minister said.

During our last sitting, the current ECE Minister indicated the work was on track, including establishment of an academic advisory council and broad consultation to develop a three-year strategic plan; and here we are, two months later, with another change, a change with no public explanation. This time, however, there was no cross-Canada search for a new president. Instead, there was a quick promotion of an assistant deputy minister of ECE. We haven't been told what his qualifications are for the job. We are left to wonder if he has the relevant qualifications and, if so, why wasn't he appointed to this role in the first place?

Mr. Speaker, I have two other concerns. The first is that the Aurora College Foundational Review made the case for the college's independence from the department. It's hard to see how this goal will be met when the president has been hired from within the department. At the very least, there is the perception that the college and the department continue to work hand in glove, to our detriment.

The second concern is that the president is expected to do two jobs, the other as ADM of post-secondary education. Given the concern I just raised, I wonder if it is feasible to have one person doing both. I will have questions for the Premier. Mahsi.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON  
LEGAL AID IN BEAUFORT-DELTA

**MS. SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to talk about legal aid. In 2016, it was decided by the government at the time that budget cuts needed to happen, according to a CBC article that I found, which stated: "The budget proposes closing the town's legal aid office, which specializes in family law, and moving the sole lawyer position from Inuvik to Yellowknife. The office's administrative worker position would be eliminated." Mr. Speaker, that did happen.

Since being elected, I have heard from my constituents that, once applying for legal aid, they wait months for a family law lawyer. That would be for cases that include custody and child maintenance. The response I received from the Minister when I asked why this was taking so long, and I quote: "There are many variables that can affect wait times in family law matters, including vacancies in staff lawyer positions, the reluctance of private lawyers to take on legal aid family law files, and the volume of applications."

Currently, two of the seven staffed family law positions at the Legal Aid Commission are vacant, which has unfortunately led to an increased wait time. It was also stated in the letter that urgent matters such as child apprehension files and files involving domestic violence or matters already before the court are assigned on a priority basis. The current wait time for the assignment of a family law lawyer to approve the applicant is approximately seven months for non-urgent family law matters. Mr. Speaker, these wait times are unacceptable to have a lawyer assigned to them, especially for custody and maintenance, which the wait times have been longer as they are considered nonurgent. If you're living in that situation, to those people, it's urgent. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes. Members' statements. Member for Hay River South.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON  
59<sup>TH</sup> WEDDING ANNIVERSARY OF  
CONSTITUENTS MR. AND MRS. TRENNERT

**MR. ROCKY SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I would like to congratulate and recognize Max and Julia Trennert, who are celebrating their 59<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary.

Max was in Inuvik 60 years ago, working as a surveyor while mapping the community of Inuvik. Julia was a student at the time. According to their daughter, Brendalynn, her dad the site surveyor was also managing the Mackenzie Hotel when he first met Julia. It was love at first sight. Mr. Speaker,

Max and Julia were married on February 5, 1960, in Inuvik, where the first of their three children were born, Brett Fraser, Spence, and Maxime. From Inuvik, they moved to Fort Simpson where their fourth child, Brendalynn, who we all know, was born.

Mr. Speaker, Max and Julia then relocated close to Kakisa, where they owned and operated a gas station in K'agee. Max and Julia eventually moved to Hay River, where they retired and have lived for the past 15 years.

Mr. Speaker, it is also important to note that Max is one of the original men who became a wildlife officer in the NWT, where he covered off the area of the Nahendeh, the Deh Cho, and the South Slave. Julia was a full-time stay-at-home mom and raised a family she was proud of. She was well known for her artistry when it comes to tuftings. Max and Julia now have four grandchildren and three great-grandchildren. Brendalynn says they are still very much in love with each other and very much cherish the family they were blessed with. I wish them all the best in this special day and look forward to visiting them when I'm back in Hay River. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Hay River South. Members' statements. Member for Frame Lake.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON  
CARIBOU EMERGENCY

**MR. O'REILLY:** Merci, Monsieur le President. In the last Assembly, I made over ten statements on the caribou crisis. It's now an emergency, and all our government has done is some planning, restrict harvest, fund some research and increase the wolf bounty.

On October 4, 2019, the Wek'eezhii Renewable Resources Board released its decisions on Tlicho Government and GNWT joint management proposal for the Bathurst caribou herd. Here are a couple of short quotes:

"The Board notes that there are no dates for implementation of Bathurst Caribou Range Plan Policies, nor is there any framework or timelines to judge how or when the plan is expected to contribute to Ekwo recovery."

"There should be an urgency to the implementation of the range plan as two of the five range assessment areas require enhanced management responses to address increased levels of disturbance."

The Wek'eezhii Renewable Resources Board also said: "The joint proposal indicates clearly to the

WRRB that the need for habitat protection is now urgent. In addition, the abandoning of traditional calving grounds may be further evidence of the need for protection and limiting of disturbance."

There have been several traditional knowledge studies and other work that has identified key habitat for the Bathurst caribou herd, including their calving grounds. Key habitat lies on both sides of the NWT-Nunavut boundary. Progress on habitat protection has been glacial at best. The transboundary agreement with the Government of Nunavut has been discussed for years, with no end in sight. The latest joint management proposal for enhanced wolf removal, including aerial shooting, was submitted to the Wek'eezhii Renewable Resources Board on July 31, 2020, but still there's nothing on habitat protection.

