



NORTHWEST TERRITORIES
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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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YELLOWKNIFE, NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**Thursday, February 6, 2020****Members Present**

Hon. Frederick Blake Jr, 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

---Prayer

SPEAKER (Hon. Frederick Blake Jr): Item 2, Ministers' statements. Minister of Environment and Natural Resources.

Ministers' Statements

**MINISTER'S STATEMENT 3-19(2):
BATHURST CARIBOU HARVEST AND RANGE
MANAGEMENT**

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Caribou are central to our communities as a food source and as part of our local culture and way of life.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, our caribou herds are struggling. In particular, the Bathurst and the Bluenose-East herds have suffered serious declines in recent years.

The Government of the Northwest Territories is committed to supporting our caribou through periods of decline. Today I am here to highlight some of the actions that the Department of Environment and Natural Resources is leading in our government's efforts to manage human impacts on the Bathurst caribou herd.

Five years ago, the Government of the Northwest Territories, together with Indigenous governments and organizations, and the Wek'eezhii Renewable Resources Board, made the difficult decision to close the Bathurst caribou harvest.

As a result of this decision, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources set up a no-harvest zone around the Bathurst caribou, known as the mobile zone. The boundaries of this zone change every week, based on the location of the collared caribou. This is how we make sure that the caribou are protected.

It is illegal to hunt caribou in this zone, Mr. Speaker. Officers monitor the area by ground and by air throughout the winter. We have two checkpoints at

Gordon and McKay Lake that are staffed 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Local community members also assist Environment and Natural Resources with the harvest monitoring.

It is important that all hunters going out on the land know where this zone is. Maps with the current mobile zone are posted on Environment and Natural Resources' website and Facebook page, on the winter roads, and in our communities.

The people of the Northwest Territories take caribou conservation very seriously. We continue to work with our co-management partners to communicate the importance of this zone for protecting the Bathurst caribou. It is up to each and every one of us to do our part to promote this herd's recovery.

Last August, the Government of the Northwest Territories released the Bathurst caribou range plan. This plan guides decision-makers, developers, and communities to help manage activities on the land in a way that supports the recovery of the Bathurst herd.

Our government is now working to set this plan into motion. This includes sitting down with our Indigenous partners to identify important habitat for Bathurst caribou, such as key land and water crossings and areas of unburned forest.

I am also pleased to report on our efforts to expand on-the-land programs to monitor Bathurst caribou. Last month, a workshop with Indigenous groups from across the range of the Bathurst herd was held to further develop a Bathurst guardianship initiative, which included representatives from Nunavut. The workshop brought in members of the Hamayas Stewardship Network from the Queen Charlotte Islands to share their knowledge and experiences as guardians on their traditional lands.

Mr. Speaker, traditional knowledge tells us that caribou have always experienced periods of highs and lows. The current population established for the Bathurst herd is the lowest it has ever been, that we know of. It is up to all of us to support our caribou herds through this current low and towards recovery.

ENR has heard from communities and wildlife co-management partners that all management actions

need to be considered, including wolf management. Environment and Natural Resources and the Tlicho government developed a Wolf Management Proposal based on the best available traditional, local, and scientific knowledge. It includes management actions for wolves on the winter range of the Bathurst and Bluenose-East herds as a way to promote the recovery of these barren-ground caribou herds and support the traditional economy.

The next population survey for Bathurst caribou is just a few months away in June, and the results will be available in late fall. Together with the local and traditional knowledge, these survey results will inform our actions going forward to manage and protect barren-ground caribou.

By applying the best available knowledge together with our co-management partners, we can help support healthy caribou populations for future generations of Northerners. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery, Reversion

MR. SPEAKER: Ministers' statements. Members, I would like to draw your attention to a Member in the gallery, former Member Bill Braden, who was the Member for Great Slave in the 14th and 15th Legislative Assemblies.

Item 3, Members' statements. Member for Thebacha.

Members' Statements

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON FORT SMITH AIRPORT INFRASTRUCTURE

MS. MARTSELOS: Mr. Speaker, for my Member's statement today, I would like to address the point made in yesterday's Commissioner's address regarding modernizing airport infrastructure in the NWT.

On June 17, 2019, the leadership of the community of Fort Smith wrote a letter to the former Minister of Infrastructure regarding narrowing the main runway at the Fort Smith Regional Airport. The leadership felt that, by narrowing the runway, disastrous results could happen if Fort Smith had to evacuate due to forest fire or other natural disasters. The leadership felt that this decision was made unilaterally, without consent from the community of Fort Smith. A drastic change without consultation with the community of Fort Smith is not acceptable.

I have also been informed that the "Arctic Light LED Package" was not put in at the airport, therefore causing multiple safety issues relating to risk

factors of take-off and landing. In discussion with the former Infrastructure Minister and senior management of that department, I was told that Transport Canada instructed the Department of Infrastructure to narrow the airport's runway by 50 feet on both sides and change their lighting system, at a cost of \$2.3 million. No other airport in the NWT was forced to endure such extreme changes to their airport infrastructure.

Mr. Speaker, the point of modernizing airports has failed in Fort Smith, based on the reduction of the runway that was forced on our community. I will have questions for the Minister of Infrastructure at the appropriate time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON INDIGENOUS INCARCERATION RATES

MR. LAFFERTY: Masi, Mr. Speaker. [Translation] I would like to talk about justice. I want to say a few words regarding that. [Translation ends] Canada's Office of the Correctional Inspector says that Canada's correctional system has reached an all-time low for the Indigenous population. Comprising barely a twentieth of the general population, Indigenous people now account for almost a third of federal inmates. That is an incarceration rate six times that of mainstream Canada.

In the Northwest Territories, the rates of imprisonment of Indigenous persons are equally troubling: 83 percent. Mr. Speaker, 83 percent of people behind bars in the Northwest Territories are either Dene, Metis, or Inuit. In the case of women, it is 100 percent.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission calls upon our territorial government, at recommendation 30, to commit to eliminating the overrepresentation of Aboriginal people in custody over the next decade.

It goes even further. TRC Recommendation 31 calls upon our territorial government to provide sufficient and stable funding to implement and evaluate community sanctions that will provide realistic alternatives to imprisonment for Aboriginal offenders and respond to the underlying causes of offending.

Mr. Speaker, at the appropriate time, I will have questions for the Minister responsible. Masi.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Monfwi. Members' statements. Member for Hay River South.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
STATE OF THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES
ECONOMY

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to speak about the stagnant economic condition in the NWT and, more specifically, the regions outside Yellowknife.

In these uncertain economic times, we must understand that the majority of current business opportunities for the regions are tied directly to government projects. Keeping this in mind, it is important that we, as government, ensure that our northern businesses and residents have first opportunity to participate in any and all government-funded projects. It is important that these projects are not delayed, in order that we can put northern companies and northern people to work.

I understand that we have processes in place to make sure that this happens. However, it is within these very processes that we fall short when it comes to carrying out projects in a timely manner or doing everything that we can to support businesses and create northern employment.

Our Business Incentive Policy, although an excellent tool that provides support to northern businesses, does fall short for large projects and the monitoring of northern content while work is ongoing. Our hit-and-miss schedule of 20- and 30-day payments for contractors, when not followed, can cause a business to experience undue financial hardship and sometimes push them to the brink of failure.

Then, there is the dreaded red tape that we continue to pile onto our northern businesses, which drives up costs of doing business while reducing productivity, which ultimately takes away from timely delivery of projects. This often results in contractors being penalized through non-payment, holdbacks, or being told they cannot bid on future projects.