I will have questions later today for the Minister of Environment and Natural Resources about when this government is going to get serious about a comprehensive and balanced approach to the Bathurst caribou emergency and finally do something about habitat protection. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY AND ACADEMIC FREEDOM

**MR. JOHNSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Building on my colleague's statement regarding the recent firing of the president of Aurora College, I would like to speak today about the importance of academic freedom.

This past week, a number of MLAs met with Dechinta University, an example of what a thriving and inspiring university can look like in the North. Fundamental to their success and in establishing a successful grant and research programming with funding from the federal government has been academic freedom. In order for a university to thrive, it must be nimble, it must be able to move quickly, and it must be able to be critical of government. I am very skeptical that Aurora College is in a position to do that now and on the path that we are going forward will take it there.

It saddens me that Aurora College is one of the most costly colleges to run in the country and one of the least successful. However, I think this reality should be recognition on all our parts that we can do better. I want Aurora College to inspire. I want the residents of Fort Smith to be excited, yet, repeatedly, when I have conversations about this,

there is a lack of enthusiasm. I think people are scared.

Now, we have a president leading this transformation who is a former bureaucrat. I do not believe that is the right path to head down if we truly want to create a northern university that is inspiring, that will meet the demands of our citizens, and will lead us into the future. I will have questions for the Minister of ECE. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON PRICE OF FUEL AND COST OF LIVING

**MR. BONNETROUGE:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the residents of the Northwest Territories are faced with many challenges in everyday life. People are faced with low to no employment, evictions from housing, soaring grocery prices, and the ever-increasing costs of living. People have to pay rent, power, and utility bills. The introduction of the carbon tax certainly did not quell the ever-increasing costs of living but is a major contributor to the problem.

Mr. Speaker, heating fuel may not be taxed, but this does not stop the fuel suppliers from raising their prices as they see fit. Mr. Speaker, when I look at my power bill, I note that a fuel charge is levied along with the power supply charge. When the price of fuel goes up, so does my power bill.

Mr. Speaker, I will have questions for the Minister responsible for the Public Utilities Board at the appropriate time. Mahsi.

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

#### MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON MOBILITY ACCESS

**MR. NORN:** Mahsi cho, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to talk about the saddening treatment that a few of my constituents experience when it comes to mobility access. Recently, I had a constituent in particular who had been lobbying the government for quite some time in an effort to build a wheelchair ramp for their home. This constituent is an elder, and I find it very upsetting that she and others like her struggle to find assistance from our government departments. What was further disturbing was the lack of a department to take the reins and help. There's a lot of back and forth and denial, which really saddened me.

Mr. Speaker, I just find these situations very frustrating because help is within reach for cases like these, but bureaucratic barriers at almost every step of the way seem to prevent assistance from being delivered.

Mr. Speaker, our government departments across the board need to re-evaluate service delivery when it comes to elders, especially elders with mobility issues. It was said dozens of times in past Assemblies that allowing elders to age in place and keeping them in their own homes for as long as possible has been a priority for everybody. However, as it stands today, I am having trouble believing that statement. This is a new government, and we have a new Premier and a new Cabinet. I realize there is room for changes to be made in this area.

Mr. Speaker, mobility issues affect some of the most vulnerable populations we serve. Hopefully, we as a government can deliver top-notch services wherever they are needed, regardless of the department.

Being raised by a great-grandmother, I know if I ever got out of line, she would give me a good ear twisting, a good earful. I would like to speak on behalf of my great-grandmother, and let's get it together and do what we can to help our elders. Mahsi cho.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh. Members' statements. Member for Nahendeh.

#### MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON EULOGY FOR STELLA KRAUSE

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Stella Tsetso was born in Fort Simpson, April 27, 1965. Stella was 54 years old when her Creator called her home. Her parents were George Cli and Annie Tsetso.

Stella was raised at two islands in the bush and came to the community of Fort Simpson when she was very young and spent the rest of her life in the service of others.

Stella was a powerful, silent presence of love, compassion, volunteerism, and community connection. Stella lived a simple life and focused primarily on her children and grandchildren. She was extremely close to each of them. Stella continuously gave of her time and volunteered for many events, always humbly giving and donating food of all kinds. Stella never wanted to be recognized or given credit, and she was content to give with a loving heart and always willing to share. Her generosity was felt throughout the Deh Cho. Stella was well-known and had many relatives in

Tulita, Nahanni Butte, Jean Marie River, Fort Simpson, Sambaa K'e, and Wrigley.

Stella's legacy is found in her eight children, five girls and three boys, along with her sons-in-law and daughters-in-law. Stella was blessed with 14 beautiful, vibrant grandchildren, whom she loved very deeply.

Stella was not only the foundation of her family but was the cornerstone of each of her children's life. She taught her children the importance of loving, supporting one another through each celebration and the challenges they faced. Stella will be deeply and dearly missed by her long-term and devoted life partner, Randy Hetchenelle.

Stella would be proud to know that, throughout the heartache of losing the pillar of their lives, her children have remained close-knit and extremely supportive, loving one another through this incredible, life-changing event.