A further reality is that, with the Alberta economy suffering, we are experiencing an influx of southern contractors with which our northern businesses must compete. When our northern businesses lose a contract to a southern firm, it results in the bleeding of dollars outside of our communities, out of the regions, and out of the NWT. These may be the very 75-cent dollars that we fight to receive from the federal government for projects or services in the NWT, and we are throwing them away.

This government has a responsibility to support our northern businesses and provide our residents with job opportunities. It is time that we stand up for our

businesses and our residents. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON
TRADES EDUCATION

MS. SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today, I am going to talk about the past, the present, and what the future may hold for trades in my community.

As far back as grade six, I can remember being introduced to the trade of carpentry. I can remember Mr. Gordon teaching us the basic skills in our options class. As I moved through the grades, I remember shop, automotive, and other trades offered to students. There was even a stream in our school for those who were more interested in the trades to focus solely in this area. It was a practical program within the senior high school.

Today, if we are lucky to have a teacher in our school who can teach the trades in combination with other classes, like math, English, or science, we will offer some intro to trades in our school.

How do we get more youth interested in carpentry, welding, mechanics, or to become an electrician or any other trade, if we are not exposing these to them or providing support for those who are interested in trades? Yes, I know, Mr. Speaker, students need to achieve an education level high enough to pass these trades exams and apprentice programs to obtain their journeyman certificate. I feel that, if we were giving them the opportunities to experience these areas, it may empower them to achieve what they need in their education.

In my community of Inuvik, we have trades trailers that were purchased in partnership with our local Indigenous groups and the GNWT, but they seem to do more sitting than using.

Within the past few weeks and months of briefings from the departments, and budgets, and looking at future capital projects, I am afraid that we will be continuing to use out-of-territory workers to complete these projects.

I want the Minister of Education to look at how we can increase the opportunities for trades to our youth, as well as support our local small businesses to apprentice them throughout the years that it takes to obtain their journeyman certificates. The current funding is only for two years. My understanding of this reason from the department is that they make money for the company in their third

and fourth years. Small businesses face a lot more expenses and try to keep people working, even when the economy is slow, and in our community, there is not much going on.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I will have questions for the Minister of ECE.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON STANTON TERRITORIAL HOSPITAL ISSUES

MS. GREEN: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Our brand new hospital has been plagued with problems from the day it opened in May. First, it was the food provided by the kitchen. Now, eight months after opening, there are chronic plumbing and heating issues. It is my understanding that the new Stanton hospital has more mechanical problems than the one it replaced. These ongoing problems are distressing for staff, patients, and residents of the NWT, who expected so much more from the most expensive building the GNWT has ever built.

I spent a day inside the emergency department before Christmas with a bad knee. An alarm rang for hours, and I understand that alarm fatigue is now a problem because medical staff do not know whether the alarm is for a real problem or whether it is an all-too-frequent false alarm.

Throughout the day, staff shared cellphone pictures of doors frosted over, as well as stories about how cold the hallways are near the outside doors, while others are uncomfortably hot. They have been dealing with plumbing problems since the hospital opened and as recently as yesterday, and they are tired of the workarounds.

I know that the Minister, staff at the department, and the hospital health authority are aware of these problems, but their best efforts have not resulted in an end to the problems. I am not sure if there are new problems every week or whether the problems have been multiplying since the hospital handover. I have no idea who is doing the repairs and what they are costing. Does the hospital have a warranty, like a new home, and how long is it good for?

You may be aware of a hospital constructed in North Battleford, Saskatchewan, using the same P3 model and 30-year maintenance contract. That hospital, which opened two months before ours, has had some of the same problems with mechanical systems. In fact, the problems in the North Battleford hospital are so extensive that they triggered a third-party construction audit of the project. A media report says that the audit will

review the quality of materials, equipment, labour, and workmanship used during the building. It is expected to be completed sometime this spring.

The current state of our brand new hospital is discouraging, to say the least. We expected better of this \$350-million facility. We want to know that we are getting value for money. I will have questions for the Minister of Health and Social Services. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON EARNING AND LOSING TRUST IN POLITICIANS

MS. CLEVELAND: Mr. Speaker, trust is a fragile and powerful thing. What can take decades to build can be broken in one action.

Surveys show that the professions trusted most by Canadians are scientists, nurses, doctors, and teachers, while politicians, unfortunately, are found at the bottom of the list. Today, only 13 percent of Canadians trust politicians. This is important because we know that, in order to truly work together, all Northerners need to trust each other.

I recently read an article which implied that the public's lack of trust in politicians is based on the sense that an "old boys' club" is maintaining the status quo to serve its own interests. Last October, northern voters changed the face of politics. I believe that this transformative change was at least partially motivated by a rejection of the old boys' club. I stand in a gender-balanced Assembly, where more than half of the Members are Indigenous, but that doesn't automatically mean that, as a government, we have changed how we operate, how we staff, do business, or our trustworthiness.

People sense three kinds of trust, Mr. Speaker: competency, emotional, and ethical trust. Competency trust is earned, and it reflects the knowledge we have and how we use it. We get this trust in steps, but we also lose it in steps. Emotional trust is based on how we make people feel. We earn it by making people feel safe and typically lose it gradually, a little at a time. Ethical trust, Mr. Speaker, is the hardest to earn and the hardest to keep. It is earned through principled actions and decision-making and can be lost in an instant.

Building trust takes the work required to understand the unique challenges of our people, the curiosity and empathy to care, and the courage to do what is right. Trust is a feedback loop of not only gaining trust, but also giving it, both inside the House, within departments, other levels of government and community organizations, and within our own

neighbourhoods. Trust allows us to have each other's backs, work side-by-side, and advance with confidence towards a common purpose.

The Greek word "democracy" literally means "ruled by the people," and its definition is a system of government by the whole population. By that definition, to truly govern, Mr. Speaker, we need to build all three kinds of trust.

As we work to evolve governance and decision-making by welcoming everyone to the table, I hope that, over time, we can collectively rebuild our trust accounts. Northerners need to trust that their words, concerns, and passions for the North are reflected through our work here. We, as politicians, must respect all voices and be humbled by the capability of our actions when we trust each other. To govern justly, with both love and power, it is up to all of us to start rebuilding our trust accounts. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON CANCER PRE-SCREENING AND PREVENTION IN BEAUFORT-DELTA

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today, my Member's statement is on cancer. It continues to touch the lives of so many people across our territory, and it is taking our loved ones far too often.

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the front-line staff in Health and Social Services, who work every day with those affected by cancer, from the doctors and nurses to the people who book medical travel. These are caring professionals. They help cancer patients navigate the medical system in such stressful times in their lives.

Unfortunately, we face challenges, such as in the remote communities that I represent in Nunakput, Mr. Speaker. The remote location of our communities means a long wait time for appointments. These make the timely treatment of cancer even more challenging in the North. There are two things that I believe this department can do to improve the outcomes of our cancer patients across the territory, in the Beaufort-Delta.

First, I would like to see the Health and Social Services provide the Beaufort-Delta Health Authority with a dedicated position focused on doing travel arrangements solely for cancer patients. A focus on doing travel arrangements would alleviate the pressure on our local front-line staff to ensure that travel is booked, as well as follow-ups. Follow-ups are so important, and people

are missing some appointments. This would ensure that cancer patients are booked in a timely manner.

Second, I believe that we could be doing more to prevent cancer through pre-screening. Cancer pre-screening takes place in medical appointments, but many people don't go to a doctor unless they feel sick, in their home communities.

I would like a commitment from the Minister today to develop a pilot project with me that would work to enable a team of professionals to travel to smaller communities at least once a year to do cancer pre-screening, especially for our less mobile elders. With today's technology, many cancers, such as colon cancer, breast cancer, and skin cancer, can be detected with simple, non-invasive procedures.