Stella was an amazing, talented, traditional sewer and was well-known for all her traditional crafts. Her bead work was impeccable. She took pride sewing for each of her children and grandchildren mukluks, mittens, slippers, hair barrettes, and moosehide gloves, each piece crafted with love and devotion.

With Stella's passing, she left a void that will not be filled. Her legacy of love, friendship, family commitment, and devotion to the family will live on in her children and grandchildren alike.

Lastly, Stella was known for her bannock, a secret family recipe that only her daughter Lisa knows how to make exactly like her mom's.

Thank you, Stella, for being the amazing woman that you were. Thank you for your children and grandchildren. Thank you for leaving your imprint on our lives and our communities. We will sadly miss you forever and always. Thank you.

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

#### MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON EULOGY FOR AIDA EGOTAK

**MR. JACOBSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today, I would like to pay my respects to Aida Egotak. Thoughts and prayers for her husband, Mark, and her daughter, Helena, and the rest of the family. She passed away in Ulukhaktok. Thoughts and prayers for Elsie and Joseph and the rest of the family.

Also, I would like to pass on regards to Arnold Archie, to my Auntie Barbara, Dorthey, Marth,

Elvira, Peter, Bessie, Charlie and Gorge and Wilbert. Thoughts and prayers are with you all.

Whoever lost loved ones in the past few months, Mr. Speaker, thoughts and prayers are with the families from Nunakput. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Nunakput. We send our condolences, as well, from the House. Members' statements. Item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member for Nahendeh.

#### Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to recognize two individuals here; first, my CA, Deborah Richards. She is back, and I am very thankful for having her back here. As well, Father Daley, who has now moved to Yellowknife, but he was our priest in Fort Simpson. Thank you and welcome here.

**HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY:** I'd like to recognize Father Daley. He is one of my constituents or Great Slave. Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Great Slave. Member for Inuvik Boot Lake.

**HON. DIANE THOM:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to acknowledge my CA, as well, Arlene Hanson. Thank you for being here with us.

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

**MS. CLEVELAND:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to welcome Sarah and Charles Kalnay-Watson. As a footnote, it is also Charles' 40<sup>th</sup> birthday, and he has chosen to spend it here with us. All the best on your 40<sup>th</sup> while you jump right in.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you and happy birthday. Member for Hay River South.

**MR. ROCKY SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to recognize and welcome my constituent assistant, Leanne, I want to say "Jameson," but Campbell. Hopefully, she is enjoying her time here in Yellowknife. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY:** I am not doing very well at this. I would also like to recognize my CA, Colleen O'Connor, and my constituent Cathy Olsen, who are also in the gallery. Thank you.

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

**HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE:** The Member for Great Slave took my glory. I want to recognize my CA, Cathy Olsen, who is in the gallery. Thank you

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Honourable Premier. If we have missed anyone in the gallery today, welcome to the Chamber. I hope you are enjoying the proceedings. It is always nice to have members in the audience. Thank you. Item 6, acknowledgements. Item 7, oral questions. Member for Yellowknife Centre.

#### Oral Questions

##### QUESTION 1-19(2):

##### AURORA COLLEGE CHANGE IN LEADERSHIP

**MS. GREEN:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Premier since it was she who released the announcement yesterday that the president of Aurora College is no longer. As the Premier is well aware from her history as the Minister, Aurora College has been through frequent leadership changes in the last three years. Now, the president the government chose just a year ago has been shown the door. My question is: why? Mahsi.

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

**HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do want to take a moment to recognize Dr. Weegar for the service he provided to the Northwest Territories. It was great to have him on board. I am not going to stand here and talk about personnel issues. I think that is inappropriate in the House. What I can say, though, is that we are on track, that we are doing the best that we can to make sure that our polytechnic goes forward and becomes an accredited polytechnic university. Sometimes, you make leadership changes that we do not have notice of. To jump to say that we are showing the door might not be the terms that I would use. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MS. GREEN:** Thank you to the Premier for that response. I believe that the public is owed an explanation of why this man is no longer working for the government after the extensive efforts that were made to recruit him to this job in the first place, so I invite the Premier to consider a more fulsome response.

My second question is about the new college president who has been appointed from within the Department of Education, Culture and Employment. Other than his long-standing employment with the government, what are his qualifications for this job?

**HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE:** Mr. Bevan has a long history of being suitable for this position. He has done the leadership skills. He is in the position

currently. He was responsible for leading the development and the implementation of our Skills 4 Success initiative. He has done practical linking of training and job opportunities, a key part of the vision for the polytech, and he actually took part in some of the polytechnic review. So, yes, he is very qualified for the position and, again, this is more of an HR issue, so I'll stop at that.

**MS. GREEN:** I thank the Premier for that response. It's a surprise to me, given his qualifications as the Premier enunciated them, that he wasn't appointed in the first place. Can the Premier tell us whether this appointment is temporary while a more thorough search takes place for somebody with direct post-secondary leadership qualifications?

**HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE:** I don't know, actually, why he never applied. I do know that, when Dr. Weegar was hired, we did go out and -- the terminology is called "head hunter"; I'm not sure what the proper terminology is. So we sought someone from outside. I don't know if Mr. Bevan actually applied in that process. This is the first I knew about it.

This position is going to be staying. We have made a commitment that, within the next six years, the Aurora College, the polytechnic university, will be independent. At that point, we will be putting it out to competition for a president. Over this next year, though, we are trying to ascertain if this position actually needs to be one position or two positions. At this point, it's the start of a new government. We are looking at that. We are deciding if this is actually the best strategy that we're using going forward, and within the next six months to a year we will have made a decision on whether we'll be splitting those positions or remaining as one.

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

**MS. GREEN:** Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the response from the Premier. It anticipates my next question. There have been reports that have documented the issues of ECE's interference with the college, and I wonder, now that there is a former ADM of ECE as president, how those two functions are going to be kept separate. Thank you.

**HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE:** There is a clear separation. As the associate deputy minister for post-secondary education, he reports to the Minister of Education directly. I am in charge of his performance, of course; and, as the president, he actually reports to the board of governors. There is also an administrator there and, of course, we have vice-presidents there to assist him within that position.

The other thing I should point out, and that was just spoken in the last sitting, is that the current Minister of Education has just appointed his Academic Advisory Council, which is advisory people from across the nation who specialize in polytechnic university. So his position will be over-supported within that framework that we have going. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 2-19(2):  
APPOINTMENTS TO NORTHWEST  
TERRITORIES POWER CORPORATION BOARD

**MS. MARTSELOS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for Minister Thompson, who is responsible for the NWT Power Corporation. On February 4, 2020, notice was given to all Members of the Legislative Assembly regarding recently reappointed members of the NWT Power Corporation Board. Mr. Speaker, why are we still reappointing deputy ministers to run a Crown corporation, rather than appointing members from the private sector or appointing members to the board who are from different regions from across the NWT?

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Thebacha. Minister responsible for the Northwest Territories Power Corporation.

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. During the last government, the Cabinet made a decision, to save money, that we reduce the board and use our deputy ministers, but they're not deputy ministers on this board. However, when I became Minister, the first thing I talked to the president and the chairperson about was to tell us how this cost-saving matter was brought forward and can we do a governance review, because we need to look at this. It's important to have people from the Northwest Territories, so we're looking at various options right now as we move forward. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MS. MARTSELOS:** The decision to go with the status quo from the 18<sup>th</sup> Assembly is unacceptable, considering the importance of public input on behalf of the Members of this 19<sup>th</sup> Assembly. My question is: are the deputy ministers once again going to be dictating the direction of this Crown corporation? When will an arm's length, neutral approach to a Crown corporation take place?

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** What happened was we had a board, we needed to appoint a number of people so the board could continue, so we did that. In the meantime, deputy ministers, we're using their skill set to run it. They are actually not deputy ministers sitting on the board. They are actually

regular people in there working together with the government, with the Power Corporation. The biggest challenge is that we need to look at making a right decision and how we can improve it. Right now, we have to get the board up and running, so we appointed deputy ministers in that role.

**MS. MARTSELOS:** As elected officials of this Assembly, we all came here to represent the interests of the people of the NWT, but are we really doing so if we continue to appoint deputy ministers to all of our boards again, as opposed to members of the general public representing all regions of the NWT?

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** I can't talk about other boards, and that. I can only talk about the NWT Power Corporation. I do not necessarily agree that having dedicated, knowledgeable public servants sitting on the board is the right way. I agree that it's not the best solution right now. However, we need to make sure we look at it and see how we can do the governance, develop the model, so we can improve the system. We're utilizing those six people to be the board right now.

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

**MS. MARTSELOS:** Mr. Speaker, it is extremely crucial that all boards, including the NWT Power Corporation, are reflective of the interests of the people of the Northwest Territories. Therefore, when will the NWT Power Corporation board be reinstated with members at large, and not just filled by deputy ministers?

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** This is exactly some of the things we're looking at. We are willing to work with committee. We're trying to understand how we can best serve the people of the Northwest Territories. Right now, I've asked the chair and the board to come up with a governance model to give us some options, and we're willing to work with committee on this as we move forward. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 3-19(2):  
LEGAL AID SERVICES

**MS. SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Minister of Justice. We are going back to my Member's statement. Can the Minister tell me: have the two vacancies at the Legal Aid Commission been filled, and, if not, where is the department currently in filling these positions? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes. Minister of Justice.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are currently still two open positions in the family law side of Legal Aid. They are not actively filled at the moment, but recruitment at the Legal Aid clinic is essentially a near-constant process, and I will certainly let the Member know as soon as the positions are filled. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MS. SEMMLER:** Can the Minister tell me: how will the department ensure that the region's needs are met now that these services have been centralized back to Yellowknife and we have vacancies?

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** When the Legal Aid clinic and the resident lawyer from Inuvik was moved to Yellowknife, that was in part a reflection of overall budget cuts at the time and a recognition that the Legal Aid clinic there was actually being underutilized in comparison to the staff lawyers that were positioned in Yellowknife. In moving that position, it actually increased access to family law services for the residents of the Northwest Territories.

That said, Inuvik does have a court registry, it does have a court worker, and there are ways to improve access to justice using those other services.

**MS. SEMMLER:** Can the Department of Justice let me know how they categorize urgent and non-urgent cases when assigning Legal Aid?