Mr. Speaker, as an MLA, I am tired of attending funerals for friends and family who have been taken by cancer. Today, I am asking the Minister of Health and Social Services to work with me to improve the lives of people in the Beaufort-Delta, the Sahtu, and in all the territory to do pre-screening for cancer, which will be able to improve patients' lives and outcomes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON LUTSEL K'E DENE FIRST NATION CARIBOU HUNTING MORATORIUM

MR. NORN: Marci cho, Mr. Speaker. I am proud to let the House know that the Lutsel K'e Dene First Nation is implementing a two-year self-imposed moratorium on hunting the Bathurst caribou herd. This was just announced yesterday, and it will be a stewardship plan led by the community members. The plan is called Yunethe Xa Etthen Hadi. Directly translated, this means "the future of our caribou" in Denesuline.

As everyone is well aware, there has been a severe decline in the Bathurst caribou herd population over the years. The GNWT even went as far as to ban harvesting caribou in its mobile hunting areas since 2015.

Mr. Speaker, what will this initial implementation look like, of this hunting moratorium? Well, the Lutsel K'e Dene First Nation have hired four full-time Nihat'ni Dene Rangers in order to, as the name suggests, watch over and monitor the land, wildlife, and visitors. This will include hunters within the Thaidene Nene protected areas.

I would like to congratulate Chief Darryl Marlowe and the LKDFN for taking the initiative and

protecting this caribou herd for future generations. I sincerely hope that other First Nations will take notice and follow suit, and I hope that this government will support endeavours such as these.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I want to leave with a quote from Lutsel K'e Dene First Nation's caribou stewardship plan that speaks to the LKDFN values and love for the caribou, and I hope it resonates with you.

"Etthen hureth'a; the caribou are listening to us. We shouldn't talk too much about Etthen; they are listening to us. We must speak good words for them, and we must help protect them. The Etthen have their own natural laws and, as such, we have to respect the ways of the Etthen and all other life forms."

Marci cho, Mr. Speaker. That will be all for now. I will have some questions for the Minister of Environment and Natural Resources later.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Tu Nedhe-Willideh. Members' statements. Member for Frame Lake.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON EDUCATION AUTHORITIES TERM OF OFFICE

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. Over the last few months, Yellowknife MLAs met with trustees of Yellowknife Catholic schools and Yellowknife District No. 1 and the Commission scolaire francophone Territoires du Nord-Ouest. The City of Yellowknife held a plebiscite on extending the term of office for its councillors to four years from three in 2018. Of the Yellowknife voters who voted, 60.6 percent were in favour, and a bylaw to extend the term of office for mayor and council to four years was passed.

The term of office for Yellowknife City Council and Yellowknife Education Authorities are now out of sync. Elections were held at the same time, piggybacking onto the city's efforts and processes. If Yellowknife Education Authorities need to hold their own elections, the costs will be approximately \$90,000 more, in terms of advertising, hiring workers, and other expenses. I am sure that we would all rather see that funding spent on our children's education than on running a separate election.

For CSFTNO, the situation is more interesting in that half of its commissaires are from Yellowknife, where there is now a four-year term for council, and the other half are from Hay River, where there is a three-year term for that local government. CSFTNO holds its own elections, if necessary, at its schools, so there is little additional cost but an obvious need for coordination.

Unfortunately, it looks like it would take a change to the Education Act to adjust the terms of office for education authorities to account for the four-year term of Yellowknife City Council. The current wording in the Education Act already contemplates coordination of the terms of office. However, it does not deal with the situation that we are now in, where a local government body has a term of office beyond three years or, for CSFTNO, where there are different terms of office for the local governments that its commissaires represent.

I raised this issue almost a year ago and was told by then-Minister of Education, "The good news is that we have a couple of years until the next election [...] so that we can actually have it dealt with before the election."

I will be asking the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment questions later today on whether the political will exists to make the necessary changes before 2021. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

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

MEMBER'S STATEMENT ON SUICIDE CRISIS AND PREVENTION

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As we sit in this House, we must never forget who we serve. We serve the people on the ground, and the reality is that so many of them are hurting. The reality is that the North is at the bottom of most social indicators in Canada. We are dealing with a history of both past and ongoing colonialism and ongoing trauma from residential schools, and there are so many issues and only limited resources. Often in this House, we feel like we are being pulled in many directions, but government is a large ship, and we all have a responsibility to make sure that it goes in a coherent, strategic direction.

Today, I would like to speak about one of the many issues facing our territory. We are presently in a suicide crisis, Mr. Speaker. We have among the highest rates of suicide in the North. Additionally, we can only do so much with the information that we have, and there is a lack of data on this. Often, when there is a suicide, there are 20 times as many attempts. Additionally, many of our residents head south and they disappear into larger urban centres, where they too often fall to suicide and addictions, and we do not track those numbers properly.

Mr. Speaker, we have a responsibility to do more. We have a responsibility to develop a suicide prevention strategy, working with our Indigenous governments, working with the federal government, and working across departments to make sure that we are getting a full picture of this crisis. We have a

responsibility to help those who are hurting, especially those in our small communities and those who have lost hope, Mr. Speaker.

I will have questions for the Minister of Health and Social Services. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Yellowknife North. Members' statements. Item 4, returns to oral questions. Item 5, recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes.

Recognition of Visitors in the Gallery

MS. SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to recognize my CA, Loretta Rogers, and I would also like to recognize a former colleague, John Stephenson. We both sat as previous chairs of education boards.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. Member for Hay River North.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would also like to recognize Mr. John Stephenson, the former chair of the Yellowknife District No. 1 education authority. I never had a chance to work directly with him, as our terms did not quite overlap, but I have heard nothing but good things, and I look forward to working with him, as he is still a trustee on the board. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Hay River North. Recognition of visitors in the gallery. If we have missed anyone in the gallery today, welcome to the Chamber. I hope that you are enjoying the proceedings. It is always nice to have an audience with us. Thank you. Item 6, acknowledgements. Item 7, oral questions. Member for Yellowknife Centre.

Oral Questions

QUESTION 9-19(2):

STANTON TERRITORIAL HOSPITAL ISSUES

MS. GREEN: Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Minister of Health and Social Services. As I had mentioned in my statement, residents of the NWT expected that a brand new hospital would be better than the old one, but, so far, the new hospital has been plagued with problems, especially with plumbing and heating. My first question to the Minister is whether the new hospital has a warranty and whether that warranty is still in effect. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Yellowknife Centre. Minister of Health and Social Services.

HON. DIANE THOM: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to let the Member know that, yes, there is a warranty, and it is between the designer-builder and the service provider, which is Dexterra. It was for a base period of one year, to November 30, 2019. There is a 10-year latent defects warranty.

Under the project agreement, the GNWT is provided with protection by transfer of responsibility and risk to the P3 partner, which is BHP, and Dexterra, who is responsible for dealing with the building performance issues, also the associated costs, and it is over the life of a 30-year agreement. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. GREEN: Thank you to the Minister for that response. As I understand it, then, the repairs are being done and paid for by the contractor. Do I have that correct?

HON. DIANE THOM: Yes, that is correct.

MS. GREEN: Thank you to the Minister for that. Who inspected the new hospital before it opened, and what were the findings of deficiencies, if any?

HON. DIANE THOM: Under the project agreement, the P3 partner, which is Boreal Health Partnership, was responsible for ensuring that the building was reviewed before the building was made available to the GNWT on November 30, 2018 -- that is the service commencement -- to begin preparation for moving the services to the new hospital.

All construction work undertaken was also subject to a sign-off by an independent certifier. BHP engaged the architect and engineers of record, who were liable for final reviews and approval that the facility is fit for use. The reviews ensured compliance with a range of technical requirements in accordance with the project agreement, the technical requirements, as well as codes, standards, and laws.

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

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the Minister for that. Mr. Speaker, in Saskatchewan, the government is paying for a third-party audit of construction following similar problems at the North Battleford hospital. Is the Minister willing to contract a construction audit of the new Stanton hospital so that we get an overall picture of the ongoing problems with the building? Thank you.

HON. DIANE THOM: Yes, we are aware of the issues in Saskatchewan, which were much more severe than the challenges we have faced within the Stanton Hospital. Our focus is working with the P3 partners to ensure challenges that have been experienced are dealt with. We are seeing the

number of issues decline over time. The project agreement provides provisions to enable the GNWT to undertake reviews and audits of the services provided by Dexterra during the life of this agreement. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 10-19(2):
SCHOOLS NORTH APPRENTICESHIP
PROGRAM AND TRADES EDUCATION

MS. SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. Will the Minister advise me if they will be running the Schools North Apprenticeship Program, referred to as the SNAP program, in my community this year? If not, why, and will his department reconsider? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes. Minister of Education, Culture and Employment.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The SNAP program, as the Member mentioned, the Schools North Apprenticeship Program, doesn't run on a schedule. It is not a regular part of the curriculum. There is no scheduled start time right now. The program requires a significant number of parties to all come together. You need employers; you need the school; you need students, parents, and ECE to ensure that things run smoothly.

If there is an interest from employers and there is an interest from students, then this is something that we can facilitate, and we can use this program. I will speak to the department to explore some further options. We have our career and education advisors who might be able to help facilitate this, but the first thing that we need is to have some participants who are willing to help us move forward. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. SEMMLER: In my Member's statement, I also talked about the trades trailers that are in my community that have been sitting there. Will the Minister advise me what the plan from the department is to continue to work with the Indigenous governments in my community to ensure that these trailers are being utilized for the purpose that they were purchased for?

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Aurora College offers trades, industrial, and occupational training in the trades mobile training lab. This lab is a state-of-the-art facility. I think it is pretty cool, basically. We are always open to having these discussions with Indigenous governments. In 2019, December, the lab returned to Inuvik from Tuktoyaktuk after offering the Building Trades Helper Program.

There are ongoing discussions about how we can better use this lab in the Beaufort-Delta for things such as trade preparation, entry-level programs for youth to enhance employment skills, and the Building Trades Helper Program. As the transformation of Aurora College into a polytechnic continues, there are going to be even more opportunities to utilize this tool.

MS. SEMMLER: Thank you to the Minister for that. I look forward to the ongoing work in that area. Will the Minister ensure that small businesses that have apprentices and utilize the on-the-job funding to support them to keep the apprentice until they reach their journeyman certificate?

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: My colleague is speaking about the trades and occupations wage subsidy program in which the department tops off the wages for apprentices for a couple years. She noted that it doesn't necessarily follow the apprentice all the way through. That is because the pot of money just isn't big enough to do that. We can't cover everyone.

I am looking forward, in this Assembly, to increasing the number of apprentices and journeypeople that we have in the territory. If this is something that we think is useful and a way to do that, then I look forward to having those budget discussions with Cabinet and with the Regular Members and seeing if that is where we want to allocate our limited resources.

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

MS. SEMMLER: Just one last thing: would the Minister, since I am pretty sure SFA falls under the Minister's department, if they could look at maybe a way that that would help apprentices continue on and maybe support them in that area? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: SFA is for students who are studying. I don't know if that is an appropriate avenue to provide funds to somebody who is working as an apprentice, but I have been speaking for years about the need to get more apprentices in the territory. We have so many journeypeople who are retiring, who have retired. Like the rest of Canada, we just do not have the people to replace them. I am hopeful and committed to increasing that number during the life of this Assembly. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 11-19(2):
FORT SMITH AIRPORT INFRASTRUCTURE

MS. MARTSELOS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Further to my Member's statement, the community of Fort Smith's concerns regarding narrowing of the airport has not been addressed. My question is: why are safety issues at the Fort Smith airport not being addressed?

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Thebacha. Minister of Infrastructure.

HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Safety is our top priority in the operation and maintenance of the Northwest Territories transportation system, including the airports. Transport Canada sets the standards by which airports are designed and operated. The GNWT is responsible for constructing, operating, and maintaining airports to those standards. The GNWT is also responsible for reviewing airport infrastructure and planning for future operational and regulatory needs.

The recent projects undertaken at the Fort Smith airport, the installation of LED lighting and the rightsizing of the runway, were undertaken when the standards and regulations were set by Transport Canada and were designed and completed to industry and professional standards.

I would like to assure the Member that neither the safety nor the level of service at the Fort Smith airport has changed as a result of these projects. The GNWT maintains a safety management system, the SMS, for all of our 27 airports. At this time, there are no outstanding safety issues at the Fort Smith airport.

We continue to encourage individuals to report hazards and safety concerns through the SMS protocols. I can forward those protocols to the Member if she would like, and they are also available on the GNWT website. Thank you.

MS. MARTSELOS: What was the point of spending \$2.3 million on an airport runway that was operational and running fine?

HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY: The decision to replace the airside lighting and to narrow the runway at the Fort Smith airport was made based on current and future operational and regulatory needs. As part of ongoing airport planning, it was determined that the aging lighting system needed to be replaced. It was also determined that a 30-metre runway would meet federal regulations and would not affect the level of service at the Fort Smith airport. Because the lighting replacement project would require digging up sections of the runway, it made good sense to complete both projects at the same time.

When the Fort Smith airport was designed and built in 1957, 60 metres was a common width for paved

runways. It was predicted at the time that future aircraft would be bigger and larger runways would be required. That is, in fact, not the case. Modern aircraft have improved performance, and the federal regulator has established that wider runways are not necessary. The cost to operate and maintain a 30-metre runway is significantly less than to operate and maintain a 60-metre runway. The cost to repair or overlay a 30-metre runway will also be less.

I would like to assure the Member that the decision to proceed with these projects was made with the safety of citizens in the front of our minds. The decision was also based on operational needs, minimizing costs to the Government of the Northwest Territories and to taxpayers, and ensuring ongoing eligibility for federal funding for future capital projects at the Fort Smith airport.

MS. MARTSELOS: The new lights that were installed at the Fort Smith airport were not the Arctic kit that was supposed to be installed at the airport, as said in the July 8, 2019, letter from the former Minister of Infrastructure. My question is: when will this be addressed?

HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY: During the design phase it was determined that, due to the regional climate, Arctic kits were not required for the lighting at the Fort Smith airport; therefore, they were not included in the design. The Fort Smith airfield lighting is checked at least twice daily by maintenance staff at the airport and documented in accordance with our preventative maintenance processes, and it is operating to specification.

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

MS. MARTSELOS: Mr. Speaker, senior management within the Department of Infrastructure still insists that this decision was given by Transport Canada. Will the Department of Infrastructure share this letter of direction from Transport Canada?

HON. KATRINA NOKLEBY: I would like to clarify that there was no decision or direction given by Transport Canada to narrow the runway. Transport Canada is responsible for establishing the regulations and standards. The current standards indicate that a 30-metre runway is required for the type of airport and service in Fort Smith, and I would be happy to share the Department of Infrastructure's copies of these standards with the Member.

Transport Canada also administers the Airport Capital Assistance Program. This is the program that the GNWT relies on for funding for construction and maintenance of its airport system. It is unlikely

that Transport Canada would fund future pavement overlay or capital projects for a runway that was wider than the regulator's standard. The decision to proceed with these projects was made by the Department of Infrastructure and was based on the established standards' operational needs, and budget considerations.