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** I hesitate to use the word "urgent." I heard the Member's statement earlier that, when someone is undergoing a situation that requires legal support or legal assistance, it will inevitably feel urgent to that individual, no matter how a government might choose to prioritize it. I want to be sensitive. I recognize what the Member is saying.

Legal Aid does prioritize child protection matters, so if there is an apprehension, for example; matters where there is domestic violence, situations where an individual needs to leave the relationship urgently; and also matters where matters are already in court. If one party has filed the matters and brought it to court, then the responding party, if they require legal services through Legal Aid, will be prioritized.

Other matters that are categorized as not being, therefore, within those realms do end up on the wait list for family law matters. That said, as I mentioned in my last response, there are other ways, at times, to access some supports through the outreach clinic, through court workers, and by filing one's papers at the court registry.



Perhaps it is an opportunity to look at whether or not some of those services can be provided to the Members, and that might help improve access to justice in their region.

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

**MS. SEMMLER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Minister for her answer. Can the Minister provide me or the Members with any information packages that we can keep in our offices for when clients do come to us? When we go to the websites, sometimes it is not as clear. If we have easy-to-read stuff, whatever issue that they are dealing with, we would be able to provide them with assistance.

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** I would absolutely ensure that we provide that to all of the Members of this House and to provide that, both in terms of the documentation that I know is out there, but also information on how to access it, and perhaps ensure that it gets to everyone's constituency assistants, as well. I thank the Member for that suggestion.

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

QUESTION 4-19(2):  
AURORA COLLEGE PRESIDENT

**MR. JOHNSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Firstly, I do not think it is the role of this House to discuss personnel matters, but when the personnel is the president of a college, a role that is necessarily required to be arm's length and independent from political interference, I believe that is a different question.

My question is to the Minister of ECE. When will Aurora College or the university it is to become get a president who is arm's length from the department? Thank you.

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

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There was a foundational review of Aurora College in the last Assembly. There was a government response to that foundational review, to the recommendations of it. That foundational review stated that we should just get rid of the president altogether and have a bureaucratic head of the college. What we have chosen to do is keep the president and have the associate deputy minister position so that there is a bit more continuity.

Right now, we believe that this is essential to ensure that both the college and the transformation

team are working towards the same goal. If we have two completely distinct bodies with separate authorities, we could run into some conflicts, and it could slow the entire process down. The plan is that, until we are at a position where we have a board of governors with revised responsibilities, where, perhaps, we have an academic senate, we are going to maintain the situation we have right now.

At a point in the future, when we are ready to have a completely arm's-length institution, we will proceed as such with the board of governors, with the senate, and then a president. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. JOHNSON:** I find the Minister's answers assuring that he understands the importance of academic freedom. Universities Canada's academic freedom in regards to leadership emphasizes that university presidents must ensure that funding does not interfere with autonomy in deciding what is studied and how.

It is clear, in its current state, that Aurora College is not meeting this definition of academic freedom. Can the Minister provide me with an answer to what is being ensured so that Aurora College's, and the soon-to-be-university's, academic freedom will be preserved into the future?

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** The Member is referring to the academic freedom that universities have. Of course, Aurora College is not yet a university. It doesn't participate in the type of research that necessitates that type of academic freedom, necessarily, but I can assure the Member that the foundational review recommended developing an arm's-length body. The government response agreed that we need to develop an arm's-length body, and I personally can assure the Member that I am not going to preside over the creation of something similar to what we had. I am not going to repeat the mistakes of the past. When we are done with this project, we are going to have a fully arm's-length university that is not subject to interference from the department.

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

QUESTION 5-19(2):  
LANGUAGE TEACHERS

**MR. LAFFERTY:** Masi, Mr. Speaker. The teachers recognized today all have a unique skill set: their language. Their skills cannot be imported from the South. Many of these teachers will be retiring in the near future, and unfortunately, there are fewer and fewer fluent speakers to take their spots.

Mr. Speaker, the first question is to the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. How does the department plan to support schools in language programming as these teachers retire? Masi.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Monfwi. Minister of Education, Culture and Employment.

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank the Member for bringing this to the House's attention and thank all of the teachers that the Member mentioned. If you look at the list, most of those names have over 20 years of experience; some have 30; some have 40. They are nearing retirement, and ECE and the education bodies are very concerned about the fact that there are not enough fluent speakers to replace these teachers. The department can't address this issue alone, and it is undertaking a concerted effort to begin working with Indigenous governments to address the issue.

In 2018, the NWT Indigenous Languages Framework and Action Plan was implemented, and as part of that, there are a number of initiatives that we are undertaking. It's really the blueprint for going forward. ECE is committed to developing Indigenous language capacity through partnerships with regional governments as well as the communities and post-secondary educations, and, since September 2018, ECE has provided two territory-wide teacher in-services to over 80 Indigenous language teachers, and the department is committed to continuing this training.

**MR. LAFFERTY:** Mr. Speaker, what measures has the department taken to build capacity to develop fluent speakers who can become language teachers?