I would like to say that I maybe did misspeak that to you earlier in saying it was a direction from Transport Canada, so I acknowledge that error. That was mine, being new to the role. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 12-19(2):
CANCER SCREENING, CARE AND PREVENTION
IN BEAUFORT-DELTA

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today, I brought up who is not affected by cancer in our great territory. For the people who I represent in Nunakput, to have to travel out for one-day appointments to Inuvik is probably four days because of the timing of flights, and stuff like that. For the safety of my constituents, what I want to bring up, Mr. Speaker, is: is the Minister working with the department to identify cancer for Northerners, and how could we speed the process up to help them travel to get to their appointments? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HON. DIANE THOM: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Member is correct. Cancer in the Northwest Territories is quite high, as with other parts of Canada, and the number of people with chronic disease continues to grow and the age of diagnosis is younger. The department continues to help reduce the impact of chronic disease such as cancer by prevention, early detection through screening, and effective medical and self-management.

In the Northwest Territories, we have guidelines for screening for the following three cancers: breast, cervical, and colorectal. There has been extensive promotion of cancer screening, such as brochures and posters related to colorectal, cervical, and breast cancer screening; prevention messages on how to reduce your cancer risk, as well as healthy living resources around nutrition, physical activity, alcohol management, and tobacco cessation; and infographics on most recent cancer screening rates for the cervical, colorectal, and breast cancer screening. We have cancer information that is available for the residents of the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. JACOBSON: Putting out pamphlets and stuff like that don't mean nothing. It is good to have them in the community, but we need to know: what are the improvements of the healthcare system that the department is currently working on today?

HON. DIANE THOM: I would like to speak about some activities that we are doing that are new. In the communities, the community health representatives are provided with training in relation to cancer screening. In the fall, as well as information on cancer prevention, screening, and healthy living resources, we are launching nine videos related to cervical, colorectal, and breast cancer screening in the Northwest Territories, and two videos will be launched to address cancer screening in general. The Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority is launching a pilot project on the cancer screening program in the Beaufort-Delta this month, in hopes of increasing the number of people being screened.

MR. JACOBSON: Today, I would like to consider establishing a dedicated position to manage travel arrangements for cancer patients, with a mandate to expedite travel, to minimize delays for the people who I represent in our small communities in the Beaufort-Delta as a whole, to get a doctor and a care unit going into the communities at least once a year to try to catch cancer. Because, by the time it is caught, it is either stage 3 or stage 4, and you can't do anything, and then we are losing loved ones because of the system. Is the Minister willing to work with me to do a pilot project in the Beaufort-Delta to provide service for all nine communities in the region, to prevent cancer?

HON. DIANE THOM: The Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority just recently hired two full-time cancer nurse navigators. This is in order to assist patients and their families through the cancer care continuum. I understand the Member's question is to have a commitment to be able to go into the Beaufort-Delta communities and, at this time, this is something we will look into.

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

MR. JACOBSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So many families are affected by cancer. I am asking the Minister today to commit, just say yes with me, on a pilot project for the Beaufort-Delta to establish a team of professionals who will travel into the communities to do pre-screening for our elders and for the people who can't leave the community, who only go to the nursing station when they are really sick. They feel like they are not going to waste people's time, because, you know, they're not feeling well. They have to be really sick to go to the health centre. You know that, Mr. Speaker. All I am asking is if we could do a pilot project for one year,

and then see how many people's lives we could save, the people who we serve. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. DIANE THOM: Again, I mentioned earlier in my response that we recognize that cancer is high, not only in the Beaufort-Delta, but also in the Northwest Territories. I understand that the Member for Nunakput is asking for a commitment, and I recognize that, in the region, it is quite high. It is something that we will look into. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 13-19(2):
INCARCERATION OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

MR. LAFFERTY: Masi, Mr. Speaker. [Translation] I spoke earlier on correction, Department of Justice, and I mentioned that the majority of incarcerated people are Dene people. I would like to ask a question regarding that. [End of translation] The Inspector of Corrections calls it a national travesty. I would like to ask the following question to the Minister of Justice: more specifically, how is our correctional system helping Indigenous inmates to reduce their chances of reoffending once they leave the prison system? Masi.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Monfwi. Minister of Justice.

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We currently have programs in place between the Correctional Service working inside our incarceration facilities and with communities to ensure that individuals have a reintegration plan before they go into the community, and that is meant to be one of the key ways in which we are hoping to assist individuals to not reoffend.

In addition, of course, this is something that involves partnerships throughout all of government to ensure that people have the right supports in their communities so that they can continue to live lives that are healthy when they are out of the facilities. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. LAFFERTY: I am just curious about the priorities of this government. What priority has this Minister given to the problem of the over-representation of Indigenous people in our corrections system?

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: As all of my colleagues here know, over-incarceration of Indigenous people was not an express priority that we noted for the Members of the 19th Assembly. Nevertheless, I have already stated publicly that this is a priority for me personally. It is an issue that I have personally been engaged on for many years,

and I can't imagine that anyone who knew me in my past life would expect me to come into this House and not see this as a personal priority. With that, Mr. Speaker, I would certainly like to assure that, doing my part, as Minister of Justice, and the Department of Justice of the Northwest Territories, we will be considering that a priority over the next four years.

MR. LAFFERTY: Just reflecting on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's 94 recommendations, obviously, there is one recommendation that I highlighted as part of my Member's statement. Are there sufficient and stable funds within the Department of Justice to implement and evaluate these measures to provide realistic alternatives to imprisonment for Aboriginal offenders?

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: I have no doubt that any department would like to see more funds. It would certainly make the work easier. At the same time, am I confident that there is enough ability and enough capacity within the Department of Justice to address this? Mr. Speaker, I would say yes. When the story broke nationally about the rates of incarceration of Indigenous people, I met immediately with senior members from the Justice Department, and they are beginning to consider what things we can do, within our control, to affect the over-incarceration of Indigenous people.

It will be a cross-government issue that we need to deal with. It will be a multiple-level-of-government issue that needs to be addressed. To that end, we remain engaged with the national task force in terms of a national strategy, but we are beginning to take steps to look at what we can do here, at home, and I hope to be coming back with that plan in due course.

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

MR. LAFFERTY: Masi, Mr. Speaker. Again, reflecting back on the TRC recommendations, it talks about reducing the systematic discrimination. Looking into the future, what are the Minister's plans to reduce the systematic discrimination that Indigenous people experience in our judicial system or justice system and in our corrections system?

HON. CAROLINE WAWZONEK: There are fortunately a number of initiatives that I can speak to. There certainly is significant effort within corrections to have Indigenous cultural safety training for all staff. There are efforts to have Aboriginal liaisons available to all individuals within the correctional system. There is, in addition to that, a number of initiatives to ensure that there are court workers available in the communities and to ensure that police priorities also include cultural safety.

All that said, Mr. Speaker, I am aware that more still needs to be done, and so I certainly am alive to that and intend to see that we can continue to do more as we move forward, to build on the successes that we already have. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Oral questions. Member for Tu Nedhe-Willideh.

QUESTION 14-19(2):
LUTSEL K'E DENE FIRST NATION CARIBOU
HUNTING MORATORIUM

MR. NORN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As mentioned in my Member's statement, there has been a severe decline of the Bathurst herd in Lutselk'e, and over-hunting is a concern that they had. They hired four staff to help address this. This area in question is quite a large area, and I have a question for the Minister of ENR. What is the Minister's plan to assist the Lutsel K'e Dene First Nation with the issue of over-hunting in their region? Mahsi.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Tu Nedhe-Willideh. Minister of Environment and Natural Resources.

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Barren-ground caribou are a shared resource and a shared responsibility, and it is important that we all work together to help their recovery. The band is a member of the Bathurst Caribou Advisory Committee, which works on their management plan for the herd. The band also participates in the Bathurst Caribou Range Plan Working Group, which will guide management of the herd moving on, and ENR continues to support the band and other Indigenous governments and organizations with their monitoring. This is in addition to ENR's regular monitoring of the Bathurst caribou herd. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. NORN: I know that there are two ENR-monitored stations, but there are still a lot of hunters who are not checking in or reporting their harvest. What is the Minister going to do to ensure that proper reporting is met?

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: I don't know if I heard the last part of the question, but I am thinking. ENR conducts regular ground and aerial monitoring of the mobile zone, and we do have the two checkpoints there. They are manned 24/7 during the season. I know, from talking to some of the hunters, that the monitors and the staff actually stop people and talk to them and communicate, and some of the times, if they have heard or seen some challenges, they investigate that further.

MR. NORN: With those four monitors that LKDFN had, I am just wondering if the Minister can make

any commitment to the LKDFN to help fund those positions?

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: No. We are working with the community through the nature fund and some of that stuff there, so the community is actually coming up with the funding. We have monitors right now on the ground. We work with paying for those, again, so unfortunately I can't say we are going to pay for those four, but we do have staff and we do have one staff in the community, an RR-02 position, so right now we do fund those things.

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

QUESTION 15-19(2):
REDUCING RED TAPE TO SUPPORT
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES BUSINESSES

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Sorry about that. Actually, I have a question, I guess, for the Premier. It is to do with red tape. I am just wondering what this government is planning to do to alleviate the amount of red tape that we have within the departments. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Hay River South. Honourable Premier.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am trying to think off the top of my head. Red tape has been identified as an issue for well over four years, I can say. In the last Assembly, we heard it often. Within our priorities, we identified that we need to support northern businesses. In our mandate that will be tabled later, we have some of the policies that we will be reviewing. I am not going to go through the three right now, because we have not tabled our mandate yet.

We recognize as a government that the bigger thing is that we need to support northern businesses and northern residents. Some of the red tape is necessary. We also need to make sure that we protect the environment and we protect all different things that can come up, but we are going to be looking through them all and making sure that what is not necessary is not there. We should not be just developing the pen for the sake of writing. We should be using the pen to make sure that we capture all of the risks, but that it is as comprehensive and appealing to people as possible so that people can access contracts within the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. ROCKY SIMPSON: The other and, I guess, last question that I have for the Premier is that we have been here now for roughly five months, I guess, since the writ was dropped. In my community in Hay River and, I guess, in the

regions, contractors are looking for work and people are looking for jobs. What is this government's plan, immediately, I guess, to start looking at putting people to work and ensuring that contracts are put out there?

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Again, none of us believe that red tape that is not necessary should be there, so we will be looking at them all across. The philosophy is, and we have maintained that not only in what will be coming in our tabled mandate, but also in the priorities that we looked at as Cabinet Ministers when we talked about what our priorities are, we identified northern businesses and northern residents taking opportunities versus the South, so that is one of our priorities.

What have we done? We are already starting it. I attended Roundup, for an example. I am a diamond driller's daughter. I am proud of that, and I support the industry whole-heartedly, but I was very adamant in saying that I support the industry, but I also support northern business and northern residents. I will not accept that it is just about industry and it is about how we do whatever we can to get industries into the territories, unless there is a benefit to Northerners. I was pretty blunt; people know me as being very honest. I was pretty blunt in saying, "What's the use of having the mining companies in the North if there are no benefits to our residents?"

That message, I will carry forward with me, as I move forward. I expect that from my Ministers. I expect that from all MLAs. We have an obligation to make sure that the benefits of the Northwest Territories, as many as possible, stay in the Northwest Territories, and that is my commitment.

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

QUESTION 16-19(2):
BUILDING TRUST IN THE 19TH LEGISLATIVE
ASSEMBLY

MS. CLEVELAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today, I spoke about trust and building trust within this House and also within our communities. My questions today are for Madam Premier. What I would like to know is: how is this Assembly building trust between our Members and between this House and our constituents? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Kam Lake. Honourable Premier.

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It was noted. I mean, we have talked about it a lot. The newspaper, the media, everybody has said this is a changed government, and I have to put it back and say that the last

government also was supposed to be a changed government, but I didn't feel that the people felt that it was changed enough, so they spoke out very loudly and said, "We're going to try it again. We're changing up our government."

We made a commitment. There is something wrong with politicians; if we were all doing a great job, the same Members would still be here. I am not saying that any of the colleagues didn't do a great job. I respect them all, but the people weren't satisfied, and so we weren't doing a good job. I think, a lot of times, the government has been pretty guarded in what we have done. We have taken a view sometimes, in my personal opinion, that says that we should know best, and if we don't know best, we look weak. I have to say that I am a mom, I am a social worker, I am a woman. I don't know if that makes a difference, but I believe it does. I don't see the lack of knowing answers as a weakness, and I don't see it as something that is a barrier. I see it as a strength, when you're willing to put it out there.

Already you see that this Cabinet has tried to work more closely with MLAs. We have shared information that has never been shared before. I hear the frustration of MLAs when we try to move in that way, saying, "You're taking too much. You're sharing too much. Get some work done." It is about finding that fine balance, is what I am struggling with. How much do we work together and build that trust, that relationship, and yet how much do we hold and get the work done? I know that some Members have said we have been here six months and nothing has happened. Other Members are saying we have been here six months and we have seen incredible things happen, with the change in how we are working across the floor. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. CLEVELAND: My next question for the Premier would be: given yesterday's events around Aurora College staffing, how does this government intend to do a better job with consistent communication, public-facing communication?

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Again, the mandate letters will be coming within this session. All Members will be told to engage as much as possible with stakeholders. That is important. The events that happened yesterday were a little bit unusual in that some things, you can share very openly, Mr. Speaker. If we are looking at doing programs or changing policies or legislation, all open. We should be as transparent and open as possible.

When we are talking about people's lives, individuals, Mr. Speaker, I do think we have to pull back a little bit and make sure that we are cautious, because one is being open and transparent, and the other is talking about respect for the person

behind that. One of the Members talked about suicide today. A lot of times, if we are not careful in how we treat people, that is a risk that we take. I am not willing to take that risk; I would rather, as a leader, be told that I'm not open when it comes to talking about personal issues of people. I will talk generally about issues of people, though, and that is how we will try to work.

MS. CLEVELAND: Yesterday, we heard a lot from colleagues about their concern over the way boards are staffed and managed. Does the Premier agree that the way that boards are appointed and managed could be improved to better build public trust?

HON. CAROLINE COCHRANE: Absolutely. I have already had conversations with all of our Cabinet, and we are talking about terms of boards. In fairness to all of us here, sometimes our plates are so busy that the easy answer is just to reappoint the person who has been there before, because it's easy. They're already there; we have already gone through the vetting; we know who they are. Is that the best way to appoint boards? That is what I have been challenging my Cabinet with.

I think they are all in agreement. We will actually be looking at terms of boards, because there is a benefit to having corporate knowledge, a person who has the knowledge, but there is a real benefit to having new blood. We see that here in this Assembly, a younger and new voice, and I think that we have an obligation to make sure, in all of our boards, that we have an equal balance of people who have the knowledge and people who have great new ideas coming forward. It is a discussion that we are on, and you will see a change within our policies within this term.