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The department, in recent years especially, has really been doing quite a bit in this area. Since 2018-2019, ECE has partnered with the University of Alberta's Canadian Indigenous Languages and Literacy Development Institute to deliver Indigenous language programs to community members. Approximately 130 participants have been involved in the NWT-sponsored program. Since 2018, ECE has awarded 29 Indigenous language revitalization scholarships, each worth \$5,000, to support NWT students registered in an accredited post-secondary program with a focus on language revitalization. ECE has also partnered with Aurora College and the University of Victoria to deliver the certificate in Indigenous language revitalization to employ individuals interested in Indigenous language revitalization. Fourteen students will complete the program by March 2020. In 2020, ECE hosted a workshop for nearly 20 Indigenous language instructors, training them on the Our Languages curriculum, pedagogy, and resources to use in the school system.

**MR. LAFFERTY:** Mr. Speaker, it's great that the department has several plans in place. We definitely need to improve in those areas. My third question obviously is: what are the plans? What plans has the department or has it encouraged as careers that require Indigenous languages and to develop fluent speakers to fill those career positions, Mr. Speaker, as language teachers?

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** Mr. Speaker, the plans are to continue what we've been doing. I just mentioned a number of different programs that the department is involved with. Also, ECE is currently facilitating partnerships between post-secondary institutions and regional Indigenous governments, with the focus on helping communities build Indigenous language capacity to develop programming that strengthens Indigenous languages and encourages development at the community level. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister. Member for Monfwi.

**MR. LAFFERTY:** Masi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my final question is: currently, there are many of our young people who have some knowledge of the language, are either latent speakers; they understand but do not speak or need to develop their language skills even further. We know that an immersion program is the best way to learn a language. Do we currently have an immersion program for young adults or adults to learn a language so they can pursue these careers and fill these positions?

**HON. R.J. SIMPSON:** ECE is partnering with three regional Indigenous governments, and we are piloting a program called the NWT Indigenous Languages Mentor Apprenticeship Program, and there are approximately 60 participants in the program right now. Now, this program pairs a fluent Indigenous speaker with an Indigenous language learner through language immersion, and the goal is to have apprentices increase their fluency and confidence in speaking and understanding the languages, with the ultimate goal of becoming fluent enough that they can then become teachers. Lastly, ECE is partnering with post-secondary organizations in order to develop adult language immersion programs here in the Northwest Territories.

Once again, I want to thank the Member for bringing this to light because this is a concern across the territory, and, the Member's region, they have done well, and they have a strong language. That can't necessarily be said for the rest of the territory. We're losing speakers, and right now the department and the division that is tasked with this is passionately working to revitalize those languages. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 6-19(2):  
COMMUNITY WELLNESS PLANS

**MS. CLEVELAND:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions today are for the Minister of Health and Social Services. What I'd like to know is: do we have an integrative group working on community wellness plans at this time? Thank you.

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

**HON. DIANE THOM:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. While there is no specific working group addressing community wellness as a system, there are a number of intergovernmental working groups that have wellness communities as an end goal. Within the Health and Social Services we have a number of intergovernmental committees that focus on early childhood development, supports for persons with disabilities, and the problematic substance use working group are just a few examples. Many of these groups have representatives from the community or individual with lived experience. The intergovernmental poverty reduction group is a good example of a group with direct connection to the community wellness.

**MS. CLEVELAND:** Is there a plan in the near future to bring all of those components together to be able to create a wellness plan specific to each community in the Northwest Territories?

**HON. DIANE THOM:** Again, I want to use the work that's being done with the poverty reduction area. This is an intergovernmental team that has worked to develop partnerships with community groups, non-governmental organizations, and Indigenous governments. Each year, the GNWT hosts an anti-poverty round table where MLAs, government representatives, NGOs, community members, and representatives of Indigenous groups gather to provide direction and review progress in meeting poverty reduction goals. Another way this group works together is the admin of the Anti-Poverty Fund. This supports the valuable work that the local groups carry out to support community wellness and issues related to poverty in their communities.

**MS. CLEVELAND:** Is there a working group that currently brings together Health and Social Services, Housing, and ECE? Thank you.

**HON. DIANE THOM:** The intergovernmental working group is made up of eight departments, so it includes not just the Health and Social Services, as suggested. It also includes Education, Culture and Employment; Municipal and Community Affairs; Finance; Environment and Natural Resources;

Industry and Tourism, which allows the government to collaborate across government on policies and programs to support outcomes established on reduction of poverty in our communities and avoids working in silos. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 7-19(2):  
CARIBOU EMERGENCY

**MR. O'REILLY:** Merci, Monsieur le President. As I understand it, the previous cabinet approved the Bathurst Caribou Range Plan. Can the Minister of Environment and Natural Resources tell us how he intends to implement this range plan when there are no resources or timelines identified in the plan? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member. Minister responsible for Environment and Natural Resources.

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, ENR is committed to work with our partners to implement the Bathurst Caribou Range Plan. The range plan serves to guide the GNWT and others carrying out activities in wildlife and land management. GNWT has committed considerable resources to the management of the Bathurst herd, including the range plan activities. Last year, ENR received an additional \$6.8 million over five years to support actions for the barren land caribou herd, and additional funds required beyond current resources will be assessed as the range plan is implemented.