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

QUESTION 17-19(2):

EDUCATION AUTHORITIES TERM OF OFFICE

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. My question is for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment on the issue of coordination of municipal and education authorities' terms of office. Can the Minister tell us whether and when he has received any formal request from the Yellowknife education authorities or CSFTNO requesting changes to allow for a four-year term? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Frame Lake. Minister of Education, Culture and Employment.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In March of 2019, YK1 and YCS raised the issue

through a joint letter to ECE. To my knowledge, CSFTNO has not raised the issue through a formal channel like that, but I am sure that it is on their radar. ECE officials have engaged with the Yellowknife DEAs to begin to try to figure out how to solve this issue. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. O'REILLY: I want to thank the Minister for that information. We have been informed by the Yellowknife education authorities that the overwhelming opinion of parents is that they want money spent on education rather than holding elections. Does the Minister agree that additional costs for separate elections by education authorities to conduct their own elections would be better spent on children's education?

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: The best-spent money is always on children's education, so it's hard to argue with that.

MR. O'REILLY: I want to thank the Minister for the straightforward response. The situation for CSFTNO is different, as I mentioned in my statement, in that its commissaires represent two communities that now have different cycles for their municipal elections. To me, it sounds like the best solution here may be to allow education authorities to set their own terms of office, with approval of the Minister, of course. I am sure that the Minister is aware of this complication, but I am wondering whether his department has contemplated a solution for the term of office issue for CSFTNO.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: The department is aware and looking into this. Unfortunately, I have to report that we do not have a silver bullet for this issue. It is going to take a bit more research, but we are committed to doing that, and I will get back to the Member when we have that information.

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

MR. O'REILLY: Merci, Monsieur le President. I want to thank the Minister. Great to hear that he and his staff are working already on this issue. I am just wondering whether the Minister can commit to making the small changes that are likely necessary in the Education Act to avoid spending money on elections rather than education. Can he make those changes before 2021? Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: The department has looked at a number of ways of doing this. Unfortunately, there is no way of getting around the fact that the board members were elected for a fixed period of time. Any change to that period of time, to extend it, would be antidemocratic.

If you are elected to a certain period, if the voters vote you in and they think that you are going to be there for this many years because that is what the

legislation says, I am not willing to extend that. What would be required would be a plebiscite, similar to what municipalities do.

I believe in democracy. I am a strong supporter of democracy. I do not believe that we should be extending term limits. We are not kings here. We are politicians who were duly elected. That being said, the department has had conversations with the education authorities. We are committed to working with them to mitigate the cost as much as we can. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 18-19(2):
SUICIDE PREVENTION

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a question for the Minister of Health and Social Services. Do we presently have a suicide prevention strategy?

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

HON. DIANE THOM: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Department of Health and Social Services does not currently have a specific suicide prevention strategy. However, the Child and Youth Mental Wellness Action Plan contains commitment to develop a suicide prevention and crisis response network.

I would like to add, also, that part of the work includes funding to support community-based prevention activities and improve screening by implementing two standardized suicide risk assessment tools, one for adults and one for youth. These tools were rolled out this summer in 2019.

We also have the development of a coordinated approach to responding to suicide or other crises. This work currently is in process and will focus on a clear process for Health and Social Services system when a crisis occurs. A key piece of this process will be engaging with community impacted and taking our lead from them as to what supports they need.

Also, I would like to add the department also delivers a prevention program aimed at educating residents on the signs that someone may be thinking of suicide and how to connect them to resources. In addition, these programs are called Mental Health First Aid and Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training. They are delivered across the Northwest Territories by the Health and Social Services authorities. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. JOHNSON: I appreciate the Minister starting that question with a clear no, and I also appreciate that all of those programs are doing great work. I know that everyone in that department takes this issue seriously. Yet, our jobs as MLAs is to look at the larger pictures, to look at systemic issues, to make sure departments are not taking a siloed approach to an issue such as suicide. This is why the importance of government strategies are what we need to do our jobs. Will the Minister commit to developing a suicide prevention strategy in the life of this government?

HON. DIANE THOM: Like I mentioned to the Member, we are looking at developing a suicide prevention and crisis response network.

MR. JOHNSON: I don't wish to get into a debate of semantics, but it is important to note that, in the GNWT, the word "strategy" has a very specific meaning. It is not the response program that the Minister is talking about.

However, I have another question for the Minister. It is important to address this, that we have all the information to do our jobs. My question for the Minister is: do we presently track suicide attempts in addition to suicide deaths?

HON. DIANE THOM: When a Northwest Territories resident dies by suicide in another jurisdiction outside the Northwest Territories, we are notified that the person has died, passed away, but we are not notified with a formal notification as to the cause of death.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is clear that I am asking my questions out of the order in which I provided them to the Minister. It is important that we start tracking suicides in other jurisdictions, as many of our residents get lost once they head down south. But my question for the Minister was: do we presently track suicide attempts? Thank you.

HON. DIANE THOM: We do track data regarding hospitalizations for self-harm but not for suicide attempts. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I apologize to the Member for that. Thank you.

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

QUESTION 19-19(2):
CHANGE IN AURORA COLLEGE LEADERSHIP

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment. There is a lack of clarity about why Tom Weegar is no longer the president of Aurora College. He has told the media that he was

fired, yet the Minister has told the media that he resigned. As I said in the House yesterday, I believe that the public is owed an explanation for why this man is no longer working for the government after the extensive efforts made to recruit him to this job in the first place. Can the Minister please provide clarification?

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

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank my colleague for allowing me to clarify this situation a little bit. I am not going to speak to the reasons for termination. That is the Premier's domain. That position served at the pleasure of the Premier.

I will note that I was aware last week that there was going to be a meeting between Dr. Weegar and the Premier. I didn't know what the ultimate outcome of that would be. I do not know if it was presupposed.

Late last week, I discovered that Dr. Weegar and the GNWT would be parting ways. I wasn't privy to the conversation, so I do not know if the conversation ended with a firing, per se, or if it ended with both parties agreeing that perhaps it was time to part ways.

On Tuesday, after the media release was issued, I received an email sent on behalf of Dr. Tom Weegar that stated, "After much contemplation and soul-searching, I decided to step away from post-secondary education leadership for the time being," which led me to believe that he was stepping away from post-secondary leadership education for the time being, voluntarily. That is why I made the statements that I did.

It has come to light, however, that this was, in fact, a termination. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. GREEN: I appreciate the Minister clarifying that. One of the things that the former president has said is that he felt a strong resistance to change from the college administration and that this factored into his decision. Is the Minister aware of this issue, and what does he plan to do about it?

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Change is always hard. I assumed years ago or, rather, when this was first discussed in the Assembly, that it would be difficult to change. Actually, one of the first meetings that I had, I think the very first meeting that I had with Dr. Weegar, I asked him if he was getting any resistance and, if so, that I wanted to work with him to ensure that we made these changes.

I am all in favour of developing a world-class, arm's-length university here in the Northwest Territories. There will be some changes. There will be some

bold changes, and I am fully in support of those. Going forward, maybe it is something that I need to be a little more forceful with, more alive to, but I am confident that the team that we have in place now can implement those changes.

MS. GREEN: Thank you to the Minister for that response. It sounds like not everybody is on the same page, even now, with the bold idea to transform the college. I am wondering if you have any plans to reassure staff and students, and, in fact, to inform staff and students and the public, that this transformation is on track, it is going to go ahead, and that you are going to support it wholeheartedly, whatever the resistance?

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Yesterday, responding to questions from the Member for Yellowknife North, I committed my support to this project. I think that this is an amazing opportunity. I am privileged to be part of this transformation of Aurora College into a polytechnic university, and I am wholeheartedly behind it.

I have been having conversations as of late that we need to do a better job explaining this to the public, and so, moving forward, I am going to be releasing more information about what we are doing. We have a plan that is nearing completion, an implementation plan, which will lay out the next steps. That is going to be ready for release after the sitting in the summer, but I have decided that we need to fill that information void and get some more information out there so that everyone can be excited, because this is a great opportunity for our students; it's a great opportunity for the people of the territory, because we're going to be able to fill a lot of these positions that we can't fill right now; and it's a great opportunity for all of the communities where the college is located, because I expect that every community with a university campus will benefit economically.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Final question, supplementary. Member for Yellowknife Centre.

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the Minister's answer on that. I am looking, really, more at specific communication that would take place with the staff and students at Aurora College. Apparently, they didn't see this change in leadership coming. They feel uncertain about their own places there and about the future of the college, so is the Minister going to make an effort to talk directly with students and not only get their buy-in to this change, but to reassure them that he is, in fact, in charge? Thank you.

HON. R.J. SIMPSON: Direct communication with the staff and the students is part and parcel of the type of communication that I want to do, and I will

be reaching out, and I will reinforce my commitment. Like I said, this is a great opportunity. I am lucky to be involved with it, and I am going to see it through to completion, and we are going to wind up with a world-class university in the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

QUESTION 20-19(2):
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES POWER
CORPORATION BOARD

MS. SEMMLER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Minister responsible for NTPC. Yesterday, my colleague questioned the Minister regarding the board. The Minister stated that DMs are not DMs when they are sitting on this board, but then he stated that Deputy Ministers are using their skill sets to run it. This is in Hansard. So how can we ensure that the DMs who are not DMs are impartial when making decisions that are made when it is involving their departments? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Inuvik Twin Lakes. Minister responsible for the Northwest Territories Power Corporation.

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I apologize. They are not DMs, but the skill sets that they have are actually helping the board run. Right now, we are filling them in that position until we get the governance model moving forward. We have asked them to come up with a governance model, and we are utilizing their skill sets to do this job. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. SEMMLER: The NWT needs to trust this government, as my other colleague has said today. I know that the Minister has asked the chair and the board to come up with a governance model and options, but these are the DMs, not the DMs on this board. Can the Minister have this board made up of regional reps sooner than later?

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: I want to do it right. I have given them clear directions. I have asked them to come up with a model that works for the North. Is it a model of public interest groups and individuals across the territories to do it? Is it a combination of utilizing government and non-government people? I have given them three or four options to look at so that they can come to us with a better option to run that corporation.

Right now, I am going to stick to what I have asked them to do, and I am willing to work with committee once we get this information. I have to work with my colleagues, and then I have to work with you guys to come up with this. It is about doing what is right,

and it is great to say, "Yes, I'll make a decision now." You can't do that. This is why sometimes we in government get ourselves into difficult situations.

Unfortunately, no. I have given them some clear direction to give us some parameters, some options, and they are working on it.

MS. SEMMLER: The impartial part: how can we ensure that decisions by this board, and they represent different departments, that we know that they are being impartial?

HON. SHANE THOMPSON: Good question. I trust that they are going to do this. I know that I will be having a meeting with the board when I can fit it into our schedule. They have made a commitment. They have made an oath. They have signed a document saying that they are going to be impartial. They are looking out for what is best for the Northwest Territories. That is what they are there for. We have looked at their skill sets, and that is how we got them in place right now. I am going to trust them moving forward, unless they break that trust, and then, as the Minister, we make some quick decisions after that.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. Colleagues, our time for oral questions has expired. Item 12, written questions. Member for Yellowknife Centre.

Written Questions

WRITTEN QUESTION 2-19(2):
AURORA COLLEGE PRESIDENT

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Premier. About 18 months ago, the Government of the Northwest Territories hired an executive search firm to assist in finding qualified applicants for the dual role of president of Aurora College and associate deputy minister of Post-Secondary Education Renewal. Can the Premier tell us how much the executive search firm was paid, and:

1. the salary range advertised for the president/associate deputy minister role;
2. the average cost of relocating a successful candidate to Yellowknife;
3. the severance provisions included in a standard deputy minister employment contract; and
4. the standard severance cost of ending a deputy minister employment contract at the one-year mark.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Yellowknife Centre. Written questions. Member for Monfwi.

WRITTEN QUESTION 3-19(2):
INDIGENIZATION OF PRISON POPULATIONS

MR. LAFFERTY: Masi, Mr. Speaker. In light of the alarming rates of incarceration that Indigenous people face in the Northwest Territories, I submit the following written questions to the Minister of Justice:

1. In the past 10 years, what programs and initiatives has the territorial government launched to keep Indigenous people out of jail, and what do the evaluations of those various programs and initiatives conclude about effectiveness of each?
2. What proportion of territorial prison staff are Indigenous, broken down by employment category, especially management, program delivery, and guards?
3. What proportion of territorial prison staff is dedicated full-time to counselling, vocational training, and educational upgrading for inmates, and what share of the total correctional system appropriation is allocated for those purposes?
4. What has our correctional system done to enhance access to screening, diagnosis, and treatment of offenders suffering Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder, and similarly, what non-traditional approaches have our courts adopted for dealing with such offenders?
5. What progress has the Minister's department made in response to the 18 separate "calls to action" contained in the federal Truth and Reconciliation Commission report relating to justice and correctional matters?

Masi, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Mahsi, Member for Monfwi. Written questions. Item 9, returns to written questions. Item 10, replies to Commissioner's address. Item 11, petitions. Item 12, reports of committees on the review of bills. Item 13, reports of standing and special committees. Item 14, tabling of documents. Member for Thebacha.

Tabling of Documents

TABLED DOCUMENT 7-19(2):
JOINT LETTER FROM FORT SMITH
LEADERSHIP REGARDING NARROWING OF
THE MAIN RUNWAY AT FORT SMITH REGIONAL
AIRPORT, DATED JUNE 17, 2019

TABLED DOCUMENT 8-19(2):
LETTER FROM MINISTER OF
INFRASTRUCTURE REGARDING THE
NARROWING OF THE MAIN RUNWAY AT FORT
SMITH REGIONAL AIRPORT, DATED JULY 8,
2019

MS. MARTSELOS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table two documents relating to my Member's statement and oral questions earlier today. First, a joint letter from Fort Smith leadership, dated June 17, 2019, regarding the Fort Smith airport infrastructure, and a letter dated July 8, 2019, which was a reply from the then-Government of the Northwest Territories Minister of Infrastructure. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Thebacha. Tabling of documents. Member for Monfwi.

TABLED DOCUMENT 9-19(2):
TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION
OF CANADA: CALLS TO ACTION

TABLED DOCUMENT 10-19(2):
UNITED NATIONS DECLARATION ON THE
RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

MR. LAFFERTY: Masi, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table the following two documents. The first is the "Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action," and the second document is the "United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples." These should be our guiding principles as we move forward as a territorial government. Masi.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Member for Monfwi.

TABLED DOCUMENT 11-19(2):
REPORT OF THE AUDITOR GENERAL OF
CANADA TO THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY – 2020:
INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT, EARLY
CHILDHOOD TO GRADE 12 EDUCATION IN THE
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES – DEPARTMENT
OF EDUCATION, CULTURE AND EMPLOYMENT

MR. SPEAKER: Members, I wish to table the "Report of the Auditor General of Canada to the Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly – 2020: Independent Auditor's Report, Early Childhood to Grade 12 Education in the Northwest Territories – Department of Education, Culture and Employment."

Tabling of documents. Item 15, notices of motion. Item 16, motions. Item 17, notices of motion for the first reading of bills. Item 18, first reading of bills. Item 19, second reading of bills. Item 20, consideration in Committee of the Whole of bills and other matters. Item 21, report of Committee of

the Whole. Item 22, third reading of bills. Mr. Clerk, orders of the day.

Orders of the Day

CLERK OF THE HOUSE (Mr. Mercer): Orders of the day for Friday, February 7, 2020, at 10:00 a.m.:

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

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. Colleagues, this House stands adjourned until Friday, February 7, 2020, at 10:00 a.m.

---ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 3:12 p.m.