**MR. O'REILLY:** I want to thank the Minister for that great news about more money being available, and I look forward to the details of that. I have reviewed the Bathurst Caribou Range Plan and acknowledge that it was collaboratively developed and its technically sound. The problem has been with habitat protection, where virtually nothing has been done in terms of execution. Can the Minister tell us when this government is finally going to protect key habitat, either temporarily, with recommended mobile caribou-conservation measures, or permanent land withdrawals?

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** The government is currently working with our co-management partners to identify high-priority habitats through traditional knowledge workshops with elders and land users. As well, once areas are identified, the government will work with our partners to identify appropriate ways for protection.

**MR. O'REILLY:** I want to thank the Minister for that. Unfortunately, we don't have a lot of time. This is an emergency. We know where some of these areas

are. There have been several traditional knowledge studies and other work that has identified this key habitat. Key habitat lies on both sides of the NWT-Nunavut boundary. Can the Minister provide an update as to the status of the negotiations towards a transboundary caribou agreement with the Government of Nunavut, and what role will Regular MLAs play?

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** The government works closely with the Government of Nunavut and our co-management partners in the management of the Bathurst herd. The two governments signed an MOU to work together on caribou research, monitoring, and management of shared barren-ground caribou herds in 2017, and we presently are working to update that MOU. ENR has committed to provide the committee with a briefing on caribou management, which will include an update on our relationship with Nunavut on caribou.

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** Merci, Monsieur le President. I want to thank the Minister for that, and I look forward to the briefing and actually seeing a signed transboundary agreement some point soon, but the Wek'eezhii Renewable Resources Board, in approving the joint management proposal, the most recent one, directed that an adaptive management framework be developed for the Bathurst and Bluenose-East caribou herds. The Minister has accepted that recommendation, so can he tell us how this adaptive framework is going to help with recovery of these herds, and whether actions will finally include habitat protection? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** I'd like to thank the Member for bringing these up. It's important, and he keeps us on our toes, and I appreciate that. I thank him for these questions here today. The Tlicho Government and the Wek'eezhii Renewable Resources Board are currently working together to develop an adaptive management framework for the Bathurst herd. The Barren-land Caribou Technical Working Group has prepared a draft framework. This framework will help us make decisions by all co-management partners on the Bathurst caribou herd management, including habitat protection. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister. Colleagues, before we continue, I'd just like to remind Members to please slow down. We have a number of interpreters with us here today, and they like to get everything that you say. Just a reminder; I catch myself doing it myself, so just a reminder. Thanks again. Oral questions. Member for Frame Lake.

QUESTION 8-19(2):  
TECK RESOURCES FRONTIER MINE

**MR. O'REILLY:** Merci, Monsieur le President. My questions are for the Minister of Environment and Natural Resources. The 24,000-acre Teck Resources Frontier tar sands mine is heading for a decision by the federal government very soon. It's going to operate for over 40 years. An independent panel has reviewed the project and found that there would be high-magnitude, irreversible impacts on the environment; it's upstream of us. So I'd like to ask the Minister whether this government has actually participated in the environmental assessment of this project. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. Minister of Environment and Natural Resources.

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The environmental assessment for Teck Frontier began in January 2012. The government did not make a submission to the Environmental Impact Assessment Agency of Canada. At the time of the environmental assessment, the GNWT was actively negotiating with the Government of Alberta towards a bilateral water management agreement. The Alberta-NWT bilateral water management agreement addresses concerns related to upstream development and was signed in March 2015. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. O'REILLY:** I want to thank the Minister for that. The GNWT previously has opposed these kinds of upstream developments, whether they are pulp mills, tar sands projects, and so on. We actually got to appoint somebody to one of these panels at one point, a resident of the Northwest Territories. Our government has been on record as opposing these sorts of things in the past, so I'd like to know whether our government has actually taken a position on the Teck Resources Frontier tar sands mine.

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** Under the Mackenzie River Basin Transboundary Waters Master Agreement, which was signed by the federal government, NWT, Alberta, Yukon, BC, and Saskatchewan in 1997, each party to the agreement maintains the right to manage the use of water resources within its own jurisdictions, providing the ecological integrity of the aquatic ecological system is maintained. The GNWT's position is that upholding this agreement ensures that the commitment of the bilateral agreement with Alberta is adhered to.

**MR. O'REILLY:** That's great to hear from the Minister, that we've got a transboundary water agreement, but that shouldn't stop us from taking a position on this project that's upstream of us. We're

not going to get any benefits; we're just going to get the effluent downstream. I'd like to know from the Minister: he's talked about this transboundary water agreement with Alberta. What help can that agreement give us in terms of adverse impacts?

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** The Alberta-NWT bilateral water management agreement was signed in March 2015. This agreement makes a clear commitment that Alberta will maintain the health of the aquatic ecological system of our shared waters, which include water quality, quantity and biology of the Slave River. Upstream monitoring by Alberta and the federal government provides the GNWT with an early warning of changes and an opportunity to mitigate effects before they are realized at the border. The GNWT monitors water quality and the biological indicators at the Alberta territorial border and has developed a system of triggering with Alberta to protect all of these areas, including traditional use.

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

**MR. O'REILLY:** Merci, Monsieur le President. I want to thank the Minister for that response. Monitoring is great, but how is that actually going to protect residents of the Northwest Territories from this upstream development? What is this agreement, and what is this government actually prepared to do to protect our residents and our environment? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** The Member raises a valid concern. Again, ENR is in communication with the Government of Alberta and the federal government related to commitments under the transboundary agreements. These include prior notification, sharing of monitoring results, maintaining ecological integrity, cost-sharing arrangements, and staff capacity and engagement. As well, I can tell this House that I'm reaching out to the Minister from Alberta and to the Minister of the federal government responsible for this, and we are trying to work together. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister. Oral questions. Item 8, written questions. Member for Frame Lake.

#### Written Questions

WRITTEN QUESTION 1-19(2):  
GNWT PARTICIPATION IN THE ASSOCIATION  
FOR MINERAL EXPLORATION ROUNDUP IN  
JANUARY 2020

**MR. O'REILLY:** Merci, monsieur le President. My question is for the Premier. Cabinet Ministers and GNWT staff travelled to Vancouver during the week of January 18 to 23, 2020, to attend the Association

for Mineral Exploration Roundup. Can the Premier provide a list of all the NWT Ministers and staff who travelled to Vancouver for the meeting, and:

1. total cost of travel, including transportation, showing air travel by executive versus economy class, accommodations, expenses, and associated allowances;
2. any related contract costs for the trip, particularly costs of conference registration, exhibitor staffing, any fees for consulting services outside of those provided by public servants, and any funding by the GNWT Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment for the costs of other NWT representatives attending, including Indigenous governments;
3. a description of hospitality events, including catering, speaker, and other costs, and numbers of persons attending; and
4. what analysis, if any, has taken place of the value for money of the GNWT participation at this event.

Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. My apologies to the interpreters for speaking too fast.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. Written questions. Item 9, petitions. Item 10, reports of standing and special committees. Item 11, tabling of documents. Minister of Finance.

#### Tabling of Documents

TABLED DOCUMENT 1-19(2):  
FOLLOW-UP LETTER FOR ORAL QUESTION 2-  
19(1): CARBON TAX IMPLEMENTATION

**HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table the following document "Follow-up Letter for Oral Question 2-19(1), Carbon Tax Implementation." Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

TABLED DOCUMENT 2-19(2):  
FOLLOW-UP LETTER FOR ORAL QUESTION 7-  
19(1): BISON MANAGEMENT PLAN

**HON. SHANE THOMPSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table the following document "Follow-up Letter for Oral Question 7-19(1), Bison Management Plan." Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister. Tabling of documents. Minister of Health and Social Services.

TABLED DOCUMENT 3-19(2):  
FOLLOW-UP LETTER FOR ORAL QUESTION 10-19(1): CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES

TABLED DOCUMENT 4-19(2):  
FOLLOW-UP LETTER FOR ORAL QUESTION 14-19(1): HOME AND COMMUNITY CARE

TABLED DOCUMENT 5-19(2):  
FOLLOW-UP LETTER FOR ORAL QUESTION 22-19(1): VAPING REGULATIONS

**HON. DIANE THOM:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table the following three documents "Follow-up Letter for Oral Question 10-19(1), Child and Family Services;" "Follow-up Letter for Oral Question 14-19(1), Home and Community Care;" and "Follow-up Letter for Oral Question 22-19(1), Vaping Regulations." Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister.

TABLED DOCUMENT 6-19(2):  
TERRITORIAL GENERAL ELECTION 2019  
OFFICIAL RESULTS REPORT

**MR. SPEAKER:** Colleagues, I wish to table the "Territorial General Election 2019 Official Results Report." The official results are published in accordance with section 265(1) and (2) of the Elections and Plebiscites Act. Thank you.

Tabling of documents. Item 12, notices of motion. Member for Yellowknife North.

#### Notices of Motion

MOTION 1-19(2):  
SETTING OF SITTING DAYS AND HOURS

**MR. JOHNSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that we are moving into both our mandate session and budget session, I expect that there will be a number of late nights. Therefore, I give notice that, on Friday, February 7, 2020, I will move the following motion: I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Hay River North, that the Speaker be authorized to set such sitting days and hours as the Speaker, after consultation, deems fit to assist with the business before the House. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Member for Yellowknife North. Notices of motion. Item 13, motions. Item 14, notices of motion for the first reading of bills. Item 15, first reading of bills. Item 16, second reading of bills. Orders of the day, Mr. Clerk.

#### Orders of the Day

**CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer):** Orders of the day for Thursday, February 6, 2020, at 1:30 p.m.:

5. Prayer
6. Ministers' Statements
7. Members' Statements
8. Returns to Oral Questions
9. Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery
10. Acknowledgements
11. Oral Questions
12. Written Questions
13. Returns to Written Questions
14. Replies to the Commissioner's Address
15. Petitions
16. Reports of Committees on the Review of Bills
17. Reports of Standing and Special Committees
18. Tabling of Documents
19. Notices of Motion
20. Motions
21. Notices of Motion for First Reading of Bills
22. First Reading of Bills
23. Second Reading of Bills
24. Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters
25. Report of Committee of the Whole
26. Third Reading of Bills
27. Orders of the Day

**MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Clerk. This House is adjourned until Wednesday, February 5, 2020, at 1:30 p.m. Thank you.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 3:17 p.m.